

# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES

**COMMISSIONER'S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

**TO**

**GOVERNOR GLENN YOUNGKIN,**

**SECRETARY CRAIG CRENSHAW,**

**AND**

**THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**December 1, 2024**

*Serving those who served*

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The Virginia Department of Veterans Services  
**COMMISSIONER'S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT**



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Attachments

1. Report on the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Grant Program
2. Report of the Military Spouse Liaison
3. Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services Report

## Mission, Vision, and Values

### MISSION

*To serve Virginia's veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard, Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves, and their family members, by ensuring they receive timely transition, employment and education assistance, benefits, health care and long-term care and recognition they have earned through service to our country and Commonwealth.*

### VISION

*The Virginia Department of Veterans Services will maximize services to make Virginia the best state in the Nation for veterans and their families to live, work, and raise a family.*

### VALUES

**EXCELLENCE:** Provide exemplary service to Virginia's veterans and their families.

**COMMITMENT:** An enduring commitment to helping Virginia's veterans and their families receive all earned federal and state benefits and creating an economic environment that promotes veteran-owned businesses and Virginia companies hiring veterans.

**INNOVATION:** Continually find new methods to reach and serve Virginia's veterans and their families.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Communicate with all stakeholders in a direct and sincere manner.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Support a climate of ownership at the lowest possible level.

## **Commissioner's Message**

This agency has been blessed for 97 years with support and leadership from our Executive Branch leaders, the Virginia General Assembly, and citizens. They have seen the value and commitment to support its veterans and families throughout their changing needs and the challenges that they face. This past year has similarly seen a continuation of changes, both among our veteran and family experience, and also within our agency, to meet these demands and better reach and serve the veteran community and our Commonwealth.

This year we completed the baseline functionality of the Virginia Veterans Network, a digital platform to deliver advice, services and support to Transitioning Service Members (TSMs), veterans, their families and survivors throughout their lives. Virginia is the proud home to one of the largest number of veterans and women veterans of any State in the nation. Without such a platform, we will be unable to reach a significant greater percentage of this population and scale our services to support them. The launch already has demonstrated a tremendous popular response by our service members and families considering transition, as well as our veterans and spouses seeking employment, accessing their benefits, or needing support or access to counseling for addiction, homelessness, or behavioral wellness. We are already working on next steps and making this a continuously improving network.

Our department for Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) has continued to advance efforts to reach those service members and spouses much earlier (1-2 years before separation or retirement) in their decision process. They have also continued to expand the number of Virginia Values Veterans (V3) employers by over 550 new companies. Continuing to evolve this program will be critical to draw the talent required to draw more veterans and spouses to Virginia and help spur the economic potential of our state.

VETE is responsible for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), with a long history of ensuring education benefits earned by those who's service during war and conflict were killed or critically disabled. The program came under threat of significant reduction this past year. With tremendous effort and support by our Executive leadership, Secretaries of Veterans and Defense Affairs and Education, members of the legislature, and significant active support of our veterans and families, the proposed reductions were voted down and the program fully restored. This "promise kept" to those families most impacted by war reinforces our commitment to the Veteran community and continue to benefit our state and our colleges and universities and add to retaining veteran and families in Virginia.

The Department of Veterans Services' Benefits division continues to be a leader nationally in providing expert counseling and support to veterans. Our team surpassed previous annual figures for claims and supporting documents submitted by nearly 64%. More importantly, due to the high caliber of expertise that our team brings to the detailed and confusing nature of claims preparation, Virginia's veterans continue to receive among the highest successful claims rates in the country.

Our department for Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) deals daily in serving our veterans and family members in greatest despair. Our programs have been recognized at the national level and modeled by other states. While only in its second year, our grants programs have already shown impact

and growth. Virginia was one of a dozen states funded in the inaugural Department of Veteran Affairs partnership agreement to build and expand suicide mortality review capacity. The DVS Housing and Criminal Justice team has expanded their work with veterans on jail diversion programs, re-entry programs, housing and treatment access.

Our capital programs are nation leading as well. After a late 2023 opening, we brought our third veterans care center (VCC), the Jones & Cabacoy VCC, in Virginia Beach, into full operational status. Meanwhile, the Davis & McDaniel VCC in Roanoke, earned a rating as the 5<sup>th</sup> best nursing home in Virginia by Newsweek magazine in their 2024 national ranking. Similarly, the VA's National Cemetery Administration presented its Operational Excellence Award to our state veterans cemetery in Dublin, one of only two awards issued annually.

None of the above is achievable without a team of talented, engaged, and dedicated professionals that work together as a high performing team. They continue to work on better outreach and communications with the veterans and families and welcome the feedback on evolving challenges and needs. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve alongside them serving those that serve us. I am confident that we will continue to do our Commonwealth proud in keeping Virginia the best place for our Veterans and families to live, work and raise their families.

Charles A. Zingler  
Commissioner

## DVS FY24 OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESULTS (OKRs)

### AGENCY OBJECTIVES: STAY, WORK AND THRIVE

DVS set agency objectives to grow the number of transitioning service members and families that **STAY** in the Commonwealth, enhance their career opportunities through **WORK** initiatives and maximize services to enable Virginia's veteran and military family population to **THRIVE**. The key results listed below support these objectives.

*DVS Key Result: Increase the community resources capability of DVS to support Virginia's Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) population by connecting them with needed resources through the Virginia Veterans Network (VVN).* The VVN is a virtual network which connects veterans and veteran families to organizations whose missions include providing services and support to veterans and create opportunities to share referral and service information. Two key lines of effort are increasing Virginia Veteran Community (VVC) membership in the VVN and Resource partners. Increasing access and availability will positively impact the VVC through vetted private resource partners that will address their dynamic needs within 50 miles of their residence.

*DVS Key Result: Increase the capability of the Department of Veterans Services to support Virginia's Veteran Community in the Virginia Veterans Network.* The VVN officially launched on Veteran's Day 2024. Prior to the launch the DVS team and contract partner conducted extensive testing to include beta tests and a pilot. At the time of the launch DVS had approximately 900 registered members. As of December 1, 2024, we have over 2,600 new users who have established over 1,000 resource connections. As we achieve larger participation in membership, DVS can provide better data on the Veteran population that will inform legislative actions designed to improve the Veteran Community across the Commonwealth.

*DVS Key Result: Increase participation in VMSDEP to 9,000 students per year.*

DVS is responsible for certifying eligibility for benefits under the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), which provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who have been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) as totally and permanently disabled, or at least 90 percent permanently disabled because of military service. Through outreach and working with our university partners, DVS enabled 8,339 survivors and dependents to utilize this program in 2024. Our goal is to grow to 9,000 by 2025. VMSDEP is a very strong incentive for qualifying veterans to remain in Virginia. It is crucial that VMSDEP remains a centerpiece of Virginia's offerings to the most deserving veterans and their survivors.

*DVS Key Result: Increase the number of V3 certified companies to 4,500.*

Through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, DVS fulfills its mission to educate and train employers throughout the Commonwealth on the value of Virginia's veterans, and to help employers connect with these veterans. We are committed to assisting employers recruit, hire, train, and retain veterans. As of September 30, 2024, there were 3,668 V3 certified employers. While efforts continued to recruit new companies, DVS focused its efforts on partnership development with V3 certified

employers this fiscal year to recruit more veterans. Efforts results in an increase of over 33% of Virginia veterans hired by V3 companies in FY24.

*DVS Key Result: Increase the number of V3 veterans hired by V3-certified companies to 20,000 per year.*

The transition from military service is not complete on the date of discharge. The V3 Program provides transition resources and assistance to veterans who now call Virginia home. V3 assists transitioning veterans in connecting with employment, education, entrepreneurial, and supportive services, and helps educate participating veterans and veteran services providers on available resources and opportunities. Through these initiatives, the number of Veterans assisted increased by over 85.72% this year, with more than 154,000 veterans hired through V3 since program inception in 2012.

*DVS Key Result: Integrate into the Federal Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to provide in-person briefings to 20,000 TAP participants per year.*

TAP classes include briefings on benefits, work transition, and entrepreneurship opportunities for transitioning veterans. DVS works with local base commanders and DoD TAP managers to allow DVS to brief in all TAP classes in Virginia, through formal partnerships and agreements. Currently, DVS' goal is to be in every TAP class at every installation as well as all virtual events and to brief 100% of the service members attending TAP. DVS team members briefed 5,694 participants in 2024 (through December 1).

*DVS Key Result: Increase the number of Skillbridge providers.*

The Virginia SkillBridge program allows transitioning service members to network with Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Certified employers offering 4-to-24-week internships to eligible applicants, with commander approval, up to six months before separation. Participation in a fellowship program while still serving in the military allows service members to gain marketable skills and experience to enhance their civilian career opportunities.

As of December 1, there were 132 Virginia SkillBridge-approved providers represent a dramatic increase in opportunities for our service members. In 2024, the Virginia SkillBridge program served over 81 active-duty service members. These service members were able to complete internships with some of Virginia's most sought-after employers whose industries range from cyber security to shipbuilding and construction. These internships led directly to high-paying careers for many of these service members.

A limiting factor for SkillBridge is the number of applicants – there were more approved providers (132 as of December 1) than service members (81 in 2024). Due to operational demands, military unit commanders may be reluctant to release service members to participate in SkillBridge.



## DVS Locations – as of December 1, 2024

Full contact information for each office is listed on our website: [www.dvs.virginia.gov](http://www.dvs.virginia.gov)

### State Veterans Offices

#### Benefits + VVFS

- 1 Abingdon
- 2 Big Stone Gap
- 3 Charlottesville
- 4 Danville
- 5 Fairfax
- 6 Fredericksburg 1
- 7 Front Royal
- 8 Hampton
- 9 Henrico
- 10 Loudoun
- 11 Lynchburg
- 12 Manassas
- 13 Norfolk
- 14 Petersburg, Virginia Community Resource Center
- 15 Salem VA Medical Center
- 16 South Hill
- 17 Springfield
- 18 Staunton
- 19 Virginia Beach - Oceana
- 20 Virginia Beach - Pembroke
- 21 Williamsburg
- 22 Wytheville

#### Benefits Only

- 23 Accomac
- 24 Arlington
- 25 Emporia
- 26 Fort Belvoir
- 27 Fort Gregg-Adams
- 28 Fredericksburg 2
- 29 Hampton VA Medical Center
- 30 Harrisonburg - JMU Valor Center
- 31 JBLE (Eustis)
- 32 JBLE (Langley)
- 33 Pentagon
- 34 Portsmouth
- 35 Quantico
- 36 Richmond VA Medical Center
- 37 Roanoke
- 38 Tazewell

#### Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Only

- 39 Blacksburg
- 40 Martinsville
- 41 Richmond
- 42 Suffolk
- 43 Warrenton

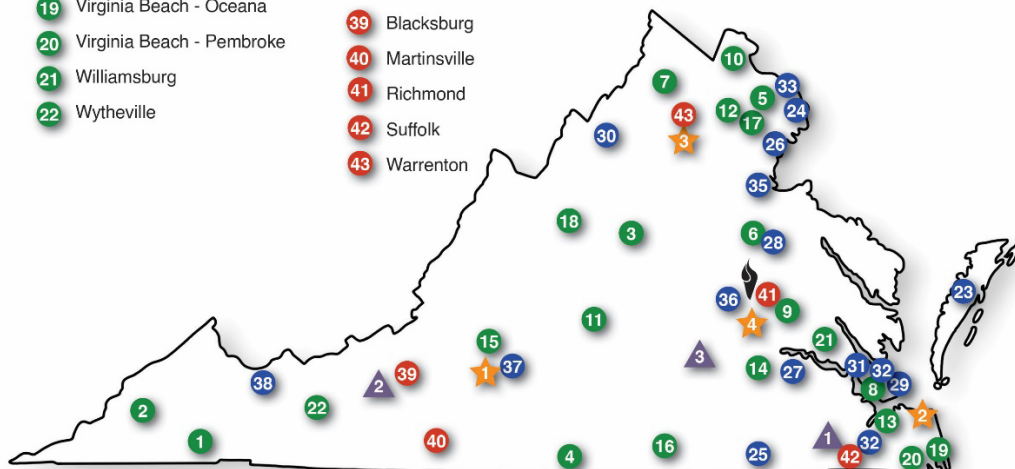
### Care Centers

- ★1 Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center, Roanoke
- ★2 Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center, Virginia Beach
- ★3 Puller Veterans Care Center, Vint Hill\*
- ★4 Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, Richmond

\* Facility to open in 2025.  
 Visit [dvs.virginia.gov](http://dvs.virginia.gov) for more information.

### Cemeteries

- ▲1 Albert G Horton, Jr., Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk
- ▲2 Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin
- ▲3 Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia



Map current as of October 2024

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## DVS BY THE NUMBERS

### BENEFIT SERVICES

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Benefit Services provides Virginia's veterans and their family members with accurate, timely, and ethical education and assistance in obtaining the federal and state benefits they have earned through their service and sacrifice.

<b>110,727</b>	Total claims and supporting documents submitted to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY24 (+ 43,079 from FY23)
<b>21,861</b>	Compensation and Pension claims submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY24 (- 966 from FY23)
<b>89,861</b>	Client contacts in FY24 (- 55,885 from FY23)
<b>\$6.28B</b>	Disability Compensation and Pension payments to Virginia veterans and dependents for Federal Fiscal Year 2023 (FFY23) (+\$626M from FFY22)

### VIRGINIA VETERAN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

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The Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program provides comprehensive coordination of and referrals to behavioral and rehabilitative health care and supportive services to Virginia's veterans, National Guard, Armed Forces Reserves, caregivers, and family members.

<b>2,937</b>	Veterans and family members served in FY24 (+820, FY23)
<b>2,033</b>	New Veteran and family members served in FY24 (+759, FY23)
<b>4,449</b>	Total individual services provided in FY24 (+1,617, FY23)
<b>562</b>	Total behavioral health services provided in FY24 (+246, FY23)
<b>143</b>	Total rehabilitative/medical services provided in FY24 (+87, FY23)
<b>3,266</b>	Total supportive services provided in FY24 (+1,169, FY23)
<b>181</b>	Individuals participating in peer support groups provided in FY24 (+90, FY23)
<b>1,251</b>	Individuals trained in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) by VVFS (-157, FY23)
<b>1,142</b>	Individuals trained in Military Cultural Competency Training by VVFS (-379, FY23)
<b>503</b>	Veterans who received Behavioral Health/Financial Assistance through Veterans Services Foundation (+201, FY23)

### **STATE APPROVING AGENCY FOR VETERANS EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The Virginia State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans Education and Training approves educational courses and programs of instruction provided by Virginia institutions to enable eligible veterans and their dependents to enroll and receive financial assistance (GI Bill benefits) from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). Because the SAA relies on federal funding, data is reported by FFY.

