

## Process and Project Summary

### History of the Project

In New Hampshire, it is widely recognized there is a significant need for affordable housing, mental health care and other services for members of the military, veterans, and their families. Since 2007, through its Veterans Count program, Easterseals NH has provided a wide variety of services for the military community and is knowledgeable about the challenges faced by this population in the state. In early 2022, Easterseals NH learned that the State of New Hampshire was interested in dedicating a portion of their COVID-relief funding to help support military services. Easterseals NH submitted a concept plan to develop a unique campus that would provide comprehensive services to service members, veterans, and their families across the state. In the fall of 2022, ESNH received approval and \$23 million in funding to develop and build the campus located on a 15-acre site in Franklin, NH, which is owned by Easterseals NH and needs repurposing.



### Project Overview

Thanks to the financial support from the State of New Hampshire, Easterseals NH is on a quest to deepen its work with the military community.

Easterseals NH will redevelop its 15-acre property at 27 Holy Cross Road in Franklin, NH, into a center of excellence and first-of-its-kind in the state to serve those who have served. The campus will provide enhanced supports for military community members and their families through access to a variety of services and recreation activities in one location.

Several of the existing buildings on the campus, many of which are historic, including the house in which Daniel Webster lived, will be transformed and at least one new building will be built. Current plans for the campus include:

- ★ **Affordable housing:** 29 units of permanent affordable rental housing for veterans;
- ★ **Hub of services with meeting and event space:** Co-location of multiple military service organizations to ensure continuum of care for each visitor to the campus;
- ★ **Retreat center:** 20 short-term rental bedrooms, some with kitchenettes; opportunities to hold events/trainings; and
- ★ **Therapeutic recreation components:** Access to the rail trail and Merrimack River; a to-be-built multipurpose building for equine and dog therapy, rock climbing wall, ropes course, and more; a military themed playground; and an outdoor performance stage.

The campus will be transformed in phases, with the affordable housing and hub of services estimated to be completed in early 2025. The remaining portions of the retreat center and other aspects of the campus will begin once additional funding is secured.



## Community Engagement Process

From the project's inception, Easterseals NH has been committed to ensuring robust participation and feedback from the community related to the services and facilities that will be offered on the campus. To assist in the community engagement process, Easterseals NH created a Campus Taskforce whose purpose is to provide insight and expertise and solicit input from subject matter experts on developing a financially sustainable and programmatically impactful campus for service members, veterans, and their families. Members of the Campus Taskforce include representatives from Easterseals NH Executive and Senior Leadership, Easterseals NH Board of Directors, Veterans Count Chapters, Swim With A Mission, and other community leaders connected to military and veteran services in New Hampshire. Easterseals NH also engaged a paid consultant with expertise in military and veteran services in NH to assist with the community engagement process.

Over the course of nine months, the Campus Taskforce participated in a number of key activities including: 1) Attending local and regional site visits of high quality military and veteran programs; 2) Conducting interviews and outreach with state officials, nonprofits, and other providers; 3) Creating, distributing, and analyzing surveys sent to providers and members of the military and veteran community; 4) Participating in discussions with local officials from the Franklin community; 5) Assisting with the selection of a Construction Design & Build Partner; and 6) Assisting with identification and recruitment of potential project financial supporters.

## Methodology for Community Engagement

In October of 2022, the Campus Taskforce developed a seven-step process for ensuring robust community engagement in the design and development of the military and veterans campus, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the services provided meet the most pressing needs of the military and veteran population in New Hampshire. Key activities included:

- I. Development of databases of providers serving the military community in New Hampshire and national organizations offering similar services.** A comprehensive database including 52 NH providers was created in order to identify existing providers of services for service members, veterans, and their families in New Hampshire. A separate database of 32 national providers offering similar services was also created. These databases were utilized to seek insight and information from experts in the field.
- II. 1:1 Interviews with key informants and entities connected to military services in New Hampshire.** 39 interviews were conducted to solicit information from key stakeholders including: 1) Greatest needs experienced by the target populations; 2) Existing services provided to the target populations; and 3) Possibilities for collaboration with existing services.
- III. Site visits to local and regional programs.** 10 site visits were conducted to identify best practices and lessons learned from local and regional programs providing similar services to the military and veteran populations.
- IV. Electronic survey to known service providers throughout the state.** 50 electronic surveys were distributed to existing service providers in NH. Sixteen responses were received, for a response rate of 32%.
- V. Electronic survey to other military connected individuals throughout the state.** 125 electronic surveys were distributed to individuals connected to military and veteran services in NH. 63 responses were received, for a response rate of 52%.
- VI. Tours of campus with stakeholders:** 9 tours of the site with interested parties and stakeholders have been conducted.
- VII. Community presentations:** Taskforce members have participated in 8 presentations to the community in an effort to keep stakeholders informed and to gather input related to the project.

