

## **Executive Summary**

Veterans Christian Network is a vital 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that attempts to moderate the negative impacts of apathy and lack of available rehabilitative services for the vulnerable veteran population of Illinois and beyond. Our organization's projects, implemented by a well-trained staff, offer many opportunities for the reduction of depravity and poverty through needed intervention. Supporting the development of mind, body, and soul, Veterans Christian Network provides as many military families as possible with a thorough foundation for future success.

Our mission is to serve those that served us.

Recognizing the needs that exist among our target population, Veterans Christian Network's staff provides low income military families with a transitional housing program and resource center that focuses on individual empowerment. Through the establishment of our programs, our organization will continue to address the needs of our target communities, brighten lives, and assist each participant achieve their personal goals. Our organization's objectives are accomplished by implementation of stimulating activities and materials that are organized around a well-developed prospectus.

Veterans Christian Network, while still a young organization, has demonstrated the fiscal responsibility necessary to ensure effective allocation of funds received via a variety of revenue streams, including donations and corporate sponsorships.

In these economic times, public and private agencies are facing tremendous budget shortfalls. Individuals are struggling to access the therapies they so desperately need and require our services now more than ever. We realize foundations are very carefully considering their annual giving, however we are confident that spending these valuable and limited resources on our programs will be one of the best investments for a more solid and hopeful future for veterans seeking safe living environments. We keep our

administrative costs low, offer high quality programming, and carefully measure outcomes.

Ongoing evaluation of all programmatic activities will assure progress and cost-effectiveness.

## **Introduction**

Veterans Christian Network is a vital 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Lombard, Illinois. Founded in 2018, our organization attempts to alleviate the burdens that are faced by many economically disadvantaged veterans in Illinois and beyond. The organization is dedicated to providing high quality housing and human services to as many individuals as possible with the funds and resources we have available. These activities will also provide a thorough foundation for the individuals in our program to better care for themselves, their families, and their entire community.

Our activities are overseen by a group of well-qualified individuals. Our diverse staff members have ties to the community, and thus possess the unique ability to relate to the target demographic. Additionally, our Board of Directors is comprised of a professional group of talented individuals who are dedicated to committing their time and resources to building a stronger community.

Veterans Christian Network strives to serve as many people as possible with the resources we have available – every individual is important to our organization and we will not discriminate against anyone. By offering services that are concentrated on serving those less fortunate and addressing the greatest needs of our target community, we can make a positive contribution in helping the people we work with lead a more fulfilling life.

## **Problem Statement**

Across the United States, the struggling economy has led to the development of a recognizable need for the expansion of human services. Unfortunately, a decline in charitable giving has stunted the growth of many promising nonprofits. Without the availability of essential services, many of our nation's most disadvantaged citizens, those from underprivileged, low-income areas, may be forced into destitution.

For challenged populations, such as military families, the effects of the recessing economy are even more apparent. Recent news reports have stated that unemployment rates for veterans who have served since 9/11 stands at ten percent. Even more disheartening is the fact that unemployment rates are higher for military members than it is for non-veterans. For young men and women fighting the war on terrorism, coming home in good health has always been a major goal, but currently coming home to a good job is also a primary concern. Approximately 250,000 service members are re-entering civilian life each year, and unless something is done to better prepare these individuals emotionally and mentally, the rate of unemployment for them will continue to rise.

Ten thousand young men and women come home from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other zones of conflict every month. These individuals have served our country well, and have made sacrifices of health, of family, and of livelihood that most of us will never have to make. Unfortunately, many of these brave men and women return to face extreme difficulty in transitioning to civilian life. Specifically, many veterans have trouble connecting with loved ones and becoming a self-sufficient and responsible member of society.

A large amount of veterans are coming back to civilian live and are not addressing their mental health. This often leads to the inability to focus on new responsibilities and create meaningful relationships with families and friends. Posttraumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) is one of the signature injuries of the U.S. conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, but it affects veterans of all eras.