- 4<sup>th</sup>** Commonwealth's ranking among the states in the percentage of Veterans using their GI Bill benefits in FFY23 (*no change from FFY22*)
- \$786M** Amount of GI Bill benefits paid to Virginia recipients in FFY23 (+ \$107M *from FFY22*)
- 943** Instructional institutions in Virginia approved to provide training to Veterans and dependents in FFY23 (+0.43% *from FFY22*)

### **VIRGINIA MILITARY SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The VMSDEP provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became at least 90 percent disabled because of military service. Many VMSDEP beneficiaries also qualify for a stipend of up to \$2,200 per year to offset the cost of room, board, books, and supplies.

- 4,789** New applications for VMSDEP benefits received in FY24 (+10% *from FY23*)
- 4,680** New applicants approved for VMSDEP benefits in FY24 (+26.7% *from FY23*)
- 8,091** Unique students used VMSDEP benefits in FY24 (+32.2% *from FY23*)
- 4,800** Unique students received stipend award for FY24 (+44% *from FY23*)
- \$7,384,571** Value of stipends awarded for 2023-24 academic year (+49% *from FY23*)
- 40** Virginia public colleges and universities that applied VMSDEP benefits to students' accounts in FY24. Students used VMSDEP benefits at all 40 public institutions (*no change from FY23*)

### **VIRGINIA VALUES VETERANS (V3) PROGRAM**

The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program assesses, coordinates, and disseminates opportunities for connecting members of the armed forces and their spouses transitioning from military to civilian life by providing a pathway to employment, education, and entrepreneurship with V3 Certified Organizations. V3 increases employment opportunities and promotes economic development, by training and certifying organizations in veteran's workforce best practices while creating connectivity opportunity and activities.

<b>22,760</b>	Virginia veterans hired by V3 companies in FY24 (33.84% increase from 17,005 in FY23)
<b>564</b>	Companies became V3 Certified in FY24 (-53.96% decrease from 1,225 in FY23)
<b>1,441</b>	Referrals of veteran/transitioning service member/spouses to DVS service lines and partner organizations for direct services outside of employment, education, and entrepreneurship. (-1.97% decrease from 1,470 in FY23)
<b>199</b>	Visits to Virginia military installations to conduct outreach and work with TSMs and their spouses in FY24 (working back to pre-pandemic levels and a 155.12% increase from FY23)
<b>2,841</b>	Inquiries fielded and services provided to transitioning service members, Veterans and military spouses by V3T Transition Coordinators. (151.86% increase from FY23)

### **MILITARY MEDICS AND CORPSMEN (MMAC) PROGRAM**

The Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program provides pathways to careers and credentialing in civilian healthcare for former service members with healthcare-related training and experience.

<b>141</b>	Applicants for MMAC FY24 (+48.8% increase from 98 in FY23)
<b>43</b>	MMAC Hires reported in FY24 (-4.44% decrease from 45 in FY23)
<b>39</b>	No Medics and Corpsmen Left Behind Hires FY24 (-48% from 75 in FY23)
<b>10</b>	Leadership Hires FY23 (-62.53 % decrease from 26 in FY23)
<b>15</b>	Military Spouse Hires (-11.76% decrease from 17 in FY23)

## VIRGINIA VETERANS CEMETERIES

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Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries<sup>1</sup> serve the memorial and perpetual care needs of veterans and eligible dependents. Virginia's veterans cemeteries commemorate the personal sacrifice of those who served and those who stand ready to defend our freedom.

**2,143** Interments conducted at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk), the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia), and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin) in FY24 (-5% from FY23)

## VETERANS CARE CENTERS

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Virginia's Veterans Care Centers provide long-term care, Memory care/dementia care, and short-term rehabilitative care to Virginia's veterans. Domiciliary (assisted living) care is provided in Roanoke.

*Sitter & Barfoot Veteran Care Center — Richmond (adjacent to the Richmond VA Medical Center)*

**160** Beds in private rooms providing skilled nursing or post-acute skilled rehabilitative care for veterans transitioning back into the community

**40** Bed in private rooms in a secure memory care/dementia unit

**56,369** Patient days of nursing and memory care/dementia care provided in FY24 (77% capacity) (+1.5% from FY23)

*Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center — Roanoke (adjacent to the Salem VA Medical Center)*

**120** Beds in semi-private rooms providing skilled nursing care

**60** Beds in semi-private rooms in a secure memory care/dementia unit

**16** Beds in private rooms dedicated to providing post-acute skilled rehabilitative care for veterans transitioning back into the Community

**8** Beds in semi-private rooms providing assisted living/domiciliary care

**59,473** Patient days of nursing and memory care/dementia care provided in FY24 (80% capacity of 196 beds) (+5% from FY23)

**2,656** Patient days of assisted living care provided in FY24 (91% capacity of 8 beds) (+13% from FY23)

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<sup>1</sup> Cemeteries at Quantico, Culpeper, and Arlington are federal facilities and not under the purview of DVS.

***Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center — Virginia Beach***

**128** Beds in private rooms providing skilled nursing care (memory/dementia care services to begin in FY25)

**2,698** Patient days of nursing care provided in FY24 (6% capacity of 128 beds)

**VIRGINIA WAR MEMORIAL**

Honor our Veterans, Preserve our History, Educate our Youth, and Inspire Patriotism in All

**61,275** Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial (+9,245 from FY23)

**85,000** On-line (TV and Streaming) viewership of Commonwealth's Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies (+13,213 from FY23)

**320** Volunteers / Guests for Hill of Heroes (+45 from FY23)

## WHO ARE VIRGINIA’S VETERANS?

### POPULATION

**678,149** Estimated number of **Virginia Veterans** as of September 30, 2024 (*Source: USDVA, VetPop2023, Table 6L*)

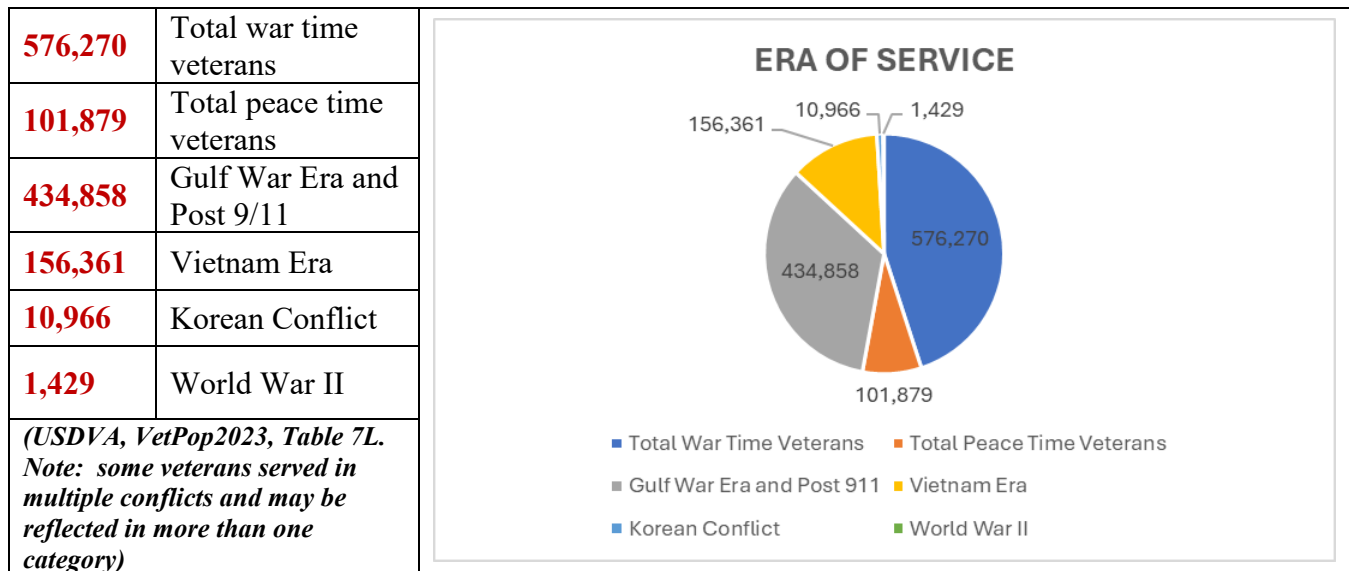
**110,420** Estimated number of **Women Veterans** – **16.3% of our veteran population**. Virginia leads the nation with the highest percentage of women veterans.

**118,026** **Number of Virginia veterans under 40**

**7<sup>th</sup>** **Virginia’s ranking in total veteran population.**

**3<sup>rd</sup>** **Percentage of veterans to total state population:** When factored in as a percentage of total population, we are second in the nation (behind Alaska).

### ERA OF SERVICE (AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2024)



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### EDUCATION & TRANSITION

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- 4th** Commonwealth's ranking among the states in terms of veterans using their GI Benefits in FFY23 (*No change from FFY22*).
- \$786M** Total G.I. Bill benefits paid to veterans in Virginia in FFY23 (*+\$107M from FFY22*).
- 943** Instructional institutions in Virginia approved to provide training to veterans and dependents in FFY22 (*+.043% from FFY22*).
- 28,923** Veterans, transitioning service members (TSMs), and spouses reached through the V3 Transitions Program's outreach efforts in FY24.
- 2,841** Inquiries fielded and services provided to transitioning service members, Veterans and military spouses by V3T Transition Coordinators in FY24.

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### DISABLED VETERANS

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- 249,289** Veterans receiving USDVA compensation and pension benefits as of September 30, 2023
- \$6.289B** Compensation and pension payments to Virginia veterans in FFY23 (*up 11% from \$5.66B in FFY22*).

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### HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING

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- 386** Estimated number of homeless veterans in Virginia on a single night in January 2023 (*-9, 2022*)
- 102** Estimated number of unsheltered veterans in Virginia on a single night in January 2023 (*+55, 2022*)
- 642** Number of homeless veterans housed statewide in FY23 (*+9, FY22*)
- 237** Veterans experiencing homelessness who received financial assistance through VVFS in FY23 (*+9, 2022*)

NOTE: 2023 numbers reflect the most recent data released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which lags 1+ years.



## Veterans’ Economic Impact on Virginia

Virginia’s veterans have a significant positive economic impact on the Commonwealth, bringing **\$20.57B in FFY23** in federal funding through compensation and pension payments, construction expenditures, educational and vocational rehabilitation employment expenditures, medical expenditures, and military retiree pay.

### US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPENDITURES IN VIRGINIA DURING FFY23

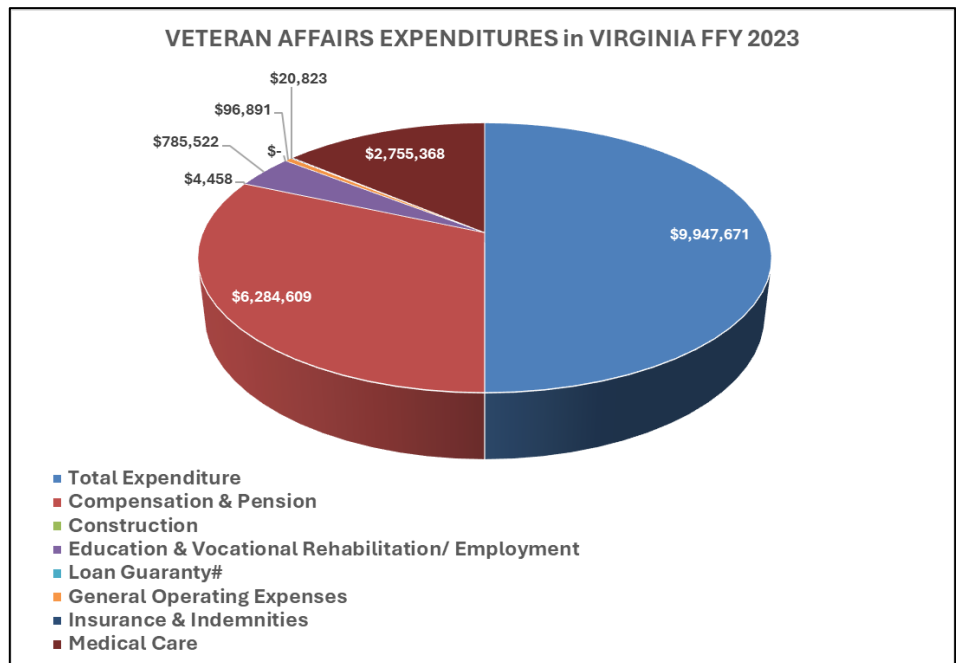
**\$9.47B** Total USDVA expenditures in Virginia

