

Bureau Dedicates VETS Unit

FCI Englewood to open new residential program



Image 8/8

Updated 09:30 AM ET, August 22, 2021

(BOP) - The Bureau of Prisons (Bureau) supports more than 7,000 incarcerated Veterans who previously served in the United States uniformed services. As a result of their service, studies suggest Veterans suffer from higher instances of trauma, anxiety, depression, and physical disabilities, which can be pathways into the criminal justice system. Military culture is highly structured with rigid daily routines, defined duties, established reporting hierarchy, provision of services and resources, and emphasis on teamwork. The transition to civilian life can leave Veterans feeling lost, depressed, anxious, and overwhelmed. However, these shared experiences and "warrior ethos" can also create camaraderie among Veterans.

Recognizing the unique needs and challenges faced by incarcerated Veterans, the Bureau has implemented a three-tiered service delivery model that culminated with the activation of a residential program for Veterans housed at FCI Englewood, Colorado. The Veterans Education Transitional Services (VETS) Unit is based on a community model in which the environment intertwines uniformed service core values with veteran centric programs, services, and benefits education. Military core values, including unit cohesion, honor, pride, discipline, rank structure and team work, create a familiar frame work within which participants address their goals through daily "muster" meetings, participant service groups, peer mentorship and staff support. Access to Department of Veterans Affairs justice program representatives assist program participants with connecting to resources, services and benefits they are entitled to and that also support the Bureau's reentry efforts.

An event was held August 16, 2022, to dedicate the Englewood VETS Unit and encourage participants to recommit themselves to lives of service, leadership, and wellness. In performing the program dedication, Dr. Alix McLearn, Reentry Services Division Acting Assistant Director, led participants in a call to action to make personal change. North Central

Regional Director Andre Matevousian, a veteran himself, also provided inspirational remarks. Guest speakers Jessica Blue-Howells, Deputy National Director, Veterans Justice Programs and Ron Self, Executive Director of Veterans Helping Veterans from the Inside Out, addressed the attendees and incarcerated Veteran participants. Warden J. F. Williams, his leadership team, and the staff at FCI Englewood coordinated an exceptional event to dedicate the Bureau's newest residential program.