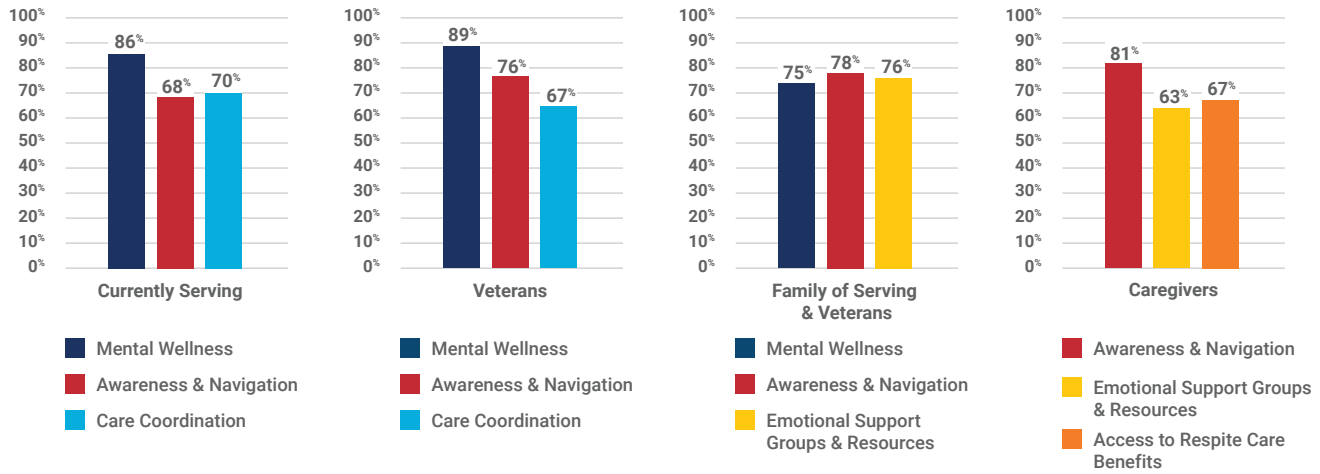
# Key Findings

## Insights from Database of Providers

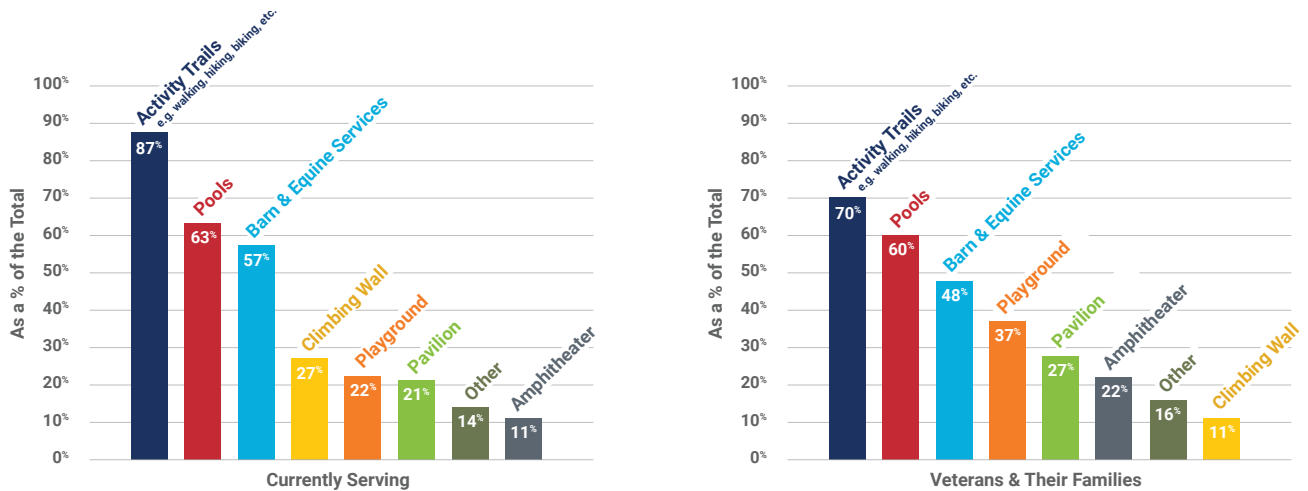
- ★ New Hampshire has many nonprofits and other entities who provide services and resources to members of the military, veterans, and their families, yet many of these services are not widely known. A need for a consolidated website with concentrated marketing to promote it with a list of services and resources in NH would be extremely beneficial in helping active military, veterans, and their families to access services that will best meet their needs.
- ★ The development of the database indicated that although there are some programs that provide some aspect of the services which will be offered on the campus, there is not a similar project that incorporates each of the four pillars of this project in one location (housing, retreat center, recreational therapy, and hub of services).