**\$6.28B** Compensation and pension

**\$2.75B** Medical Care

**\$785M** Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and employment

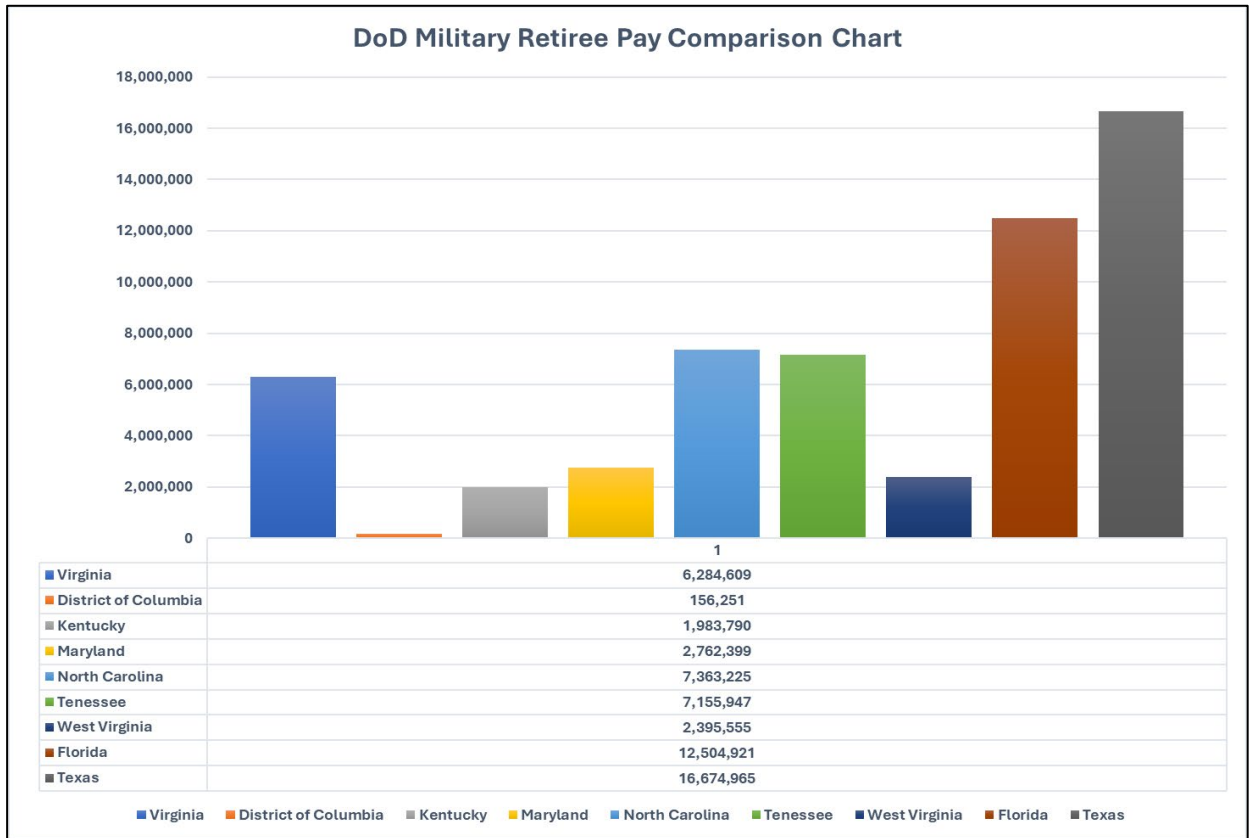
**\$118M** Other General Operating, Insurance & Indemnities, Construction)<sup>2</sup>

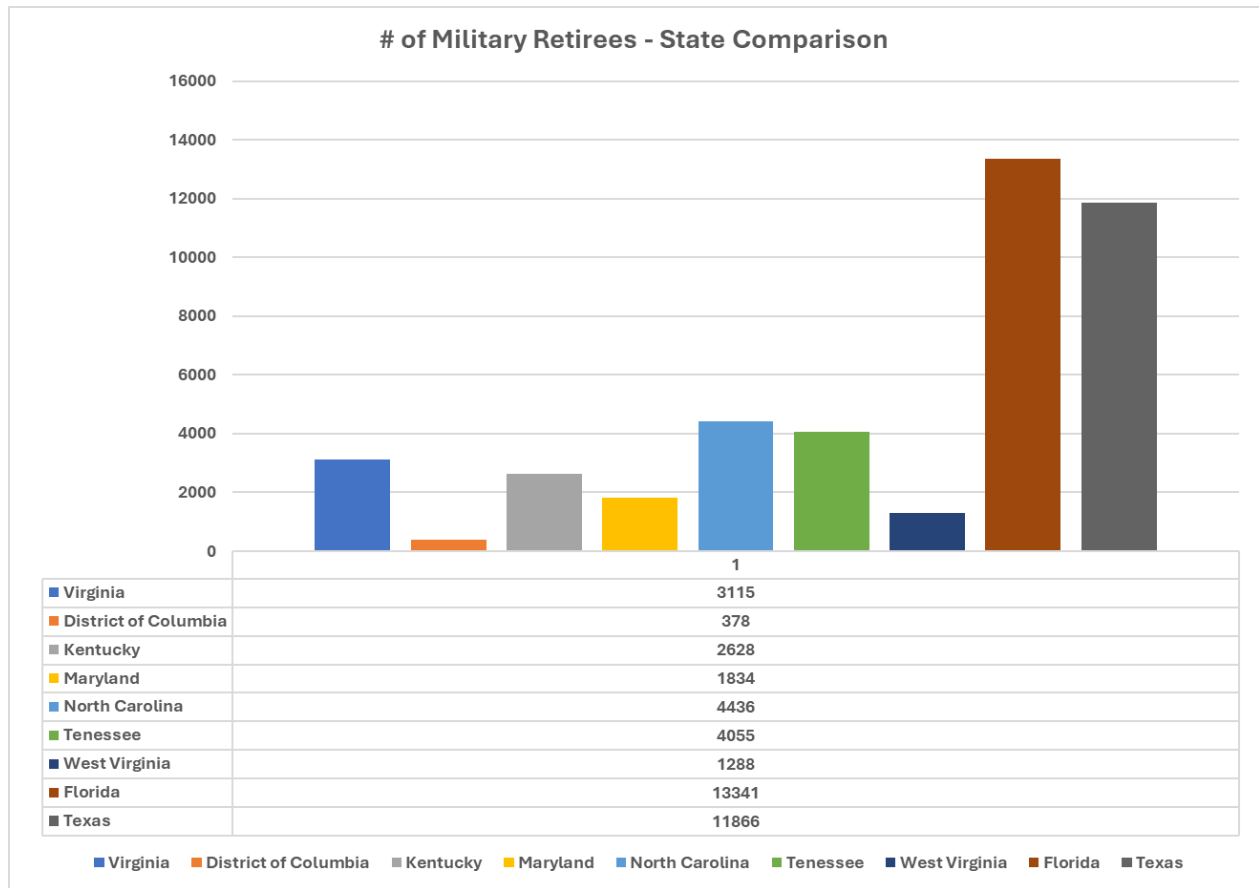


<sup>2</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, FFY23 Summary of Expenditures by State.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MILITARY RETIREE PAY IN VIRGINIA IN FFY23**

**\$5.99B** Virginia ranks third in the nation for military retirement pay received and number of state's overall veteran retirees. (Department of Defense, Office of the Actuary, Statistical Report on the Military Retirement System, FFY23).





# Benefits Services

## MISSION

*To provide Virginia's veterans and their family members with accurate, timely, and ethical education and assistance in obtaining the federal and state benefits they have earned through their service and sacrifice.*

## FY24: TOP 3 – ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES

1. The Benefits service line created and fielded several innovative initiatives in FY24. Taking service line level Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and extending them down to the employee level, they created an Individual OKR template for our claims representatives, allowing leadership the ability to precisely measure the efficiency of our employees and determine which employees had excess capacity and which were overworked. Utilizing this data, they relocated some customer-facing positions as they became vacant, and simultaneously utilized online video appointment capabilities to connect customers in high demand areas with representatives across the state who had the capacity to see them sooner. Benefits also created and implemented a flexible work schedule policy, extending our office hours for customers in some locations (e.g. 6:30 am appointments at military bases). They built a professional development course program and started but have not yet completed a wholistic review of our training program (utilizing VSF approved funds), development of a legal-based customer relations management software for our attorneys and connecting existing software systems together to allow seamless flow of information.
2. Despite the innovation and successes, Benefits continues to lose skilled front-line claims professionals to private sector and Federal jobs offering more pay and better benefits. In FY24, a 40% turnover in these positions continued to challenge our ability to train effectively and meet customer demand, leaving us with 71% of our customer-facing employees with 4 years or less experience. With fewer trained personnel available at a given time, production, growth and outreach were significant challenges this year. Supported by the HB1759 Strategic Plan Working Group Report recommendation, the service line responded to this issue by spending over 4 months creating a detailed, seven-step Career Development Plan and accompanying policy document, which outline performance-driven salary increases, while balancing the cost to the Commonwealth. The plan addresses staff retention issues by ramping up pay to competitive levels by year 3 for vulnerable staff who perform well and meet specific requirements. A request for funding for this initiative was submitted for the FY26 Budget.
3. FY24 saw a troubling trend for Benefits with a notable increase in threats and physical security incidents in our offices. Many of Virginia's veterans are dealing with PTSD issues on top of the difficulties of dealing with their other disabilities and the stresses of normal life. While DVS is looked to for assistance with some of those difficulties, some veterans remain frustrated with both the pace and complexity of the compensation process. Unfortunately, some have come to our offices with attitudes and demeanors that result in them verbally abusing, threatening and even assaulting our employees. As a result, staff security remains a top concern for DVS employees and leadership alike. Benefits has provided verbal de-escalation training to all employees, has established a Security Guard contract to provide additional security to offices when deemed appropriate, and has even banned certain veterans from services where necessary. They have also initiated an effort to consider security when looking at renewing property leases. Some work has also been completed to identify and implement some necessary security upgrades in existing offices, but no funding has been available to complete all the work necessary.

## ACTIVITIES

Benefits Services assists Virginia's veterans in gaining access to the federal and state benefits. These benefits and services include:

- Compensation for service-connected disabilities or death;
- Income-based pensions;
- Survivor pensions;
- Aid and Attendance claims;
- Appeals assistance and legal representation;
- Burial benefits, flags and markers;
- VA Health Care eligibility.

Team Benefits provided needed services to develop and submit claims to assist veterans and their families in Virginia. The team filed 21,861 disability compensation claims, with a total of 110,727 submissions. The team met and worked with 15,992 new veteran clients during FY24. Outreach to Transitioning Service Members (TSM) increased through briefings on military installations, which ultimately led to 2,269 Benefits Delivered at Discharge claims developed and filed during FY24. The Benefits team's efforts contributed to the \$5.99 billion in federal compensation and disability payments to Virginia veterans in FFY 2023. This is a \$.33M (6%) increase over FFY22.

Benefits team members also refer veterans to other service lines. The client interview process includes a suicide screening that may result in a referral to the VVFS Program, a community partner, or a VA Medical Center (VAMC). Veterans Services Representatives (VSR) screened 13,673 veterans for suicide risk in FY24, which is 98% of the new veterans we served this year. The VSRs and Veterans Services Administrators also refer veterans with a 90% or higher rating to the VMSDEP to determine potential eligibility for the program.

The East Region has continued to build and strengthen their partnership with the U.S. Navy's Regional Transition Assistance Program which is consolidated at the Naval Operating Base, Norfolk. On average, Benefits staff provided benefits information every week to 350 transitioning active duty USN/USMC service members and their families, alongside their VVFS and Virginia Education, Transition & Employment (VETE) teammates. Additionally, Benefits staff seized the opportunity to partner with the newly commissioned Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center in Virginia Beach and established an offsite location providing easy access to benefits and claims assistance for some of our most vulnerable veterans and their families, negating the need to travel. Benefits staff also expanded services in Gloucester VA, by negotiating free space at the Gloucester County Library where they now regularly provide benefits and claims assistance, again reducing the need for these veterans to travel for their services.

In the West Region, Benefits further developed a new partnership formed in FY23 with James Madison University's Valor and Resource Center. Securing a full-time office, Benefits staff served the Harrisonburg veteran community, JMU veterans and dependent student population while also participating in the university's diverse veteran outreach events. Benefits staff collaborated extensively with Valor Center to market information about the existence of our services to the greater Harrisonburg veteran population. Other West offices have continued to increase their emphasis on responding to and liaising with incarcerated veterans and their counselors, helping with potential VA Benefits. Specifically, this has been accomplished by the offices of Lynchburg, Tazewell, Big Stone Gap and Staunton who service those areas in the proximity of the Dillwyn, Pocohontas, Red

Onion and Augusta Correctional Facilities. The West region offices also played an important role in the deployment of video appointment services via the scheduling and appointment software, offering multiple representatives to test the initial deployment. The West Region offices that are either co-located with a VA Medical Center or rely on referrals from the local VA Clinic successfully worked with and helped our partners educate the veterans on how to best receive services from us while promoting online video appointments. Once deployed, offices in Abingdon, Big Stone Gap, Tazewell and Lynchburg took on significant work by becoming video overflow offices, taking video appointments from veterans across the state, thereby contributing to an increase in services for all of Virginia's veterans.

The North Region spent 2024 on steady ground and continued to expand partnerships within the region. After opening the 9th office in the region in May of 2023 in Arlington, the team worked hard to build the client base for that office and take pressure off the Fairfax and Springfield offices. The Arlington office has proven to be the perfect complement to our office within the Pentagon and both offices have been working on building relationships on Joint Base Myers / Henderson Hall. Outreach continued to be a priority for the North in 2024 with team members attending several events in the Pentagon, on Fort Belvoir, with the National Science Foundation, the Secret Service and with several state and local organizations such as VDOT in Fairfax and with the Loudoun County Community Veterans Engagement Board. Turnover in the North continued to be an issue in 2024 with VSRs leaving for higher paying jobs in the area or moving onto retirement, leaving 35% of employees in the North region with less than 1-year of experience in their job.

Benefits Central Region continued to develop an outstanding partnership with the Fredericksburg Massapanox Health Care Clinic, providing offsite services from our Fredericksburg office five times per month. Building on this relationship, the Central Region has secured an office location in the VA's new Fredericksburg Health Care Center, opening in March 2025. The 470,000+ sq ft center will replace three smaller Fredericksburg clinics and our new office at this location will present a tremendous opportunity for serving veterans and families in the area.

In August, twenty-one employees from our Central Region team, the VDVS Appeals Team attorneys and several other DVS service lines collaborated with the Petersburg Virginia Community Resource Center and McGuire Woods Pro Bono Team to host a Veteran Wills Clinic. This Clinic provided an opportunity for veterans to obtain free assistance with end-of-life planning by creating or modifying wills, and successfully served the estate planning needs of 38 veterans in one day.

The Benefits Center of Excellence (COE) houses the Benefits service line's quality assurance, data and performance metrics, and process improvement functions. As part of the quality assurance function, the COE reviews all claims submitted by VSRs to ensure legal requirements, policies, and procedures are consistently met thereby ensuring the maximum opportunity for veterans' claims to be granted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). COE Claims Specialists not only provide a quality review of all submissions but also monitor submission errors to identify trends that may provide opportunities for further training. This year, the COE developed and implemented improved workload management and tracking tools. These IOKRs (Individual Objectives and Key Results) assign efficiency scores by measuring the volume of work completed at all offices. The efficiency scores assist in identifying less utilized offices or individuals having resources to assist offices and individuals being challenged by high workloads.

