



2022-2023 Grant Finalist Summary

Wounded Veterans Relief Fund | Emergency and Essential Dental Care for Disabled Veterans

The Organization

Wounded Veterans Relief Fund is an organization led by veterans, for veterans. The organization exists to provide emergency financial assistance and critical dental support to qualified disabled veterans.

The Program

Implemented in 2021, the Emergency and Essential Dental Care Program provides emergency/essential dental care to disabled veterans who do not qualify for VA dental coverage. The VA only provides dental coverage to veterans who have a 100% disability rating, have suffered a service-related oral injury or be a former prisoner of war. Only 8% of veterans in the VA healthcare system are qualified to receive dental coverage, leaving 92% to pay for private dental insurance, pay for dental out of pocket, or forego care altogether. This gap in services increases the likelihood of veterans falling through the cracks and not receiving critical care. Dental recipients are referred to this agency by VA case managers. Dental care includes dentures, bridge work, implants, crowns, root canals and other urgent and essential dental services. The average cost per recipient is \$4,500.

How will this program impact Palm Beach County?

Consistent oral care has been found to be an important factor in overall health. Numerous studies report that neglecting oral health can lead to serious health problems, including significant tooth decay and oral cancer. Poor dental health also exacerbates social withdrawal, depression, isolation, and poor self-esteem. The consequences of poor oral care extend beyond direct health implications. Research shows that it can also affect the ability to find and keep employment, therefore affecting social and economic well-being. Studies also show that veterans have a higher risk of oral health problems than nonveterans. A recent study examining differences in oral health status between veterans and nonveterans, shows a higher prevalence of periodontitis, missing teeth, filled teeth, and caries experience among veterans.

Despite the sacrifices that veterans have made to protect us, many veterans find themselves struggling to obtain essential services such as dental care.

Measurable Outcomes

- Increase access to dental health for disabled veterans who are not eligible for coverage through the VA.
- Increase in the number of dentists who will participate.
- Increase in referrals from the VA.

How will Impact Palm Beaches grant be used?

100% of the grant will be used to provide dental services to veterans who do not qualify for VA dental coverage.