



Middlesex Sheriff's Office

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Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian Announces New Initiative to Identify and Assist Incarcerated Veterans

Partnership of the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, US Department of Veterans Affairs
and MA Department of Veterans' Services

Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian is proud to announce the Middlesex Sheriff's Office has entered into a first-in-the-nation agreement with federal and state agencies to work cooperatively to better identify Veterans in its custody and provide targeted outreach to those individuals.

Sheriff Koutoujian made the announcement Wednesday at Billerica's Vietnam Veterans Park where he was joined by Michael Galloucis, the Executive Director of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) and Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans' Services Coleman Nee.

"I am proud to announce we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the VA New England Healthcare System and our own Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services to better identify Veterans in our custody in an effort to educate them about programs and services available to them prior to their release date," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "With this new initiative government on all levels will be working together to address the needs of Veterans while incarcerated and upon reentry back in the community."

Reentry Specialists from the US Department of Veterans Affairs' Healthcare for Reentry Veterans Program and Peer Specialists from the Department of Veterans' Services will coordinate aftercare planning tailored to the specific needs of each individual, including referrals for housing, substance abuse counseling, mental health services and employment counseling.

"When we look at the underlying issues that lead people – Veterans and non-Veterans – to land in our custody we find substance abuse, homelessness and mental health issues play significant roles," said Koutoujian. "This initiative allows us to better work with our federal and state partners to help a particular segment of our population address these underlying issues."

"Massachusetts is the national leader in providing comprehensive Veterans' services for many reasons, but none more so than the strong collaborations we have made to maximize our resources and provide world-class, comprehensive benefits to our Veterans and their families," said Secretary Nee. "Identifying Veterans and providing the knowledge and access to resources is one of the most difficult tasks. This partnership is the perfect example of state and federal resources working together to

ensure we're serving a vulnerable Veterans population. I thank Sherriff Koutoujian and Mike Galloucis from the VA and we look forward to the continued partnership.”

“I want to commend Sheriff Koutoujian, the VA and Sec. Nee for their continued efforts on behalf of the Commonwealth’s Veterans,” said State Representative Carlo Basile. “As the Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs I join these leaders in recognizing the need to address the challenges that face our Veterans.”

As a result of this initiative, the VA and the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office were immediately able to identify 44 Veterans in custody who did not appear in previous counts. All Veterans in the custody of the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office will now know they have access to the full range of services provided through the VA New England Healthcare System and the Department of Veterans’ Services.

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