Training and compliance with VA standards are important components to the continued success of Benefit Services. The Training Team is comprised of a training manager and three training specialists who conduct all VA

accreditation, professional and continuation training for 135 Benefits personnel. A week-long Basic Training course is attended by all new personnel followed by a proficiency exam which must be passed before new employees work independently with Veterans. During FY24, the Training Team conducted eight Basic Training Courses, nine Proficiency test sessions, and facilitated training 20 employees across 5 different professional development courses. From claims basics to advanced veterans law topics, to customer training, and even training trainers, the Training Team spent over 200 hours developing the expertise of our employees. In FY24, the Training Team added a VSR assessment process, utilizing Assistant Regional Managers to conduct regular individual assessments of VSR performance both to improve their performance and to inform our training process. In addition, the training team has started, but not completed a Training Gap Analysis project with the intent of finding efficiencies, and improvements in how we train our VSRs.

Appeals Team staff are well-versed in the complex area of veterans' law. Comprised of six Appeals Attorneys, one Appeals Specialist, a Legal Liaison, an Administrative Assistant, and the Director of Appeals, the Appeals Team uses legal expertise to advocate for veterans challenging unfavorable VA decisions. In addition to representing veterans and their families before the VA Regional Office and the Board of Veterans Appeals, the Appeals Team provides direct advisory support to DVS employees. This provides a real-time training opportunity for employees to learn more about the law, while also ensuring a higher quality of appeals filed by state offices.

The Appeals Team is also active outside its role in disability appeals. For example, the Legal Liaison serves as a conduit between VDVS and providers of free or discounted legal services to veterans, such as university clinical programs, law firms, other governmental agencies, and non-profits. When veterans seek legal assistance outside the scope of VDVS' many programs, the Legal Liaison helps facilitate referrals to organizations that provide services the agency does not. The Legal Liaison also coordinates clinical events in which free legal services are provided to veterans and their families. In 2024, VDVS worked with McGuire Woods, a law firm in the Richmond area with an active pro bono program, to provide wills and estates documents to veterans in Petersburg, VA. During FY24, the Appeals Team conducted 452 hearings at both the VA Regional Office and Board of Veterans Appeals. Of those hearings, 99 percent were conducted virtually, allowing veterans who lack a means of travel to attend their scheduled hearings. The Appeals Team also wrote and filed 497 Informal Hearings Presentations (IHPs), or legal briefs. During FY24, the Appeals Team's advocacy resulted in a total of roughly \$6.2 Million in retroactive benefits for DVS clients.

## **PARTNERSHIPS, INNOVATION & ENGAGEMENT**

In FY24, Benefits continued their partnership with the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) which helps ensure veterans can pursue appealed VA decisions to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC). They also continued partnerships with William & Mary Law School, who provide a veteran law course and claims-writing course for selected staff. A new partnership this year through our Manassas office is our connection to and collaboration with the newly created Secret Service Veterans Service Department. In addition to meeting and briefing at the Secret Service Veterans Summit each year, Benefits hopes to engage more regularly to provide information and services.

Benefits continued to search for ways to better engage our community, improve availability to our services and reach underserved areas. However, they were hindered in some aspects by employee retention issues, driving them to leverage technology to find more efficient methods and means of engagement, while still attending high payoff

marketing events such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day. In August, they stood up a new Virtual Contact Center (VCC), consisting of an automated phone system, new communications software and existing staff working the center part-time. The center allowed veterans to use one phone number to find information on making appointments, get connected with one of our 38 office locations, get connected to other service lines or speak with a VCC representative if they felt stuck or were unsure where to go. In the first three months, our VCC on-call staff assisted 287 of these veterans, getting them connected to offices and services they were unable to find themselves. Also, by leveraging the 3500+ appointments per month made through our veteran appointment software launched in FY23, they fielded Zoom video appointment capability for all offices between July and October. Utilizing smart scheduling within our appointment software, they matched veterans in our busiest areas (particularly NOVA & Hampton Roads) with representatives in some of our less busy offices. The result was a 10% increase in appointments made (3900+ per month now), quicker appointments for veterans choosing a video appointment (2-3 weeks sooner on average for those selecting video appointments), and a 31% average increase in VSR productivity in the offices they targeted.

Benefits established three new Benefit offices during FY24. These are located at James Madison University’s Valor Center (previously a Staunton Itinerate site), Joint Base Langley (previously a JB Eustice itinerate), and Fredericksburg 2 (which will become Fredericksburg Health Care Center in FY25). Each of these full-time locations now offer greater access to services for Virginia’s veterans. In addition, Benefits maintained 42 itinerant locations this year, including 1 new location at the Gloucester library. However, we were forced to temporarily pause services at multiple sites at different times of the year due to staff turnover. When active, each of these locations offered full claims services at various community venues between one day per month up to three days per week, depending on location, reducing the need for veterans to drive extended distances to seek assistance.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
Compensation & Pension Claims submitted to USDVA	19,726	22,827	21,861
All Claims submitted to USDVA	86,847	67,648 <sup>3</sup>	110,727
Client contacts	275,915	145,746 <sup>4</sup>	89,861
Number of offices	34	36 <sup>5</sup>	38
Itinerant sites	41	43	42

<sup>3</sup> The Benefits tracking system and methodology was upgraded in FY23, affecting Claims (other than Compensation and Pension), Contacts and Evidence numbers. The lower numbers in FY23 should not be interpreted as a decline in services. Compensation & Pension Claims were unaffected.

<sup>4</sup> The Benefits tracking system and methodology was upgraded in FY23, affecting Claims (other than Compensation and Pension), Contacts and Evidence numbers. PACT Act implementation also generated an increase in contact numbers from veterans seeking information. The lower numbers in FY24 should not be interpreted as a decline in services. Compensation & Pension Claims were unaffected

<sup>5</sup> The Strasburg benefits office relocated to Front Royal in FY23. The total office number includes both Strasburg and Front Royal in FY23 since data was reported for both.



# Veterans Education, Transition, & Employment

## **FY24: TOP 4 – ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES**

1. The VMSDEP team set impressive new processing timelines. Despite a notable rise in applications driven by increased awareness and programmatic changes, the team has managed to process requests within an average of just one business day. This is a remarkable achievement, especially considering the standard processing timeframe is 10 business days. This efficiency is even more impressive given that staffing levels have not been adjusted annually to accommodate the surge in requests.
2. The V3 program in coordination with the Virginia Chamber Foundation established a new partnership with the Marine Corps Base Quantico (MCB Quantico). This location now participates in a monthly Hire Vets Now (HVN) employment event, which is more frequent than any other installation partnership via HVN events. In addition, the V3 Program hosts bi-monthly “Employer Panels” with at least four V3 Certified Employers to share insight about industry trends, recruiting preferences, and question-answer sessions. This relationship has yielded securing V3 Certified employers participation in Military Spouse Employment Events on MCB Quantico.
3. The V3 Program revived its MOU relationship with American Corporate Partners (ACP) to provide career coaching, entrepreneurship and mentorship assistance to veterans and their families. Nearly 40 employers have been referred to ACP to establish mentorship opportunities for Service Members, Veterans, and their families.
4. The V3 Program has entered a review and maintenance phase to facilitate the re-launch of the recertification and recommitment process for Virginia employers. This process will provide employers with the opportunity to reassess their hiring goals, evaluate their ongoing participation, and reaffirm their commitment.

## **STATE APPROVING AGENCY FOR VETERANS’ EDUCATION & TRAINING**

### **MISSION**

*Enable access to post-secondary education opportunities for veterans and eligible family members.*

### **ACTIVITIES**

The State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans Education and Training, operating under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), reviews, evaluates, and approves post-secondary education and training programs offered by educational institutions, businesses, and industries in Virginia, helping veterans and eligible family members to use their GI Bill® benefits to attain their educational goals.

The SAA provides support and supervision for 943 education and training institutions. While some offer only one program, many offer multiple programs, with each program requiring separate approval. The SAA must approve programs before veterans and eligible family members can enroll and receive financial assistance from the VA through the GI Bill®. In addition, the SAA ensures compliance with federal and state education regulations through on-site visits to active institutions.

The SAA conducts risk-based surveys, awards actions for accuracy, and ensures payments made to eligible veterans are within VA regulations to verify enrollment data. The Virginia SAA FFY24 cooperative agreement required 90% of assigned surveys to be conducted by September 15, 2024. This year, the SAA conducted and completed 100% of the assigned surveys before July 15. Additionally, the SAA completed almost 450 approvals that expired this fiscal year.

The SAA celebrated the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the GI Bill in partnership with the Virginia Association of School Certifying Officials (VASCO) where we highlighted the efforts of dedicated SCOs with the Admiral John Harvey Career Achievement in Military Education Excellence Award (Dr. Latoya Sivell, Northern Virginia Community College), the Annie Walker Education Service of Excellence Award (William Brown, ECPI), and the Institution Award (Reynolds Community College).

SAA’s secondary mission is outreach to veterans and family members, making them aware of all the various education and training programs and eligibility criteria. Outreach is conducted through job fairs, military bases, and veteran’s events hosted by DVS around the Commonwealth. Staff conducted one-on-one discussions on military bases with veterans, service members scheduled to retire or be discharged from the military, and family members. The conversations cover VA educational benefits, approved facilities, how to apply, On-the-Job (OJT) and apprenticeship opportunities, instructions to start the Post-9/11 GI Bill® and Transfer of Entitlement benefits for an eligible dependent.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FFY22</b>	<b>FFY23</b>	<b>FFY24</b>
Education and training institutions supported	962	939	943
Educational program approval actions	7405	14,123	7006
Number approved/% approved	6482/88%	13,487/95%	6706/98%
Other approval actions	2178	2381	2077
Number approved/% approved	1967/90%	2293/96%	2155/96%
Educational institution compliance/risk-based visits	56	42	36
% of required compliance/risk-based visits completed	100% <sup>6</sup>	100% <sup>7</sup>	100%
Veteran student population	49,558	44,045 <sup>8</sup>	46,150

Note: Data is reported by the federal fiscal year (FFY) due to the SAA being federally contracted.

<b>SAA Internal Performance Measures</b>	<b>FFY23</b>	<b>FFY24</b>
Process 100% of GI Bill approval requests within 30 days of receipt	99% <sup>9</sup>	99%
Complete 100% of Veterans Affairs assigned compliance visits	100%	100%

<sup>6</sup> The VA contract requires the SAA to complete 90% of the 56 assigned compliance visits.

<sup>7</sup> The VA contract requires the SAA to complete 90% of the 42 assigned risk-based surveys. This is the first year the SAA was assigned risk-based surveys instead of compliance visits.

The VA contract requires the SAA to complete 90% of the 36 assigned risk-based surveys.

<sup>8</sup> Number of Veterans receiving G.I. Bill benefits in Virginia as of April 2024. This does not include Veterans who attended school but have not received GI Bill Benefits payment. The final count for FFY24 should be available in March 2025.

<sup>9</sup> The FY24 cooperative agreement requires 90% of approvals to be processed on time.

## **VIRGINIA MILITARY SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATION PROGRAM (VMSDEP)**

### **MISSION**

*Provide education benefits to spouses and children of qualified military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled because of military service. Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard.*

### **ACTIVITIES**

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) waives tuition and required fees at Virginia public colleges and universities for qualified survivors and dependents. Some VMSDEP beneficiaries also receive a stipend to partially offset the cost of room, board, books, and supplies. The dependents must be a spouse or child (between the ages of 16 and 29), of a military service member who, while serving as an active duty member in the U. S. Armed Forces, Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard, during military operations against terrorism, on a peacekeeping mission, as a result of a terrorist act, or in any armed conflict, was killed or is missing in action or is a prisoner of war, or of a veteran who has been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled, and has been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Domiciliary or physical presence requirements also apply and are detailed in the Code of Virginia.

Eligibility for VMSDEP benefits include dependents of veterans with non-combat service-connected disabilities. Two tiers of benefits now exist: Tier 1 waives tuition and mandatory fees for the dependents of veterans who are rated at least 90% with permanent disabilities, but the beneficiaries do not receive a stipend; Tier 2 beneficiaries are the dependents of the veterans or service members who meet all the previous criteria but are also related to combat-related disabilities. Tier 2 beneficiaries receive the stipend as well as the waiver.

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund (the Fund) provides the Tier 2 stipend funding. The stipend partially offsets room, board, books, and supplies. The stipend amount may vary based on determinations by the Virginia General Assembly, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), and the amount appropriated to the Fund.

Since July 1, 2019, the number of applications submitted has increased by +296%, and the total number of beneficiaries has grown by +531%. Based on the current average cost of tuition and mandatory fees at Virginia's public colleges and universities, each dependent would receive over +\$56,000 in waivers for a 4-year degree.<sup>10</sup>

In FY24, VMSDEP continued to use the application portal to administer the program with support from all DVS staff, SCHEV, applicants and the schools. The portal has allowed schools and students to see benefits

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<sup>10</sup> The +\$56,000 amount is based on the average tuition and all mandatory fees costs for in-state undergraduates listed in the [2023-24 Tuition and Fees Report](#).

usage in real-time, making the approval process more efficient over the last year.

The SAA staff conducted VMSDEP outreach at Fort Gregg-Adams, Joint Base Langley- Eustis, and Fort Belvoir. Staff disseminated information about the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program through multiple communications channels, including:

- DVS website;
- SCHEV website;
- State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training listserv;
- Virginia public college and university websites and catalogs;
- “*Opportunities: Preparing for college guide and workbook*” created by SCHEV and the Educational Credit Management Corporation annually. Printed copies are distributed to students and guidance counselors free of charge, and an electronic version is on the SCHEV website;
- DVS-developed VMSDEP informational brochure; and
- Direct outreach to veterans whose disability rating and period of service would potentially make their dependents eligible for VMSDEP benefits.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
New Applications Submitted	4,511	4,354	4,789
New Applications Approved	3,499	3,695	4,680
Unique students using VMSDEP benefits	4,451	6,120	8,091
Unique students receiving stipend	2,346	3,338	4,800
Total stipend dollars awarded	\$2,833,654	\$4,950,572	\$7,384,571
Outreach Activities	2	14	16

## **MILITARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE INITIATIVE (MEWI)**

### **MISSION**

*The Military Education and Workforce Initiative (MEWI) assists Veterans and service members with their transition from active duty to the workforce by providing a pathway to education, training, certifications, and the technology needed to achieve their academic endeavors. MEWI enhances employment opportunities for Virginians who have served in the United States Military and their families.*

### **ACTIVITIES**

In 2024, MEWI continued its partnership with the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) and Tech for Troops assisting military-affiliated students across Virginia. In partnership with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), MEWI developed the Virginia Veterans Laptop Project (VVLP), as a first-in-the-nation initiative, the VVLP provided laptop computers to every community college in Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University. MEWI, through the VVLP, provided a total of 490 computers to military-affiliated students across the Commonwealth. Additionally, MEWI and the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) formed a new collaborative initiative by providing 92 laptop computers to VMSDEP beneficiaries across the Commonwealth.

