



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services Office of the Commissioner

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Commissioner

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine, Governor
Members of the General Assembly
c/o Division of Legislative Automated Service

THROUGH: The Honorable John W. Marshall
Secretary of Public Safety

FROM: Vincent M. Burgess, Commissioner of Veterans Services

DATE: October 16, 2006

SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Department of Veterans Services on the
impact of the aging of the population on agency services

Pursuant to Va. Code §2.2-5510(A)(4), the Virginia Department of Veterans Services submits this annual report on the impact of the aging of the population on agency services.

Cc: The Honorable Marilyn B. Tavenner
Secretary of Health and Human Resources

Virginia Department of Veterans Services

***ANNUAL REPORT ADDRESSING THE
IMPACT OF THE AGING OF THE POPULATION
ON THE ABILITY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES
TO DELIVER SERVICES***

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BACKGROUND

Va. Code §2.2-5510(A)(4) requires that each state agency's strategic plan include "*An analysis of the impact that the aging of the population will have on its ability to deliver services and a description of how the agency is responding to these changes.*"

Va. Code §2.2-5510(A)(4) also requires that "*Based on guidance from the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, each agency shall report by October 1 of each year to the Governor and to the General Assembly its progress for addressing the impact of the aging of the population in at least five specific actions.*"

This report was developed in accordance with guidance from Secretary of Health and Human Resources Marilyn B. Tavenner in a memorandum dated August 25, 2006.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 1. To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If the agency can provide data that compares such numbers to numbers of senior citizens served in the past, please do so. If the agency lacks specific information about the numbers of senior citizens it serves, but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer senior citizens than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.**

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) lacks the automated systems necessary to readily compile data on the number of persons served that fall into the above age ranges. However, because of the nature of the service provided, the majority of the persons served by the Virginia Veterans Care Center and Virginia's two state veterans cemeteries are seniors.

As DVS opens new benefit service offices, care centers, and cemeteries (see #2 below) the Department will serve more senior citizens than it has in the past. Estimates and forecasts prepared by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) are most illuminating:

- The USDVA estimates that, in 2006, there were 737,600 veterans in the Commonwealth, or almost 10% of the state's population
 - Over 228,000 – or 31% – of these veterans were 65 years of age or older

- The number of Virginia veterans age 65 and older is forecast to rise through 2014, reaching a peak of 254,860, before beginning to decline
- The number of veterans in Virginia is expected to be just over 500,000 in 2033
 - Over 216,000 – or 43% - of these veterans will be aged 65 and over
- The number of Virginia veterans who are forecast to die each year will peak in 2008, at 16,698, and will then begin to decline
- The USDVA forecasts that 13,679 Virginia veterans will die in 2033

The USDVA estimates indicate that the Department of Veterans Services will need to retain, and even expand upon, the ability to serve seniors for the next quarter century and beyond.

2. Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency’s capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?

DVS provides services to Virginia’s veterans through four service delivery sections:

- Benefit Services – Assists veterans and eligible dependents in accessing federal and state veterans benefits through claims development and representation
 - Service is provided at 20 benefit service offices statewide, with two additional offices expected to open in FY2007
 - Because there is no age limit or statute of limitations when filing for veterans benefits, seniors may file claims for disabilities resulting from peacetime or wartime service, including service in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War
 - DVS has the capacity to meet current demand, but demand is expected to increase in the near future
 - Expanded marketing and outreach efforts, coupled with the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, are expected to increase the demand for assistance in preparing and filing disability claims
 - As this happens, DVS will request the appropriate additional resources to meet demand
- Care Center Services – Delivers skilled nursing and domiciliary care to veterans
 - Care is delivered at the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC), a 240-bed nursing home in Roanoke with 180 skilled nursing beds and 60 domiciliary care (assisted living) beds. The VVCC is adjacent to the Salem VA Medical Center
 - VVCC residents are primarily drawn from within 50 miles of Roanoke
 - Average occupancy is 93%, or 224 of 240 beds

