

Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program
Facts for Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Westchester, Suffolk,
and Ulster Counties
February 12, 2021

The Soldier

The Program is named in honor of Joseph P. Dwyer, a US Army Medic in the Iraq War who, in the earliest days of the invasion in 2003, was pictured cradling a wounded boy while his unit was fighting its way up the Euphrates to Baghdad. PFC Dwyer's post-war struggles with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) resulted in his untimely and tragic death in 2008.

The Joseph P. Dwyer Program was created by then-New York State Senator, Lee Zeldin, now a congressman representing New York State's 1st District. Zeldin served four years in the Army active duty, having been deployed in 2006 to Tikrit, Iraq. Beginning in 2012, the Program now offers peer-to-peer counseling for Veterans suffering from PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury and any Veteran looking to reintegrate into civilian society. It began in Suffolk County and quickly expanded to almost half the counties in the state.

The Program

The Dwyer Program provides non-clinical support by Veterans to Veterans. Many Veterans are often reluctant to speak with anyone who is unable to understand the mental and physical challenges they face daily. Trained to keep doubts and vulnerabilities to themselves, Veterans are hesitant to discuss issues such as mental health, relationships with family and friends, and barriers to regain sustainability. This can lead to a destructive and devastating journey when arriving back home; including substance use, domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, chronic unemployment, and suicide.

Support Veterans are trained in military behavioral health and they personally understand the effects of PTSD, TBI and the challenges of reintegrating into civilian society.

Support by Veteran peers provides resources, and a connection to the surrounding community, as well as a friendly ear by those who have been through the same challenges and overcome many of these obstacles. Peer volunteers offer a non-judgmental environment that allows Veterans to openly discuss their concerns and needs as well as referring Veterans directly to needed resources.

While each Program may offer different aspects of support, many of them assist Veterans and their families with help finding housing, employment, accessing their Veteran benefits, education and training information, and short and long term mental health counseling. The Programs also offer groups of Veterans, current active military personnel, children, adolescents, groups, couples, and families the opportunity to come together in support of each other. This gives them the chance to listen and benefit from each other's experiences with service-related issues through social activities and non-clinical support.

The Dwyer Program is available to all Veterans, members of the Armed Forces, National Guard, Army Reserve, and their families. All are welcome regardless of service dates, discharge status or dependency status. The Program is free and confidential.

The Need

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Predictive Analytics and Actuary Service, the total number of Veterans* in New York State is more than 718,900 and the numbers in the Counties participating today are as follows:

Dutchess: 13,023
Orange: 19,698
Putnam: 3,861
Rockland: 7,819
Suffolk: 58,792
Ulster: 9,592
Westchester: 24,907

*** Veteran population estimates, as of September 30, 2019**

Veteran Testimonials:

- “I’m so glad you guys were able to help, I didn’t know where to go, this assistance will help my family in a really big way.” – Family member of a Veteran
- “Vet2Vet has changed my life. I feel I can always count on help if I need it and emotional support.” - Veteran

The Support

Significant funding for the Dwyer Program comes from the New York State budget but it is discretionary, meaning it may be allocated, but not distributed if state budget priorities compete. For today’s participating Dwyer Program counties the 2021-22 budget amounts are:

Dutchess: \$185,000	Suffolk: \$185,000
Orange: \$185,000	Ulster: \$185,000
Putnam: \$185,000	Westchester: \$185,000
Rockland: \$185,000	

Additional financial support is provided through different sources depending on the County, such as a County’s Veteran Service Agency, Mental Health Association, County Department of Health, private grants, fundraisers, and individuals.

For More Information

For more information on the Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Programs in these counties:

- **Dutchess:** Anthony Kavouras, Vet2Vet Program Manager, (845) 473-2500 x1364 <https://mhadutchess.org/services/vet2vet/>; akavouras@mhadutchess.org Veterans@mhadutchess.org or Call 845-473-2500 x1307 to make an appointment. No referral is necessary.
- **Orange:** Larry Neumann, Program Supervisor, lneumann@mhaorangeny.com, 73 James P. Kelly Way, Middletown, NY 10940, Cell: 845-421-2132 / Fax: 845.343.9665
- **Putnam:** John Bourges, Program Coordinator, 2505 Carmel Avenue, suite 212 Brewster NY 10509, jbourges@mhaputnam.org, Office: 845-278-8387, WARM LINE: 914-519-8097, CRISIS LINE: 800-273-8255 (TALK)push #1, www.dwyervet2vetputnam.org
- **Rockland:** Sharon Bailey, LCSW; Veteran Outreach Administrator, (845) 624-1366, Cell: (347)829-2515, sbailey@vettovetrc.org; <https://www.bridgesrc.org/programs-services/vet2vet/>
- Ismael (Izzy) Quintana, Veteran Outreach Coordinator (Bilingual: Spanish), (845) 624-1366; , Cell: (845)587-6497, iquintana@vettovetrc.org; <https://www.bridgesrc.org/programs-services/vet2vet/>
- **Suffolk:** John J. Schultz M.B.A.; USMC OIF VET; Program Director, Office: (631) 853-8345, Cell: (631) 766-5806, john.schultz84@gmail.com, jschultz@mhaw.org
- **Ulster:** Gavin T. Walters Sr., MSW; Program Manager, cell (845) 288-1951, office (845) 481-4004; Gavin.Walters@HVCVR.org
- **Westchester:** Andrea Molina, MBA - Marine Corps OIF 1&3 Veteran, Director of Veteran Services/Vet2Vet, 106 North Broadway | White Plains, NY 10603, Direct Line 914.358.4240, Cell 646-342-0898, Fax 914.358.9866, Amolina@FSW.org