In demand, high-paying careers are made possible by industry-leading educational certifications made available to veterans, spouses, and active-duty service members free of charge through the Department of Veteran Services’ partnership with the Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA), Altria Group, and the Veteran Service Foundation. Through these partnerships, MEWI currently offers 11 certifications and credentialing opportunities at no cost to the service member or dependent.

Continuing our efforts in offering no-cost credentialing and certification opportunities to our military-affiliated student population, MEWI created the Eastern Education Project in partnership with the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII), and Tidewater Community College. Through this initiative, industry-leading certifications are offered at no cost to the student.

The DoD-approved Department of Veterans Services, Virginia SkillBridge program allows transitioning service members to network with Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Certified employers offering 4-to-24-week internships to eligible applicants, with commander approval, up to six months before separation. Participation in a fellowship program while still serving in the military allows service members to gain marketable skills and experience to enhance their civilian career opportunities.

Currently, 138 Virginia SkillBridge-approved providers represent a dramatic increase in opportunities for our service members. In 2024, the Virginia SkillBridge program served over 81 active-duty service members. These service members were able to complete internships with some of Virginia’s most sought-after employers whose industries range from cyber security to shipbuilding and construction. These internships have led directly to high-paying careers for many of these service members proving that Virginia is the place for veterans to **STAY, WORK, and THRIVE**.

A limiting factor for SkillBridge is the number of applicants – there were more approved providers (138 in FY24) than service members (81). Due to operational demands, military unit commanders may be reluctant to release service members to participate in SkillBridge. Additionally, DoD has issued new enrollment guidelines for employers and new partners. The program will transition to structured application enrollment periods, with a Fall Enrollment Period from 1 October to 1 December and a Spring Enrollment Period from 1 February to 1 April. The changes will also affect employers renewing their previously approved agreements.

Annual Services Provided	FY22	FY23	FY24
Laptop Distribution	136	254	582
Student Veteran/Spouse Certifications	117	79 <sup>11</sup>	45
Virginia SkillBridge Employers	60	91	138

<sup>11</sup> This decrease in Student Veteran/ Spouse Certifications is due to the exhaustion of Altria grant funds in FY24.

## **VIRGINIA VALUES VETERANS (V3) PROGRAM**

### **MISSION**

The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program assesses, coordinates, and disseminates opportunities for connecting members of the armed forces and their spouses transitioning from military to civilian life by providing a pathway to employment, education, and entrepreneurship. V3 increases employment opportunities and promotes economic development, by training and certifying organizations in veteran's workforce best practices while creating connectivity opportunity and activities.

### **ACTIVITIES**

The V3 Program connects transitioning members of the armed forces, spouses, and dependents to Certified V3 Employers who offer pathways to employment, education, and entrepreneurship. After several years of operating independently, the Department of Veterans Services decided to merge transition services with Certified V3 employer operations for better alignment of V3 service offerings to veterans and their dependents.

V3 continues to be a national leader in training employers to recruit, hire, train and retain military job seekers. Since its initial launch as a pilot program, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program has educated thousands of individuals and certified over 3,000 organizations on why hiring veterans is the best business decision they can make.

Transition from military service is not complete on the date of a service member's discharge; the process of transition may take years beyond the actual transition date. The V3 program offers a suite of services applicable to each veteran's and transitioning service member's unique journey. The V3 team serves as the guide and entry point to all of what the Department of Veterans Services and the Commonwealth have to offer for veterans, Transitioning Service Members (TSMs), and military families.

In FY24, V3 connected with veterans, transitioning military, and spouses through a variety of outreach methods and hired over 135,000 veterans. As a national leader in training employers to recruit, hire, and retain veterans, V3 remains a preferred provider with both the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI). V3 continued its mission to training V3 Certified Organizations by conducting 31 training events in FY24.

The V3 Program continued to strengthen its partnership with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Virginia Chamber Foundation through partnership events such as Hire Vets Now (HVN). In FY24, the V3 Program co-hosted 27 HVN events on military installations resulting with approximately 2,318 registered attendees.

Additionally, the V3 employment grant provides employers with 300 and fewer employees \$1,000 for every veteran hired (on or after July 1, 2014) and retained for one-year full time, within five years of separation of active duty. Employers can receive a total of \$10,000 annually. For FY24, \$100,000 in grant monies were distributed. The V3 Program approved 136 of applications resulting in the full disbursement of the \$100,000 V3 grant allocation. 36 of the grants approved during the FY24 fiscal year were awarded in FY25.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
New Employers certified	554	1,225	564
Veterans hired by certified companies	17,846	17,005	22,760
Training events conducted	19	24	31

## **MILITARY MEDICS AND CORPSMEN (MMAC) PROGRAM**

### **MISSION**

*The Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program provides pathways healthcare careers and employment for transitioning servicemembers, veterans and military spouses with healthcare background and education.*

In FY24, the Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program maintained efficient and effective operations, facilitated veteran and military spouse hiring, and expanded partnerships. MMAC addressed veterans' career and credentialing challenges daily by recruiting, reviewing, and referring candidates to healthcare employers statewide.

The unique and measurable aspect of the MMAC Program is that it not only keeps veterans in Virginia, but it draws veterans from across the world to come to live and work in the Commonwealth. The veterans hired in healthcare directly contribute to the state and local tax base, economy, and community. The MMAC Program also fosters a new awareness and appreciation of veterans and what they offer the healthcare workplace.

In 2016, MMAC began with six Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with Partner Healthcare Systems (PHS). In FY24, the total stood at 62 Healthcare Associates statewide with 23 signed MOAs. The MOA allows MMAC-Qualified employees to apply their extensive clinical skills and experience under supervision while they obtain required civilian clinical credentials.

In FY24, MMAC developed partnership with new MMAC Partner Healthcare Systems:

- AFC Urgent Care
- Alternate Solutions
- Angels LLC
- Ashby Ponds
- Bath Community Hospital
- Commonwealth Oral & Facial Surgery
- Companion Extraordinaire Home Care
- D19 Transportation
- Ellie Mental Health
- Fairfax County FD
- Global Medical Response

- Health Vision MD
- Master Center
- Pamco group
- Potomac Healthcare
- Rockingham FD
- Saber Health
- TriMed X
- Virginia Beach EMS

MMAC set a goal to reach 800 total hires facilitated through the program since launch and by December 2024, MMAC will reach that goal. As of November 2024, MMAC has obtained 778 total hires.

During FY24, the MMAC team has been actively traveling across the state to engage with healthcare employers, associations, strategic partners, as well as veterans, transitioning service members, military spouses, and National Guard and Reserve members. MMAC has continued to strengthen and expand its program, focusing on supporting veteran hires and managing their transition into civilian careers. The team has conducted in-person presentations at key military bases, including Fort Belvoir, Fort Myer-Henderson Hall, Fort Gregg-Adams, Fort Walker, Fort Eustis, Oceana, Norfolk Naval Base, and Portsmouth Naval Base, among others.

In addition to local efforts, MMAC has attended national conferences to broaden its impact, leading to a significant opportunity to present at the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) 30 Minutes of Excellence event. This presentation on supporting veterans' workforce transitions has helped position the Education, Transition, and Employment teams for an upcoming opportunity to speak at the NAWDP National Conference in May 2025, which will be hosted at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. This national stage will amplify the agency's work and further its mission of connecting veterans with meaningful career opportunities.

MMAC played an active role in Hire Vets Now Networking events that were held in partnership with the Virginia Chamber Foundation on military installation across the Commonwealth. MMAC engaged with over 1,000 transitioning service members and military spouses as they supported 12 networking events across five military installations.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
Program Applicants	179	98	141
Total Hires	124	163	107
MMAC Qualified Hires	22	45	43
No Veteran Left Behind Hires	64	75	39
Leadership	33	26	10
Military Spouses	5	17	15



## **VIRGINIA WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM**

### **MISSION**

*The Virginia Women Veteran Program (VWVP) is a port of entry to provide referrals and ease of access to community resources to educate, unify, and empower Virginia's women veterans who have served in the military in all eras by ensuring they receive timely yet appropriate transition and benefits support, employment and education outreach, and health and community advocacy.*

### **ACTIVITIES**

The Virginia Women Veteran Program (VWVP) ensures women veterans have easy access to transition and benefits support, workforce and education services, and health and community advocacy. VWVP is enabling Virginia to become the most women veteran-ready state in the nation.

In FY24, VWVP worked to increase strategic partnerships with local, state, and federal entities, focusing on women-veteran-centric organizations. Through these strategic partnerships, VWVP and DVS attained numerous earned media opportunities, including social media marketing. Strategic partnerships extend VWVP's visibility and impact, ensuring more women veterans receive information on and access to local, state, and federal resources.

In partnership with the Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) Program, VWVP hosted Virtual Peer Support Groups. These groups provide a relaxed and confidential environment, facilitated by female veterans, to address the needs of the Veteran, National Guard, and Reservist communities. Participants may share past military and current transitional experiences with other veterans. They strive to foster support for their members by improving self-reliance and self-advocacy by encouraging each veteran to follow their path to behavioral health wellness.

Governor Youngkin designated March as Women's History Month and the Virginia General Assembly designated March 17-23, 2024, as Women Veterans Week. In conjunction with Women Veterans Week, VWVP conducted our seventh annual Virginia Women Veteran Pinning Ceremony. Participating in the pinning event were Governor Youngkin, First Lady of Virginia Suzanne Younkin, Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears, Secretary Craig Crenshaw, Secretary Sheppherd Miller, III, and Delegate Jackie Glass. Additionally, the VWVP facilitated multiple virtual events and regional pinning ceremonies hosted by the Virginia Veteran Care Centers.

The Virginia Women Veterans Program partnered with the Military Women's Memorial and the Army Women's Museum, to host virtual education events that celebrated Women Veterans and provided updates on initiatives sponsored by the facilities. Attendees were provided with resources and opportunities for partnership and follow up.

## **MILITARY SPOUSE SUPPORT INITIATIVE**

### **MISSION**

*Advocate for military spouses across the Commonwealth through legislation and program initiatives by conducting outreach, research, identifying barriers and creating pathways for spouses to find meaningful employment in Virginia.*

### **ACTIVITIES**

The Military Spouse Support Initiative (MilSpouse) collaborates with key stakeholders within federal, state, local government, military installations, and the private sector to develop and implement a resource system to provide access to employment, childcare, licensure, and community resources. The program is responsible for outreach and provides advocacy for military families.

This year, one of the MilSpouse program's primary objectives was to expand outreach to military spouses across the Commonwealth through partnerships, informing spouses of the services and opportunities Virginia offers. These partners included veteran service organizations, employers, community leaders, military installations, and local, state, and federal agencies.

The second objective for the MilSpouse program is to promote resources, referrals, and information available to military spouses at events, community engagement meetings, and one-on-one interactions. Areas of focus are childcare, licensure reciprocity, employment, and other spouse benefits.

For more information on the 2024 Military Spouse Support Initiative, please see the attached 2024 Military Spouse Liaison Report, required per the Code, section 2.2-2004 (18).

## **VIRGINIA VETERAN AND FAMILY SUPPORT (VVFS)**

### **MISSION**

*To monitor and coordinate resource connections and care coordination for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and other related supportive services to transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard, Armed Forces Reserves, caregivers, and families.*

### **FY24: TOP 3 – ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES**

1. VVFS saw a significant increase in overall client services in FY24. During this time period, VVFS created 39% more clients than the previous FY and saw a 57% increase in service needs (for assistance with housing, behavioral health, financial assistance etc.) for SMVF than the previous FY.
2. VVFS was granted a Suicide Mortality Review Cooperative Agreement with Veterans Affairs (one of just 12 States and Territories nationwide) which supports efforts to establish, coordinate, and manage a formal process to characterize military-connected suicide deaths and implement data-informed strategies to prevent suicide.
3. VVFS has seen a significant loss of highly skilled Resource and Veteran Peer Specialists in recent years. To address this turnover, VVFS developed a comprehensive career development plan to encourage staff longevity and has requested the additional budget resources to implement the plan.

### **ACTIVITIES**

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program is a focused response to improve and expand services to service members, veterans and their family members and caregivers coping with the impact of deployment, military service, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), operational stress, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and/or other behavioral health concerns. It is operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). VVFS serves transitioning service members, veterans of all eras, members of the Virginia National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves, and their caregivers and family members.

In accordance with Virginia Code 2.2-2001.1, the purpose and priorities of the VVFS program are:

- Build awareness of veterans' service needs and the availability of the program through marketing, outreach, and training for first responders, service providers and others,
- Collaborate with relevant agencies of the Commonwealth, localities, and service providers,
- Develop and implement a consistent method of determining how many veterans in the Commonwealth are currently in need of mental health, physical rehabilitation, or other services, or may need such services in the future,

- Work with veterans to develop a coordinated resources plan that identifies appropriate service providers to meet the veteran's service needs,
- Refer veterans to appropriate and available providers based on their needs identified in the coordinated resources plan, and
- Monitor progress toward individually identified goals in accordance with the coordinated resource plan.

VVFS's five internal Objectives and Key Results (OKR) consist of the following:

1. Open at least 1,440 new clients for services as a total program (FY24: 2,033 clients opened for services),
2. 90% of all new VVFS clients will have a needs assessment completed within seven days of initial client contact for the purpose of creating a coordinated resource plan (FY23: 95% out of 1,458),
3. 90% of veterans with an identified behavioral health need will be connected to an appropriate resource (FY23: 98% out of 316),
4. 90% of veterans experiencing literal homelessness will be connected to a shelter/housing resource (FY23: 97% out of 249), and
5. DVS field office staff (VVFS and Benefits) will screen 95% of new Service Members, Veterans, and Families for suicide risk per month (FY23: 95% out of 13,574).

In 2024, VVFS continued to expand and sustain partnerships with federal, state, and community partners in connecting service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF) to resources and services. VVFS provides regular training, such as Military Cultural Competency (MCC) and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), to state agencies and community partners to enhance knowledge and resource connections. Creating a continuum of care for SMVF for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services is a continual priority to ensure there is no wrong door and SMVF can quickly access services when needed.

### **Governor's Challenge and Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF**

VVFS continued coordination of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF<sup>12</sup>. The City of Richmond was one of the first eight cities in the nation to join the Mayor's Challenge, and Virginia was one of the first seven states to participate in the Governor's Challenge. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sponsor both initiatives.

