



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES
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CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary, EOHHS

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

CHERYL LUSSIER POPPE
Secretary, DVS

December 31, 2022

Chair Paul McMurtry
Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
State House, Room 238
Boston, MA 02133

Chair John C. Velis
Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
State House, Room 519
Boston, MA 02133

Chair Adrian C. Madaro
Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use,
and Recovery
State House, Room 33
Boston, MA 02133

Chair Julian Cyr
Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use,
and Recovery
State House Room 312-E
Boston, MA 02133

Steven T. James
House Clerk
State House Room 145
Boston, MA 02133

Michael D. Hurley
Senate Clerk
State House Room 335
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs McMurtry, Velis, Madaro, and Cyr, and Clerks James and Hurley:

[Section 77 of the Acts of 2022](#) requires the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) to convene an advisory committee on veteran reintegration, suicide prevention, and the support of per services, and report on its findings.

SECTION 77. (a) The department of veterans' services shall convene an advisory committee that shall consist of: 2 representatives of the Massachusetts chapter of Team Red, White & Blue; 2 representatives of the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital's Home Base Program; 2 representatives of the Wounded Warriors Project; 2 representatives of the Mass Mentoring Partnership, Inc.; 2 representatives of the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention; 2 representatives of the Massachusetts Psychological Association, Inc.; and such other members as the committee deems necessary. The members of the committee shall have experience in mental health or veterans' support

services with an emphasis on treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety among veterans.

(b) The committee, in coordination with the department of veterans' services and the department of mental health, shall investigate and study: (i) ways to augment services to returning veterans to reduce the rate of suicide and the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety; and (ii) the complexity of reintegration into civilian life and issues related to isolation and suicide among veterans. The committee shall provide support and expertise to reduce isolation and suicide among returning veterans.

The committee shall examine: (i) the impact of having a community peer liaison on a veteran's reintegration into society; (ii) the relationship between isolation and suicide among veterans; and (iii) the impact of having a community peer liaison on symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety in diagnosed veterans.

The committee shall file a report of its findings and any recommendations, with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery not later than January 1, 2023.

Progress report:

This report is being submitted as an interim report as individual members to the advisory committee are still in process of appointment. DVS expects to submit a final report of the advisory committee by June 30, 2023.

Overview:

DVS was tasked with coordinating with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to convene an advisory committee to investigate and study services to support veterans and reduce the rate of veteran suicide and mental illness and support reintegration.

The base committee membership is outlined explicitly in statute. Additional members as deemed necessary by DVS and DMH are allowed. The statute and membership are outlined below. The language requires a report out by January 1, 2023. This will not be possible based on the signing of the law and the timeline to establish the committee. However, DVS plans to convene the first meeting in January as a first step and hold monthly meetings to conduct the committee's charge. Following the final meeting, the Co-Chairs will develop the report and submit as final to DVS, DMH, and the Legislature.

The committee meeting schedule is as follows:

- January 2022 Meeting 1: Explore current landscape
- February 2023 Meeting 2: Examine topic 1: (i) the impact of having a community peer liaison on a veteran's reintegration into society;
- March 2023 Meeting 3: Examine topic 2: (ii) the relationship between isolation and suicide among veterans
- April 2023 Meeting 4: Examine topic 3: (iii) the impact of having a community peer liaison on symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety in diagnosed veterans.

- May 2023 Meeting 5: Review all content and discuss recommendations

Membership

DVS and DMH representatives will be co-chairing this committee (SAVE Clinical Advisor John Rodolico and DMH Director of Clinical Services Margaret Guyer Deason).

12 members are outlined explicitly in statute and are people identified by external organizations.

The Co-Chairs and DVS have identified 7 additional members integral to the conversation, (including themselves), that would represent various veteran and community perspectives on the committee:

- US Department of Veterans’ Affairs in MA
- Massachusetts Veterans Service Office Association
- Department of Public Health Suicide Prevention Program
- Vet Centers
- Massachusetts National Guard

Note: Please note that some organizations designated to appoint membership in statute have not identified members, despite repeated attempts to contact the organizations and establish committee membership. This delay in appointments has caused a delay in organizing the meetings. Efforts to establish formal appointments to the committee will continue, and once a quorum is finalized the committee will proceed.

The Committee Membership will consist of:

1	2 representatives of the Massachusetts chapter of Team Red, White & Blue	<i>TBD – will be confirmed in January following meeting of Team Red, White, and Blue</i>
2	2 representatives of the Massachusetts chapter of Team Red, White & Blue	<i>TBD – will be confirmed in January following meeting of Team Red, White, and Blue</i>
3	2 representatives of the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital’s Home Base Program	René Lento, PhD Staff Psychologist Director of Addiction Services, Home Base
4	2 representatives of the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital’s Home Base Program	Bill Davidson, Sr. Director of Veteran Outreach and Peer Support, Home Base
5	2 representatives of the Wounded Warriors Project	Dr. Erin Fletcher Warrior Care Network Director, Wounded Warrior Project

6	2 representatives of the Wounded Warriors Project	Michael Baird Alumni Manager, Wounded Warrior Project
7	2 representatives of the Mass Mentoring Partnership, Inc.	Lily Mendez Chief Executive Officer, Mass Mentoring Partnership
8	2 representatives of the Mass Mentoring Partnership, Inc.	<i>Other will be TBD per Executive Director of Mass Mentoring Partnership, following first meeting</i>
9	2 representatives of the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention	Paula Tessier, MSW Associate Director, Membership & Communications, Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention
10	2 representatives of the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention	Deacon Jim Greer Executive Board, Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention
11	2 representatives of the Massachusetts Psychological Association, Inc.	Jenny D'Olympia, PsyD, LMHC, LP, HSP Associate Chair and Assistant Professor, Counseling and Behavioral Health Department Director, Military Veteran Psychology and Train Vets to Treat Vets Programs William James College
12	2 representatives of the Massachusetts Psychological Association, Inc.	Miriam Stoll Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital (DMH)
13	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	CO-CHAIR John Rodolico, PhD Clinical Advisor to SAVE team, Department of Veterans' Services Psychologist, McLean Hospital Assistant Professor of Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
14	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	CO-CHAIR , Margaret Guyer Deacon, PhD, Director of Clinical and Professional Services, Department of Mental Health
15	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	Katherine Nicholas Malvey, LICSW VISN 1 Veterans Justice Programs Coordinator, US Department of Veterans Affairs

16	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	Charly Oliva, MSW VSO for Belchertown MA, Representing Massachusetts Veterans Service Officer Association
17	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	Kelley Cunningham Director of Suicide Prevention Program, Department of Public Health
18	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	Elisabeth Parrot, PsyD, RN Director, Lowell VET Center
19	and such other members as the committee deems necessary	MAJ (P) Katie Murphy Director, Warrior Resilience & Fitness, Massachusetts National Guard

Sincerely,



Cheryl Lussier Poppe

Secretary

Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services

CC:

Commissioner Brooke Doyle, Department of Mental Health