

## **Washington State Health Care Authority Helps Link Up Veterans and Their Families With Federal Benefits**

**For Immediate Release:** 11/13/2012

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OLYMPIA, Wash. – One way to celebrate Veterans Day this month is to help spread the word about a program that connects Washington State veterans and their families with federal benefits they have earned with their military service.

Manager Bill Allman launched the project in 2003 as a pilot in Clark County after realizing that he was encountering veterans who were Medicaid clients but did not realize they might qualify for richer federal benefits. The pilot also benefited from a partnership with the State Department of Veterans Affairs, which endorsed the effort. The program has helped more than 4,000 veterans and their families, while the state avoided costs estimated at \$30 million.

“We can be especially helpful for veterans struggling with the costs of long-term care,” Allman said. “In some cases, this may also save the state money – but the best part is that it can beef up the benefits available to the vet.”

Unlike Medicaid, the federal veteran programs are not required to seize family assets to help pay for the cost of care after a veteran passes away. Under law, Medicaid must try to recover its costs from client estates, which may require selling a family home. VA programs have no strings attached.

“Veterans earned their federal benefit with their military service,” said Allman, a Vietnam veteran himself. “They do not have to pay anyone back for the services we give them in return.”

NR 012-0430