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<sup>12</sup> Governor's and mayor's challenges to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families. SAMHSA. (n.d.). R.f. <https://www.samhsa.gov/smvf-ta-center/mayors-governors-challenges>

The Virginia team is implementing the VA's National Strategy for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide,<sup>13</sup> which provides a framework for using a comprehensive public health approach to address the growing challenge among the veteran population.

Governor's Challenge teams focus on three main priorities:

1. To identify SMVF and screen for suicide risk;
2. To promote connectedness and improve care transitions;
3. To increase lethal means safety and safety planning.

Tying into these national priorities, the theme of the Virginia's Governor's Challenge team is the "3C's – Care, Connect, and Communicate":

- Care: The provision of accessible and culturally competent behavioral health services.
  - Strategy: Identify, screen, and refer SMVF at risk of suicide in community services.
- Connect: Bringing military/veteran specific resources and community services together; forming systemic partnerships.
  - Strategy: Increase engagement between Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), and partner organizations for SMVF referrals.
- Communicate: Educating the SMVF population on resources and behavioral health providers on military culture and suicide prevention best practices.
  - Strategy: Expand lethal means safety (particularly firearm safety) training to community stakeholders.

As part of the Governor's Challenge, VVFS and Benefits service lines participate in Virginia's Identify SMVF, Screen for Suicide Risk, and Refer for Services (VISR) program. The goal of the VISR program is to develop military culture, suicide prevention, and safety planning infrastructure in community agencies (including hospitals, local departments of social services, Community Service Boards (CSBs), Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs)).

In DVS, suicide prevention work continues after the initial VISR pilot implementation in 2020. VVFS serves on the Steering Committee for statewide VISR to coordinate best practice training (examples include training in grant writing, suicide risk screening and intervention, and safety planning) for all stakeholders and leads the VSO working group. As of October 2024, 137 individuals (providing services and/or support to SMVF) received VISR training certification. The VISR Steering team will begin work on development for a new learning management system to streamline training access and certification in 2025.

The table below shows the total number of SMVF screened for suicide risk between the VVFS and Benefits teams (16,199). A total of 2,488 individuals screened at risk of suicide and the VVFS and

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<sup>13</sup> National strategy for preventing veteran suicide. *U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs*. (n.d.). R.f. [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/docs/Office-of-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention-National-Strategy-for-Preventing-Veterans-Suicide.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Office-of-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention-National-Strategy-for-Preventing-Veterans-Suicide.pdf)

Benefits teams linked them to behavioral health resources, VVFS peer support, and other supportive services. This expansion helps ensure that the DVS team is less likely to miss someone that is struggling and can link individuals in need with support to prevent a crisis or suicide.

<b>Suicide Risk Level (C-SSRS)</b>	<b>FY24 (All VVFS and Benefits)</b>
<b>No risk</b>	13,541
<b>Low risk</b>	2,288
<b>Moderate risk</b>	120
<b>High risk</b>	80
<b>Total</b>	<i>16,199</i>

The SOS team applied for and was awarded a slot for the Veterans Affairs/SAMHSA’s Suicide Mortality Review (SMR) Academy and Cooperative Agreement. Federal Veterans Affairs and the SAMHSA Suicide Mortality Review Academy and Cooperative Agreement was awarded to the Commonwealth of Virginia as one of just ten States and two Territories nationwide. The Suicide Mortality Review (SMR) process is a multidisciplinary process to help us better understand why people in our community die by suicide and to help us identify how we can prevent these unnecessary deaths. Suicide Mortality Reviews (SMR) are systematic and comprehensive reviews of deaths that are intended to help develop recommended strategies to prevent future deaths. SMRs are conducted by a committee of stakeholders (SMRC), which access multiple sources of clinical and non-clinical information to provide a deeper understanding of the circumstances surrounding a death. The SMRCs then develop recommendations for action to prevent similar deaths in the future.

The SMR Academy allowed a team of 10 Virginia partners to participate in skill building and interact with subject matter experts in the field. Virginia was 1 of 7 in the 2023 cohort of awardees. THE SMR Academy was sponsored by SAMHSA's SMVF Technical Assistance (TA) Center staff and Project Manager Partners Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRAI). Each team received technical assistance to strengthen behavioral health systems and services for SMVF Inter-agency cooperation to develop an implementation plan for SMR or SMR related efforts in Virginia. The importance of data compilation, analytics and storage were also brought forward during the academy.

In July of 2024, The Suicide Mortality Review Development Team applied for the SMR-Cooperative Agreement (SMR-CA) which allowed for up to \$300,000 to assist in Lethal Means Safety training, project management and a landscape/data analysis. The SMR-CA was created by section 303 of Division V of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), which states that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with States, territories, and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes for the development and implementation of veteran suicide prevention through the Governor’s Challenge Program. The population of focus for the SMR-CA is Virginia Veterans. Virginia veterans must be included as a population of focus for SMR-CA's as well as education and training. In

September of 2024, the Veterans Administration announced that Virginia was awarded the SMR-Cooperative Agreement. With the additional award of \$281,086 from the SMR Cooperative Agreement (CA), the SMR Team will be able to deliver Lock and Talk Lethal Means training to 6 military connected communities within the commonwealth and partner with a prestigious Veteran Service Organization, America's Warrior Partnership (AWP) for SMR Project Management/Coordination, landscape/community analysis and data analysis.

The SOS team continues to deepen our partnership with the Virginia Department of Health's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner related to suicide decedents, overdose deaths and violent deaths. The OCME will be an integral stakeholder in the SMR process along with local change makers/stakeholders. The process is one that will be intensive, but we hope to discover crucial data that will inform our outreach efforts and allow for more directed prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts.

### **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

VVFS provides hands-on assistance navigating behavioral health, rehabilitative, and other supportive services, including peer and family support services to the most vulnerable veterans. This includes justice-involved veterans and those at risk for/or experiencing homelessness.

VVFS focuses supportive services in six areas:

1. Care Coordination and Management
2. Housing and Homeless Services
3. Justice Involved Services program (JIS)
4. Mission: Healthy Relationships Couples Workshop
5. Veteran Peer Support (VPS) Services
6. Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS)

### **CARE COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT: REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

VVFS consists of 46 direct services staff located in 28 offices across four regions. Supervised by Regional Directors, staff provide resource connections, care coordination, and individual and group peer support to veterans and their family members.

In addition, VVFS implements the following regional capacity-building initiatives:

- **VISR:** VVFS staff continue to train all new DVS Benefits staff in suicide prevention, risk screening, and safety planning. In addition, VVFS staff promote military culture and suicide prevention best practices among community partners such as Veterans Service Organizations, human services providers, employment support and faith-based programs. VVFS has consulted with multiple states on the VISR Pilot including KY, MD, MN, NC, NY, and WI. VISR (2.0) launched in January 2023 and includes 82 State and local agencies. VISR 2.0 offers training certification in military culture and suicide prevention. VISR was featured at the national conferences for the American Academy of Suicidology, Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense Suicide Prevention national meeting and National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs.

- **STEP VA:** VVFS is assisting DBHDS and Community Services Boards (CSBs) with the military and veterans services component of System Transformation Excellence and Performance in Virginia (STEP VA) in the public mental health system. As part of STEP VA, CSBs increased clinical services and suicide prevention among SMVF. VVFS staff provide military culture and resource training to CSB staff, partner on care coordination and peer support services delivery and expansion of suicide prevention initiatives including the Lock and Talk Virginia lethal means safety campaign. VVFS staff work closely with regional SMVF Navigator (and other military/veteran focused) positions in the CSBs.
- **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training:** VVFS staff provide SMVF crisis intervention team training to partner agencies, law enforcement, and first responders. This training builds capacity in communities and solidifies partnerships throughout the regions for referral resources and care coordination. CIT trainings provide the program with referrals at vital intercept points to connect veterans experiencing crises to care treatment and other related supportive services.
- **Virginia National Guard:** VVFS staff continue to support ongoing planning and training with the Virginia National Guard. Through the Commander's Ready and Resilient Council (CR2C) and with the Risk Reduction, Readiness and Suicide Prevention (R3SP) office, VVFS streamlines behavioral health and supportive services referral partnerships with Readiness Centers and units statewide.
- **Military Cultural Competency (MCC) training:** VVFS staff continue to provide MCC training to community agencies, state agencies, and other providers serving veterans. VVFS is the lead MCC trainer for the VISR program through the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide. This training builds community provider knowledge in serving SMVF and provides information on key resource connections including Veterans Affairs and DVS services. Staff provided both virtual and in-person MCC to approximately 1,142 community services providers and partners in FY24.

## **HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

VVFS supports the Commonwealth in sustaining efforts to ensure that veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Communities continue to use the strategies to prevent and address homelessness by using "by-name" lists, assessment tools, and coordinated entry. The term, "*functional zero for veteran homelessness*" means that the community never has more veterans experiencing homelessness than it has demonstrated it can house in an average month (minimum threshold is three veterans). Currently, the 30-day timeframe is not attainable because of the aftereffects of the pandemic, housing shortages, high eviction rates, and limited bed space at shelters/Veteran transitional housing. So, although Virginia is still operating under functional zero standards, it is under more difficult circumstances for individuals, families, and community services providers.

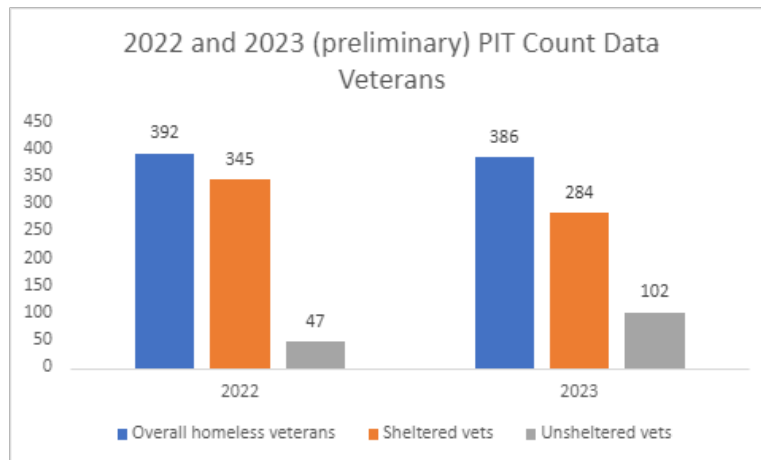
VVFS continues to be recognized as a national leader. The VVFS Housing and Criminal Justice Director (HCJD) and VVFS Housing and Criminal Justice Coordinator (HCJC) provide technical assistance and housing resources to housing and criminal justice partners. They also provide housing resources and support to the VVFS staff. The VVFS regional staff work with community partners to access housing



resources for veterans experiencing homelessness. The VVFS Housing and Criminal Justice Director and Housing and Criminal Justice Coordinator continue to provide statewide coordination and leadership with federal, state, and community organizations. They also serve on several workgroups including the Virginia Housing Supportive Solutions Advisory Council, Permanent Supportive Housing committee, and Balance of State Steering Committee. The Housing and Criminal Justice Coordinator started statewide quarterly meetings with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) team to provide transparency between both the DVS and SSVF staff and to track on housing and program needs for veterans experiencing homelessness.

Virginia held the **2023 Point-in-Time Count** on the night of January 2023. Based on the PIT count<sup>14</sup> there were 386 veterans experiencing homelessness (284 sheltered, 102 unsheltered). The unsheltered number of veterans increased from 47 (in 2022) to 102 (2023). The PIT count in January 2022 accounted for 395 total homeless veterans. The 2023 count is 2.3% lower than the 2022 count, but there is a substantial increase in unsheltered veterans this year. NOTE: the 2023 numbers reflect the most recent data released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which lags 1+ years.

VVFS continues to work with communities in sustaining efforts of reducing veteran homelessness through coordinated entry and targeting of resources. The VVFS team assists communities with resources, technical assistance and support, and information-sharing across agencies.



*The 2023 count is 2.3% lower than the 2022 count, but there is a substantial increase in unsheltered veterans this year (47 in 2022 to 102 in 2023)*

The DVS Homeless Fund continues leveraging Veterans Service Foundation (VSF) funds, coordinating with SSVF partners across the state to fill gaps in housing veterans experiencing homelessness, and provides prevention funds for previously chronically homeless veterans. Allowable expenses include rental deposits/arrears, utility assistance, beds, and other one-time expenses that may prevent a veteran from being housed. In FY24, VVFS used \$279,309 in VSF and agency funds to assist 270 veterans with

moves into permanent housing or homeless prevention. There has been an increase in spending compared to last FY (\$239, 256) due to increased eviction rates, higher housing costs, and affordable housing shortages.

The Dominion *Veteran EnergyShare* program, administered by VVFS and Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) providers across the state, continued in FY24 to provide utility assistance to homeless veterans who move into permanent housing. The *Veteran EnergyShare* program is continuing with \$800,000 for calendar year 2024. This partnership has received national recognition as a best practice and has been vital in sustaining efforts in Virginia. For calendar year 2023, VVFS and SSVF providers utilized 1,254 *Veteran EnergyShare* vouchers for veterans experiencing homelessness or were at-risk. As of November 2024, VVFS and SSVF providers have utilized 1,100 vouchers.

In addition, the VVFS Housing and Criminal Justice Director and the VVFS Housing and Criminal Justice Coordinator are a part the Justice and Housing workgroup based on a grant received by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). The Justice and Housing workgroup is a national project with a geographic focus area to explore the need and address challenges for justice-involved individuals to secure housing. In FY23, the group created a Learning Collaborative for property managers and landlords to examine tenant selection plans and help increase housing access for justice-involved individuals. In FY24, built on the Virginia's collaborative learning group work and will be featured in an upcoming Corporation for Supportive Housing webinar in the Fall of 2024.

### **VVFS JUSTICE INVOLVED SERVICES (JIS) PROGRAM**

The VVFS Justice Involved Services (JIS) program provides resource connections, care coordination, and support to Virginia's veterans and service members across the criminal justice spectrum, including diversion, incarceration and while on supervision in the communities. The VVFS Veteran Justice Specialists (VJS) offer direct assistance to veterans and service members of any era, regardless of discharge status. The program provides services to veterans in treatment dockets, in local jails and state prisons, and on probation and/or parole supervision.