It is estimated that seven to twenty percent of service members are being affected from PTSD or a similar emotional disorder. PTSD is characterized by a combination of mental health symptoms - re-experiencing of a traumatic event, avoidance of trauma-associated stimuli, adverse alterations in thoughts and mood, and hyperarousal. PTSD can be lifelong and pervade all aspects of a service member's or veteran's life, including mental and physical health, family and social relationships, and employment. It is often concurrent with other health problems, such as depression, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, substance abuse disorder, and intimate partner violence.

Veterans Christian Network envisions addressing the above needs via the provision of high-quality services to underserved individuals. The organization seeks to reverse the negative trends by offering cost-effective, life enhancing opportunities to those in need.

### **Objectives**

Veterans Christian Network is determined and committed to play an active role in the development of underserved military families in Illinois and beyond. Staying true to our mission and vision, being intentional with those we serve, building on solid program practices, and evolving with the changing economy and population needs allows our organization to provide quality programming to every individual in our service area.

In support of our main goal, the organization aspires to:

- Continue the growth and maturity of our organization and its programs while expanding the services we are offering
- Increase both the local and national community's awareness of our organization, our mission, and the services we are offering

- Increase the number of professional individuals involved with our organization in an effort to better serve the individuals we work with
- Put the necessary building blocks in place to continue operating our organization in the smoothest and most efficient manner possible in order to better serve our participants
- Continue developing our name within the community and build a strong reputation for delivering the highest quality services possible with the resources we have available
- Create long lasting and positive changes in the lives of the individuals our organization is fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work with
- Build long-standing relationship and partnerships with other organizations in the community that share our vision

### **Methodology**

To accomplish the objectives stated in the previous section, Veterans Christian Network will use the following methods. It was decided to follow this course of action based on the expertise of the Executive Director, as well as the success of similarly structured organizations.

Veterans Christian Network's administrators are in the developmental stages of establishing a transitional housing program for vulnerable military families that are unable to locate safe housing accommodations. In order to operate this program, our organization is seeking the funding required to purchase multiple acres of land that will accommodate dozens of tiny homes. Every fully furnished unit will include sleeping area, bathroom, kitchen, and living area. The community will also include a resource center, recreation area, and laundry facilities.

Veterans Christian Network not only cares about the well-being of our community members, but the environment as well. Therefore, our goal is to build housing accommodations that will operate in the eco-friendliest manner as possible. Our

facilities will have green energy applied to them in order to help save energy. Our aspiration is to run a facility efficiently, resulting in further cost-effectiveness, while also reducing our footprint on the environment. All construction will be completed by contractors that have been selected based upon a bid process and assessment of previously completed work. The organization will adhere to all government codes when completed construction projects.

Every applicant is required to meet with representatives of our organization in order to complete a brief evaluation prior to admittance into our program. This meeting provides potential residents with the opportunity to discuss their current financial struggles and for our staff members to determine if the organization is a good match for their life skills development needs. Staff members will take into consideration the motivation, attitude, and willingness to follow expectations when selecting our residents. Veterans Christian Network has established valuable relationships with veteran services organizations in order to receive referrals of potential housing candidates.

After the enrollment process has been completed, our residents will be registered in social services opportunities and life skills development programs that are offered by our organization, outside community programs, and government agencies. The subject areas that our clients may be enrolled in, and provided with transportation to, include personal development planning, vocational development, financial literacy, substance abuse prevention, interpersonal skills development, religious services, personal and emotional development, community involvement, and independent living preparation/follow up. The customized action plan created for each individual will be based upon their needs and personal goals. Our organization will purchase the vehicles necessary to accommodate the transportation needs of those who do not have the means to access their own transportation services.