- A waiting list is maintained when no beds are available
 - The Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) is under construction adjacent to the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, and is expected to open in July 2007 with 160 skilled nursing beds
 - An addition with 40 domiciliary care beds is planned, and state funding (35% of project costs) has been committed. However, it is unlikely that federal matching funds (65% of project costs) will be available before 2009
 - DVS expects that SBVCC residents will be primarily come from within 50 miles of Richmond
 - A waiting list will be established if demand exceeds the number of available beds
 - A third veterans care center, to be built in Hampton, is in the early planning stages
 - State funding (35% of project costs) has been committed, and DVS has applied for federal matching funds (65% of project costs) to construct a 200+ bed care center adjacent to the Hampton VA Medical Center
 - However, it is unlikely federal funds will be available before 2009
 - DVS does not have the capacity to meet current demand statewide
 - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) data indicates that Virginia's veterans population would support 1,700 care center beds
 - Even when the VVCC, SBVCC, and Hampton Roads Veterans Care Centers are complete, Virginia will only have a capacity of 600+ beds, leaving a shortfall of 1,000 beds
 - Accordingly, DVS will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a study to determine the need and location for future veterans care centers. This study will guide DVS efforts in planning for additional care centers
 - Because the majority of VVCC residents come from within 50 miles of Roanoke, the capacity of the VVCC appears adequate to meet the demand of this population
- Cemetery Services – Provides honorable burial and memorial services to veterans and eligible family members
 - Virginia operates two state veterans cemeteries
 - The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, in Amelia, performed 231 burials in FY06. The majority of the veterans buried came from within a 50 mile radius of Amelia
 - The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, in Suffolk, performed 478 burials in FY06. The majority of the veterans buried came from within a 50 mile radius of Suffolk
 - The Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery is in the early planning stages, and is expected to open in 2009. The cemetery is expected to be built in Dublin
 - Veterans in the northern part of the Commonwealth are served by national cemeteries
 - The USDVA operates Culpeper National Cemetery and Quantico National Cemetery, while the U.S. Army operates Arlington National Cemetery

- A USDVA goal is to place a national or state veterans cemetery within a 75-mile drive of the majority of America’s veterans
 - DVS does not have the capacity to meet current demand statewide, as there is no veterans cemetery in the southwest part of the Commonwealth
 - Most veterans in the northern part of the Commonwealth are served by national veterans cemeteries
 - However, it is unknown how long these cemeteries will have the capacity to serve Virginia veterans, or if veterans in the Shenandoah Valley and northwest part of the Commonwealth are adequately served
 - The capacity of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery is adequate to meet the demand of veterans living within a 75-mile radius of these cemeteries. At present burial rates, these cemeteries are expected to have the capacity to serve Virginia’s veterans for at least another 50 years
 - When built, veterans within a 75-mile radius of the Dublin area will be served
 - DVS will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a study to determine the need and location for future veterans cemeteries
- Education Services – Certifies that post-secondary educational institutions meet G.I. Bill funding and eligibility requirements, enabling veterans to use their G.I. Bill benefits to pursue educational opportunities
 - Under the Montgomery G.I. Bill, veterans have up to 10 years (active duty) or up to 10 or 14 years (selected reserve) after leaving military service to use their educational benefits
 - DVS has the capacity to meet current demand
 - Because veterans must use their education benefits within 10 or 14 years after leaving military service, education services are not heavily used by seniors
 - DVS expects that federal budget cuts will impact the ability of the department to deliver education services. However, this is not expected to significantly impact Virginia’s seniors

3. Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education; Public Safety; Recreation; Financial Security (including Housing); and Transportation.

- Health Care/Wellness
 - Care Center Services (see #2 above)

4. Identify the extent to which your agency provides “consumer-oriented” publications and websites online that are designed to be “senior-friendly.” If the information you currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.

Promotional literature advertising the services available at the Virginia Veterans Care Center and at Virginia’s two state-operated veterans cemeteries is specifically targeted to seniors, while other Department publications are designed to serve the veterans population at large. DVS publications are distributed at meetings of veterans service organizations, civic groups, etc., many of which are attended by seniors.

DVS held two “Veterans Expos” in 2004, four in 2005, and one in 2006. These events were heavily attended by seniors.

The Department’s website is WAI Level A compliant.

DVS has partnered with SeniorNavigator.org to list the Department’s services on the SeniorNavigator website.

5. Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia’s population.

The Department of Veterans Services has implemented, or plans to implement, the following services or programs to address the impact of the aging of Virginia’s population:

- Benefit Services
 - The department will request the resources to open new benefit services offices or to expand the service capacity of current offices as demand rises
- Care Center Services
 - The Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center, a 160-bed skilled care nursing home, will open in Richmond in 2007. A 40-bed domiciliary care addition is planned
 - A third veterans care center, to be built in Hampton, is in the early planning stages. This facility is expected to feature 200+ beds (mixture of skilled care and domiciliary care) but is not expected to open until after 2009
 - DVS will commission a report to identify the need for future care centers
- Cemetery Services
 - A third veterans cemetery, to be built in southwest Virginia, is in the early planning stages and is expected to open in 2009
 - DVS will commission a report to identify the need for future state veterans cemeteries