In FY24, the caseload for VJS has more than doubled since last fiscal year (despite capacity challenges with staff leave and/or vacancies). In FY24 (thru June 2024), VVFS served 178 justice-involved veteran clients. This number has increased in comparison to 84 clients in FY23. There are currently only five VVFS VJS in the program that provide resource connections and support justice-involved veterans statewide. The JIS program provides virtual and in-person services for justice-involved veterans. The VJS, HCJC, and HCJD provide marketing and outreach to justice-involved veterans, criminal justice and community partners.

### **Justice Involved Veterans in Virginia Data:**

#### VADOC data as of June 2024

- Institutions- 1,513 (6.50% of incarcerated VADOC population compared to 6.13% of VADOC population in FY23)
- Community supervision- 2,241 (3.67% of state supervision population compared to 3.24% of state supervision population in FY23)
- Jail (state responsible)- 65 (compared to 23 in FY23)

- Lack of veteran data from other criminal justice system intercept points (jails, courts, law enforcement/arrests, etc.)

VVFS has been instrumental in providing capacity support to veteran treatment dockets. Below is a list of active veteran treatment dockets:

- Chesterfield County General District Court
- Fairfax General District Court
- Fairfax Circuit Court
- Fairfax Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
- Loudoun County General District Court
- Norfolk Circuit Court
- Prince William County General District Court
- Pulaski General District Court
- Rappahannock Regional Circuit Court (multi-jurisdictional veteran treatment docket)

To address the needs of justice-involved veterans (JIVs) with serious medical and mental health conditions, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Justice Outreach program staff led the Justice Involved Veterans with Special Needs discharge planning work group with the VVFS VJS staff and VADOC. In FY23, the group met as needed to coordinate housing placements for veterans releasing from incarceration in need of assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

The VVFS Housing and Criminal Justice Director (HCJD) conducts statewide collaborative quarterly meetings between the VA Veteran Justice Outreach and Healthcare for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) specialist staff and VVFS VJS staff. The group discusses program updates, issues related to the justice-involved veteran population, and training opportunities. The HCJD continues to provide statewide technical assistance and advocacy on addressing the needs of the justice-involved veteran population and serves on the Academic Consortium on Criminal Justice Health (ACCJH) Board of Directors and ACCJH Racial and Social Justice Subcommittee. The goal of the ACCJH is to advance the field of health care for individuals in the criminal justice system. The VVFS HCJD and HCJC serve on the VADOC Veterans Stakeholders group along with the VVFS VJS staff to address the needs of incarcerated veterans and work on streamlining referrals. The HCJD joined the Chief Transformation Office's Reentry Optimization group and in a partnership with VADOC, the group worked together to strengthen referrals between the state Probation and Parole Districts and the JIS program to increase support for veterans on community supervision. The VVFS JIS program continues to have an active collaboration with the VADOC Probation and Parole Officers in assisting veterans on their caseloads that need resource connections. VADOC added a referral link in their current case management system (CORIS) to track referrals to the VVFS JIS program. The HCJD has also joined the Governor's *Stand Tall-Stay Strong-Succeed Together* Reentry Initiative ([EO-36-Establishing-The-Stand-Tall---Stay-Strong---Succeed-Together-Reentry-Initiative---FINAL.pdf](#)) to work on reentry efforts for justice-involved veterans.

The JIS program team provide marketing and training to criminal justice and community partners on identifying justice-involved veterans. Criminal justice partners have been encouraged to use the VA's

Veterans Reentry Search Services (VRSS) system to identify veterans. There are currently only 21 local and regional jails using the VA's VRSS system. The VJS staff and HCJD have been working with local jails to increase veteran identification.

### **MISSION: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

*Mission: Healthy Relationships* (MHR) are retreats held at various locations in Virginia and focus on effective communication skills through the provision of individualized and group support in a workshop format.

*Mission: Healthy Relationships* is a program focused on relationship enhancement and effective communication skills for couples. MHR was adapted from "8 Hours to a Lifetime of Relationship Satisfaction," a workshop designed by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Couples who experienced military transition, deployments, and/or are coping with the effects of operational combat stress, PTSD, TBI or other trauma-related experiences are taught a skills-based approach to relationship strengthening. They are also provided connections to behavioral health, rehabilitative and supportive services to improve the overall health, well-being, and relationship satisfaction of the couples who attend.

In FY24, VVFS held two retreats for 30 service members, veterans, and their partners. At both events, staff encountered service members who were coping with the effects of PTSD, TBI, and other mental health concerns. Following both, VVFS staff had referrals not only for further VVFS services such as peer, caregiver, and spousal support, but also referrals for other DVS service lines such as Benefits and VETE.

### **VETERAN PEER SUPPORT (VPS) SERVICES**

The VVFS Veteran Peer Support (VPS) program leverages professional peer training and personal experiences to provide support in increasing self-reliance, health, wellness, and quality of life. The program has a specific focus on veterans struggling with behavioral and rehabilitative needs but presently disinterested in clinical treatment. VVFS Peer Specialists link with veterans who share similar military and post-military experiences to build a supportive relationship and connect to services. VVFS currently employs 10 VPS representatives across the state.

The VPS program facilitates veteran support groups that promote personal growth, self-awareness, coping strategies, and the opportunity to interact with other veterans. VVFS facilitates five virtual groups. VVFS also facilitates a virtual peer support group for women veterans. In addition, the VPS Peer Group Program has resumed in-person groups if veterans request this format.

The VPS Program continues its work to sustain and grow partnerships with Department of Defense (DoD) and the Virginia National Guard (VaNG) to assist service members who experiencing anxiety, depression and other issues associated with military service. In addition, the program continues outreach efforts to Veterans Affairs and other state and community peer support programs such as DBHDS and DMAS by coordinating with these partners to expand VVFS training and resource opportunities. These

partnerships increase the identification of veterans who cannot access VA services due to discharge and/or reluctance to accept services. VVFS continues to provide peer support presentations, webinars, and technical assistance to nonprofit partners such as VOCAL Virginia, Mental Health America, CSBs, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Department of Health, and peer specific organizations throughout the Commonwealth.

In July 2024, VVFS partnered with Cabana, a modern mental health provider offering confidential, tech-enabled support, to provide free, comprehensive mental health resources to Virginia's veterans, Guard and Reserve members, as well as their spouses and caregivers. This collaboration expands access to Cabana's digital mental health services, including live peer support groups moderated by Virginia-certified Veteran Peer Specialists.

With this partnership, eligible Virginia users gain full access to Cabana's digital suite, which includes the full range of virtual, professionally facilitated groups offered by Cabana, as well as dedicated Virginia Veteran peer-led support groups. Participants can connect discreetly on topics such as transitioning to civilian life, managing family relationships, and coping with stress, all within a secure and confidential environment accessible from any device. As of October 2024, VVFS secured over 100 users on the Cabana platform.

### **SUICIDE PREVENTION AND OPIOID ADDICTION SERVICES (SOS) PROGRAM**

The General Assembly of Virginia, through the Appropriations Act (Chapter 2, 2022 Acts of Assembly Special Session I, Item 470.F) earmarked general funds of \$5,000,000 for the first year (FY23) and \$5,000,000 the second year (FY24) to the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to establish a program for prevention and intervention of suicide and opiate<sup>15</sup> addiction for service members, veterans, and their families throughout the Commonwealth.

Specifically, DVS is to collaborate with federal, state, local and community organizations, public and private institutions, and other service providers to develop programs to prevent suicide among service members and address opiate/opioid addiction suffered by service members and veterans.

The Appropriations Act directed DVS to coordinate with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), and the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), whenever possible, to promote the use of evidence-based practices in continuity with other suicide and opiate/opioid misuse prevention and intervention programs administered by the Commonwealth.

Dr. Angela Porter joined DVS in September 2022 as the Director of the Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) Program. Initial program development research and partnership formation began in December 2022. The new SOS program provides outreach and training to Federal, State, and local partners and initiated a new community and research grant program to enhance prevention, intervention, and recovery services statewide.

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<sup>15</sup> operationalized as 'opioid' which includes natural, semisynthetic, and synthetic opioids

As of November 2023, the SOS program has awarded forty-one community grants totaling almost \$4.1 million and eight research grants awarded as of November 1, 2023, totaling almost \$1,650,000. Grantees will implement, study, and expand best practices in veteran peer support, suicide prevention training, risk screening, and clinical therapies for Service Members, Veterans, and Families across the Commonwealth. The SOS team also hosted a Suicide Prevention Symposium and Recovery Day event to commemorate National Suicide Prevention month and National Recovery month with grantees and regional partners on September 21, 2023. For a full report on SOS program accomplishments, please reference *(INSERT APPENDIX for full SOS program report)*

### **FY24 VVFS SERVICES**

Provides resource referrals, comprehensive behavioral and rehabilitative health care coordination, and supportive services to Virginia's veterans, National Guard, Armed Forces Reserves, caregivers, and family members.

<b>2,937</b>	Total Veterans and family members served in FY24 (+820, 2023)
<b>2,033</b>	New Veteran and family members served in FY24 (+759, 2023)
<b>4,449</b>	Total individual services (linkage to mental health, housing, financial assistance etc.) provided in FY24 (+1,617, 2023)
<b>562</b>	Total behavioral health services provided in FY24 (+246, 2023)
<b>143</b>	Total rehabilitative/medical services provided in FY24 (+87, 2023)
<b>3,266</b>	Total supportive services provided in FY24 (+1,169, 2023)
<b>181</b>	Individuals participating in peer support services provided in FY24 (+90, 2023)
<b>60</b>	Veterans and family members served by <i>Mission: Healthy Relationships</i> (MHR) in FY24 (+8, 2023)
<b>1,251</b>	Individuals trained in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) by VVFS (-157, 2023)
<b>1,142</b>	Individuals trained in Military Cultural Competency Training by VVFS (-379, 2023)
<b>503</b>	Veterans who received Behavioral Health/Financial Assistance through Veterans Services Foundation (+201, 2023)

### **HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING**

<b>386</b>	Estimated number of homeless veterans in Virginia on a single night in January 2023 (-9, 2022)
<b>102</b>	Estimated number of unsheltered veterans in Virginia on a single night in January 2023 (+55, 2022)
<b>642</b>	Number of homeless veterans housed statewide in FY23 (+9, FY22)
<b>237</b>	Veterans experiencing homelessness who received financial assistance through VVFS in FY23 (+9, FY22)



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<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
Individual Services Delivered	2,683	2,832	4,449
Outreach and Training Events	408	1,092	1,200

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## VETERANS CARE CENTERS

### MISSION

*Provide veteran residents with exceptional care in a home-like environment that enhances their sense of well-being. To achieve this, DVS veterans care centers:*

- 1. Take a “whole person” approach that focuses not just on providing physical health care to residents, but also providing recreational, spiritual, therapeutic, and social opportunities that contribute to overall physical and mental health.*
- 2. Operate the care centers as symbols of the Commonwealth’s commitment to her veterans; and*
- 3. Serve the greatest possible number of veterans by maintaining the highest practical facility census.*

### FY24: TOP 3 – ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES

1. Opened the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center (Virginia Beach) in November 2023. This state of the art 128-bed facility was built to serve Hampton Roads-area veterans. It reflects the latest in resident-focused care, being organized around a “household” model with individual rooms/bathrooms and common living/dining spaces in a community setting.
2. The Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center in Roanoke was recognized as a “Top 5” among all nursing homes in Virginia (public, private, and non-profit) by Newsweek Magazine for providing outstanding care to DMVCC residents and support to their families.
3. The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond recently opened a newly remodeled dementia/memory care unit with highly trained staff, specializing in radically transforming the experience of dementia care to reflect a true positive approach to care.

### OVERVIEW

Virginia’s veterans care centers provide residential (in-patient) care services to Virginia veterans, including skilled nursing care, dementia/memory care, and short-term rehabilitative care. Domiciliary (assisted living) care is also provided at the Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center (DMVCC) in Roanoke. All 532 beds (204 in Roanoke, 200 in Richmond, 128 in Virginia Beach) are certified for both Medicare and Medicaid. The 128 beds at the Puller Veterans Care Center in Fauquier County will be certified after it comes online in 2025. Revenue sources include Medicaid, Medicare, per diem payments from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), VA payments for veterans rated 70-100% service-connected disabled, and private funding sources. Honorably discharged veterans who reside in or entered active duty from Virginia with a need for skilled nursing care are eligible to reside at one of Virginia’s veterans care centers. It is an honor to care for all our Virginia veterans, whether short or long term.

All care centers provide high-quality, on-site physical, occupational and speech therapy, as well as many other ancillary health care services. They offer amenities such as Wi-Fi, a library with computer access, a chapel, solariums on each hallway, wheelchair accessible nature trails and decks, and a no charge on-site barber shop.



All care centers continue to follow strict adherence to all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) infection control and prevention guidelines. With near-universal vaccination of staff and residents across all care centers, operations have returned to normal.

### **Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center**

The Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center (DMVCC) in Roanoke, adjacent to the Salem VAMC, is a 204-bed facility (196 skilled, 8 assisted living) providing high-quality, short-term rehabilitative and long-term health care. 60 of the 204 beds are dedicated solely to the care of veterans who require a secure environment related to the effects of Memory care/dementia. An 8-bed unit serves the needs of veterans who require assisted-living/domiciliary care. It is a multi-story facility. Most resident rooms are shared (semi-private) with shared (“Jack and Jill”) bathrooms between two rooms.

DMVCC is named in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Paris Davis, US Army (Retired) and Navy Cross recipient Captain Eugene “Red” McDaniel, US Navy (Retired).

In FY24, DMVCC provided 59,473 patient days of skilled nursing or memory/dementia care, which is 80% occupancy of 196 beds, and 2,656 patient days in assisted living, which is 91% capacity. Census has increased by 1% since FY23.

DMVCC reduced the number of assisted living beds from 28 in FY22 to 16 in FY23 and 8 in FY24 due to the declining demand for this level of care. Residents who, 20 years ago, would have gone to a facility like DMVCC for care are now staying in their homes longer, only moving to a facility like DMVCC when they need skilled nursing or dementia/memory care. At the same time, DVS increased the number of skilled care beds from 180 to 196 to deliver in-demand short-term rehabilitative services.

DMVCC recently was recognized by Newsweek Magazine as a top 5 nursing home in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **ACTIVITIES**

Staff work throughout the year in coordination with veteran’s service organizations (VSOs) and over 120 individual volunteers, on an array of activities that historically includes trips to the D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Salem Red Sox baseball games, the Fishing Rodeo, bowling, shopping excursions, Dining out experiences and other community events. On-site activities are planned as well pet therapy, an annual apple festival and entertainments. DMVCC staff also help facilitate resident participation with Honor Flight.