Every resident will check in with our staff members on a weekly basis to ensure that they are completing their required responsibilities and maximizing the opportunities made available to them within our residential services. Each client will have regularly

scheduled household chores to complete that will establish a sense of pride and responsibility through the development of cleaning habits that lead to a safe and hygienic home life. Our belief is that these daily tasks will prepare our residents for successfully providing for themselves and their family members when they have the means to transition into their own accommodations.

Veterans Christian Network will also facilitate a community access center that allows veterans to enroll in vital human services offered by the government and community organizations. These services may include, but are not limited to, food stamps, health insurance, housing opportunities, basic needs resources, literacy programs, and financial planning. Every participant may come to the center during operating hours to participate in our programs and benefit from our directors' guidance. Our qualified staff members will briefly speak with the individual to assess their needs and prepare an action plan that serves the client in the most efficient manner. The representatives of our organization will guide the individual through the application process of each social service or human need they are seeking to enroll in. This may include gathering essential identification and financial documentation, filling out any required applications, and submitting the application via internet, phone, mail, or in person.

In addition, Veterans Christian Network's directors have established a financial assistance program that distributes basic needs materials and financial support to veterans in need. Our application process requires that every applicant completes a brief interview with Veterans Christian Network's representatives after they have been referred to our organization as a potential recipient. The amount of distributions our organization allocates per year will vary and is dependent upon resources available and the needs of our applicants.

Our directors have established a strict follow up procedure that allows our organization to ensure the donation was used for its intended purpose. Our administrators monitor the distribution process by recording the recipient's name, contact information, and exempt status. We also record the amount, type, and valuation method for every

distribution. Veterans Christian Network will also conduct home inspections as deemed necessary by the Board of Directors. All of Veterans Christian Network's programs will be staffed by qualified individuals that have expertise in their particular service area. Each staff person will be subject to a screening process that may include an application, criminal background check, and interview. The Executive Director of the organization will oversee all staff and client interaction, while continuously employing his years of training and experience. Veterans Christian Network and the programs that are currently being offered aspire to improve the lives of each and everyone we are fortunate enough to work with.

### **Evaluation**

Each quarter the Executive Director will review the current population of clients residing at the facility. The Case Manager will observe the program activities and review each of the participant's records. Progress notes and assessment forms will be used to document and record the progress of each participant in our programs. Organization administrators will evaluate the state of funding, and determine how many additional individuals could be supported by the current programs we are offering.

Data on each client's progress, including program attendance and participation, will be collected quarterly through meetings with the Case Manager. Meetings between supervisors and staff provide an opportunity for discussion and decision-making regarding needed method modifications. Staff will also seek to assess the satisfaction of the client with their services via ongoing participant evaluations.

The number of clients leaving the program will also be assessed on a semi-annual basis. Residents will be subject to pre and post-program testing in an effort to determine the extent of their progress. Survey instruments will be employed upon each client's exit to determine their level of satisfaction with our services, as well as to generate suggestions for future improvement of our organization's programs.

All funders of Veterans Christian Network will receive semi-annual reports during the award year, as will board members, the Executive Director, and other interested individuals. If we meet our objectives for the next year, we will consider the programs to be successful. In the longer term, the organization defines success as a reduction in the veteran population that is going without needed intervention and support.

### **Sustainability**

Veterans Christian Network has established a strong history of obtaining funding for our programs and is confident in receiving ongoing funding for the organization. Our organization will be surviving from year to year through practicing strong financial efficiency and stewardship with the funding that we are able to obtain. The organization is expected to have support of foundations for its continuing support.

In addition to these monies, the Board will increase the amount of unrestricted funds for the program through direct mail requests and annual fundraising events. During 2018/19, the growth rate of the individual donor base is expected to increase exponentially. In upcoming years Veterans Christian Network will seek to obtain continuation grants from both foundations and corporate sponsors in an effort to continually provide up to date facility furnishings and rehabilitative services.

We will also be working diligently to acquire many in-kind donations. These in-kind donations will serve as an additional source of revenue for all programs. We plan to continue funding our organization in this manner as long as it is necessary.