## Insights from Electronic Surveys

- ★ Almost 90% of respondents to the provider survey expressed an interest in collaborating in the provision of services on the Easterseals NH Military and Veterans Campus.
- ★ Results from the surveys related to the top needs of active members of the military and veterans were largely as anticipated. Top needs included: Mental health services; awareness & navigation of services; care coordination; and housing support & stabilization.



- ★ Top needs identified for caregivers and families of service members and veterans included respite and support groups, social events, and childcare.
- ★ The top three amenities offered on the site suggested by respondents included trails, pool, and barn. Playground, pavilion and amphitheater ranked closely thereafter.



- ★ Other recommended amenities/uses listed by respondents included: Pickle ball; cornhole; archery; axe throwing; art area; family activities; gaming area; basketball; volleyball; skate park; winter activities (e.g. snowmobiling, sledging, snowshoeing).
- ★ Other offerings suggested by respondents included: Organized family events; canine training; day camps; recruiting events for local businesses and colleges; and peer group meeting areas.

## Summarizing Project Visits

The Campus Taskforce visited 10 other military and veteran centric organizations throughout New England. The goal was to be able to meet with other organizations, tour their facilities, ask questions, and gain insight on what others are doing to bring back best practices to Easterseals NH's military and veterans campus.

The site visits included the following: Boulder Point, Plymouth, NH; Brighton Marine, Brighton, MA; Operation Delta Dogs, Hollis, NH; Farmstead New England, Weare, NH; Hero Pups, Exeter, NH; Liberty House, Manchester, NH; Rally Point, Norwich, CT; Soldier On, Pittsfield, MA; Travis Mills Foundation, Rome, ME; and UpReach Therapeutic Stables, Goffstown, NH.

The Campus Taskforce was impressed by each of the tours and visits and left with information that continues to help guide the path to the creation of Easterseals NH Military and Veterans Campus.

Some key highlights identified that will be brought to the Easterseals NH Military and Veterans Campus include:

★ **Affordable Housing:** Provide quality affordable rental housing that is accessible for all abilities; create a plan for the aging demographic; engage residents in work and volunteerism; and offer peer and social offerings on campus to build community.

★ **Hub of Services:** Integrate care coordination with a variety of providers in order to make the process of recovery and access to services streamlined.

★ **Retreat Center:** Offer space for respite overnights and group meeting areas. Create client data management system to track usage of facility to ensure the correct offerings and utilize data to inform future developments on campus.

★ **Community Engagement:** Make room for grassroots, skill-based programming dependent on local community offerings and people who live on and/or access the campus. Engage local businesses, organizations, and individuals in supporting the project financially and through volunteerism.

★ **Therapeutic Services:** Offer therapeutic recreational and creative opportunities that span equine therapy, service dog programming and training, accessible paths throughout the campus, create a dedicated space for outdoor music and performance activities, provide space for art therapy, build a playground with accessible features, and other traditional fitness and wellness opportunities including ropes and challenge courses, a workout gym, and yoga studio.



## Conclusion

Easterseals NH's development of its military and veterans campus will be the first of its kind in the Granite State. As a true center of excellence, with research and community engagement behind its creation, the offerings on the campus are expected to make a deep impact for military members, veterans, and their families. Collaborating with other providers who serve the military and veterans community will be an essential component to the campus's success.

The campus will be developed in stages, over several years, based on Easterseals NH's ability to raise the needed funds to complete all aspects of the campus. The first phase to be completed will be the affordable housing and hub of services, which is anticipated to be completed summer of 2025. As funding permits, additional portions of the campus will be developed.



For more information about the campus, please email  
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