DMVCC recognizes special events and occasions, such as Military Branch Birthdays, 9/11, Run For the Wall, and Women Veterans Week. DMVCC raised over \$2,184 in support of Memory care Awareness month, and \$17,493 for Operation Holiday Spirit (OHS), to support the purchase of individualized holiday gifts for all care center residents.

### **Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center**

The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC), located on the campus of the Richmond VAMC in Richmond, has 200 skilled nursing care beds in private rooms, of which 40 beds are dedicated to the care of Memory care/Alzheimer's care. It is a single-level facility.

SBVCC is named in honor of Medal of Honor recipients Colonel Carl Sitter, US Marine Corps (Retired) and Colonel Van Barfoot, US Army (Retired).

In FY24, SBVCC provided 56,369 patient days, which is 77% occupancy, or an average of 154 beds filled. Along with long-term residents, SBVCC has some veterans on a short-term basis for rehabilitation, as they transition from hospital care back to their homes and families.

One wing (40 beds of 200 beds) was offline for most of 2024 for renovations. This wing has now reopened as the specialized dementia/memory care unit, providing exceptional space/programs for veterans with this level of need. The former dementia/memory care unit will be offline for most of 2025 as it is renovated to provide specialty care for veterans requiring short-term rehabilitation. It will also be configured to serve as an isolation unit if needed.

### **ACTIVITIES**

SBVCC provides high-quality on-site physical, occupational, and speech therapy, therapeutic recreation, along with social and spiritual activities. Other amenities include on-site pharmacy, fully equipped barber and beauty shop, activity and game rooms, library, resident lounges in each nursing neighborhood, courtyards, and an outdoor walking trail.

SBVCC has been able to resume a normal activity schedule, including group activities with guests, and outings from the facility. SBVCC provides different activities daily, such as bingo, trivia, music, ice cream socials, cook-outs, movie days, entertainers, and food gatherings to name a few. SBVCC also celebrates special events and occasions such as, Military Branch Birthdays, Women Veterans Week, Memory Care Awareness Month, 9/11, Veterans Day, etc.

### **Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center**

The Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center (JCVCC) in Virginia Beach is named for Medal of Honor recipient Col. William A. Jones, III and SSgt. Christopher Cabacoy, a Virginia Beach native who was killed in action in Afghanistan.

JCVCC has 128 skilled nursing care beds in private rooms. JCVCC is organized into eight 16-bed households and is a single-level facility. Any of the households can be configured as a memory care/dementia care unit. JCVCC will begin offering those services in FY25.

JCVCC admitted its first resident in November 2023 and has been admitting new residents and adding new staff. JCVCC is projected to reach occupancy targets of 95% or better in April 2025. In FY24, JCVCC provided 2,698 patient days, which is 6% occupancy, or an average of 7 beds filled.



**ACTIVITIES**

JCVCC provides high-quality on-site physical, occupational, and speech therapy, therapeutic recreation, along with social and spiritual activities. Other amenities include on-site pharmacy, fully equipped barber and beauty shop, activity and game rooms, library, resident lounges in each nursing neighborhood, courtyards, and an outdoor walking trail.

**New Construction: Puller VCC**

The Puller VCC is named for U.S. Marine Corps Lt. General Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller, his son, Marine Corps Lt. Lewis B. Puller, Jr. and Lewis Jr.’s wife, former state Senator Linda (Toddy) Puller. Senator Puller, along with Senators Bryce Reeves and Louise Lucas, and Delegates Kirk Cox, Rich Anderson, and Chris Stolle, among many others, was instrumental in securing funding for the new center. PVCC will be a 128-bed facility with private rooms that provide residential (in-patient) care services (skilled nursing care, Memory care/memory care, and long/short-term rehabilitative care).

The Puller Veterans Care Center currently has 13 team members on board and will build to 60 before the first resident is admitted. Staffing will increase ahead of increased admissions; the target is for each new care center to be at full occupancy 17-20 months after opening.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
<b><i>Davis &amp; McDaniel Veterans Care Center, Roanoke</i></b>			
Patient Days—Nursing / % of beds occupied	55,999/78%	56,664/79%	59,473/80%
Patient Days—Assisted Living / % of beds occupied	6,043/59%	4,563/78%	2,656/91%
<b><i>Sitter &amp; Barfoot Veterans Care Center, Richmond</i></b>			
Patient Days—Nursing / % of beds occupied	54,916 / 75%	55,486 / 76%	56,369 / 77%
<b><i>Jones &amp; Cabacoy Veterans Care Center, Virginia Beach</i></b>			
Patient Days—Nursing / % of beds occupied	N/A	N/A	2,698 / 6%

## Veterans Cemeteries

### MISSION

*Provide dignified final resting places in places of honor in perpetuity for Virginia's veterans, members of the Guard and Reserve, and their eligible family members.*

### FY24: TOP 3 – ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES

1. The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on November 4, 2024. The same day, the cemetery conducted its 20,000<sup>th</sup> interment, only the 10<sup>th</sup> state or tribal cemetery to reach this milestone.
2. The Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin receive the “Operational Excellence Award” from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration (NCA) in recognition of superior performance. This award is only given to 5-6 state veterans cemeteries a year (out of 122 nationwide).
3. DVS completed federally-funded phase development projects at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia (\$2.3M) and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin (\$1.2M) to add additional columbaria burial niches (above ground inurnment of cremated remains). A current phase expansion at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk (\$7.1M) will add additional columbaria, a second committal shelter for memorial services, and a cortege lane. The NCA has awarded Virginia an additional \$9M for phase development projects in FY25.

### ACTIVITIES

DVS' Cemeteries Division operates and maintains Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries: the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk; the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia; and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin. All three provide final resting places for our veterans, members of the Guard and Reserve, and their eligible family members in places of honor, dignity, respect, and remembrance. All cemeteries can accommodate in-ground burial of casketed remains, in-ground inurnment of cremated remains, and above-ground inurnment of cremated remains in a columbarium. The Southwest Virginia State Veterans Cemetery also offers a green burial option for cremated remains in its scatter garden.

In FY24, Virginia's three state veteran's cemeteries conducted 2,143 committal services: 1,343 at the Suffolk cemetery, 549 at the Amelia cemetery, and 251 at the Dublin cemetery. This represented a 5.5% decrease in interments compared to FY23, but a 29% increase since FY20.

Virginia's state veterans cemeteries follow burial eligibility requirements set by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Any member of the U.S. Armed Forces who dies on active duty, retires, or is discharged from military service under conditions other than dishonorable is eligible, as are Commissioned Officers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and some WW2 Merchant Mariners. Veteran's spouses, including widows/widowers are eligible for internment in the same gravesite as the veteran. Additionally, certain dependents, including unmarried sons/daughters under age 21, and when applicable, an unmarried adult son/daughter, who before the age of 21 became

permanently incapable of self-support due to physical or mental disability, are also eligible for burial at state veterans cemeteries. For former Guardsmen and Reservists, an honorable separation from the service component is required.

DVS receives a plot allowance from the VA for each veteran buried in a Virginia state veterans cemetery. These VA plot allowance covers a portion of the cemetery operating costs, including burial operations, grounds maintenance, operating equipment replacement and maintenance, and the upkeep of cemetery buildings. The remaining Cemetery Division's budget comes from the General Fund and is used primarily for personnel costs.

The *Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act of 2022* allows state and tribal cemeteries the option to inter former Guardsmen, Reservists, and current ROTC members without losing future VA grant opportunities. Virginia was the first state in the nation to begin interring these newly eligible individuals.

Following the passage of legislation by the 2023 General Assembly and funding in the FY24 Appropriation Act, all fees for dependents and Guardsmen/Reservists were eliminated.

All three cemeteries held wreath-laying events in December. Live wreaths with red bows, purchased by local non-profit organizations, were placed on each gravesite. In FY24, partner organizations supporting the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin) received donated funds of approximately \$21,000, while partner organizations for the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) received donated funds totaling over \$127,000. The Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) has a relatively new wreath committee, which, in partnership with *Wreaths Across America*, was able to raise enough funds to place a wreath on every gravesite in Amelia.

For those veterans who pass away without family, DVS cemetery staff work with local organizations and civic groups, law enforcement, public health officials, funeral directors, the Virginia Army National Guard Funeral Honors Program, and individual citizens to identify the unclaimed remains of veterans who deserve a dignified final resting place. In FY22 the SWVAVC Volunteers worked with cemetery leadership to develop and implement the Ambassador program, whose mission is to ensure that no veteran is ever buried alone. During FY24, the volunteer Ambassadors attended 179 veteran funerals at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery. Local funeral directors were also informed on procedures to request reimbursement for a casket or urn through the VA's Casket and Urn Reimbursement Program. Effective July 31, 2023, the VA changed the casket/urn reimbursement program for unclaimed veterans to a flat fee amount of \$1,273 for a casket and \$147 for an urn.

DVS encourages veterans and family members to complete a "pre-application" so that required documentation (discharge documents, marriage certificates, etc.) are on file to expedite scheduling in their time of need. Filing a pre-application is an indication of intent to be buried in a state veterans cemetery, in advance of the veteran's or spouse's death, and helps the families and the cemeteries successfully prepare for internment. Pre-application forms are available for download on the DVS website.

All three cemeteries are open to the public for visitation daily during daylight hours. Cemetery administrative offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Cemeteries Division launched a toll-free telephone number where callers can obtain information about each cemetery, locate a loved-one’s gravesite or schedule a burial. The new number was launched in March, 2023 and is 1-855-4VA-VETS. The staff understands the importance for families to visit on weekends and holidays, so each cemetery is staffed on Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and Independence Day, and on all Saturdays. These personnel can assist families with locating and accessing a loved-one’s gravesite, as well as ensuring the public restrooms are clean and accessible. Each cemetery hosts various special events and services throughout the year, such as wreath-laying ceremonies, bench and monument dedications, and flag placements each Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
<b><i>Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia</i></b>			
Interments	596	554	549
Pre-applications on file*	3,930	4,119	4,387
<b><i>Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk</i></b>			
Interments	1,538	1,468	1,343
Pre-applications on file*	8,979	9,697	10,706
<b><i>Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin</i></b>			
Interments	279	236	251
Pre-applications on file <sup>16</sup>	2,179	2,434	2,531

**CONSTRUCTION/PHASE DEVELOPMENT**

Virginia’s three state veterans cemeteries were built on land purchased by or donated to the Commonwealth of Virginia and were constructed using federal grant funds from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Veterans Cemetery Grants Program (VCGP).

The NCA has set a goal that there be an operational (meaning that it has burial capacity) national, state, or tribal veterans cemetery within 75 miles of 95% of the nation’s veterans. If an area meets these requirements, NCA considers the veterans in that area to be “served.” Veterans living more than 75 miles from an operational cemetery are considered to be “unserved.”

Though Virginia has 16 national cemeteries (15 operated by USDVA, plus Arlington National Cemetery operated by the U.S. Army), only three are open to new burials: Arlington National Cemetery, Culpeper

<sup>16</sup> Filing a pre-application is an indication of intent to be buried in a state veterans cemetery, and is a way to submit, in advance of the veteran’s death, all necessary documentation to verify eligibility for burial in a state veterans cemetery.

National Cemetery, and the National Memorial Cemetery at Quantico. Danville National Cemetery is open to cremated burials only.

As of FY24, 94% of the nation's veterans are considered "served" by NCA. In Virginia, it's 99%. Virginia is served by state veterans cemeteries in Amelia, Dublin, and Suffolk, and by national (NCA-operated) cemeteries in Virginia in Culpeper, Danville, and Quantico, and the national cemetery in Mountain Home, Tennessee (serving veterans in the Bristol/Abingdon area).

The initial VCGP grants to the Commonwealth of Virginia funded the construction of an administration building, maintenance complex, roads (for part of the cemetery) and the initial in-ground casketed, in-ground cremated, and above-ground cremated sites at each cemetery, providing an estimated 5-10 years of burial capacity. This initial development funding left a significant portion of each cemetery undeveloped for future phased expansion.

As one or more of the current burial options (in-ground casketed, in-ground cremated, and above-ground cremated) is 1-2 years away from being exhausted, VCGP will award a grant to develop the next phase to add an additional 5-10 years (estimated) of capacity.

Due to limited federal funds, VCGP is only funding state projects that expand current state veterans cemeteries (first priority) or the create new state veterans cemeteries in unserved areas (second priority). VCGP is authorized to fund repair projects at state veterans cemeteries, but does not do so because of limited federal funding.

In FY24, DVS completed federally-funded phase development projects at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia (\$2.3M) and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin (\$1.2M) to add additional columbaria burial niches (for above-ground inurnment of cremated remains). A phase expansion project currently underway at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk (\$7.1M) will add additional columbaria, a second committal shelter for memorial services, and a cortege lane.

The NCA has awarded Virginia an additional \$9M for phase development projects in FY25. These projects will add additional roadways, columbaria, in-ground casketed and in-ground cremated burial spaces at the Suffolk cemetery. The Amelia and Dublin cemeteries will both receive additional in-ground cremation spaces and enhancements to their Service Walls.

The Suffolk cemetery has an estimated 20 years of operational space, after which it will not have space for new burials. DVS has requested funding to purchase adjacent property to extend the operational life of the cemetery.

## Virginia War Memorial

### MISSION

*Honor patriotic Virginians who rendered faithful service and sacrifice in the cause of freedom and liberty for the Commonwealth and the nation in time of war, honor all of Virginia's veterans, preserve their history, educate the public, and inspire patriotism in all Virginians.*

### FY24: TOP 3 – ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES

1. D+80: Virginians in the Normandy Invasion: this was a highly successful exhibit featuring oral history interviews of WWII veterans, memorabilia, and other displays to highlight the role Virginia and Virginians played in the Normandy Invasion, including the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division.
2. Beirut 40<sup>th</sup> Ceremony, October 23, 2023: this ceremony marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on the Marine Corps barracks. It was well attended to include 10 Gold Star Families and coincided with the release of our latest documentary: *One Week in October*, about Beirut and the Grenada invasion.
3. Veteran Oral History Program: Oral history partnership with Scouts and Retirement Communities – the program has created new partnerships, greatly expanding our outreach for Oral Histories.

### ACTIVITIES

The Virginia War Memorial is the Commonwealth of Virginia's memorial and educational center honoring the memory of all Virginians who demonstrated a willingness to serve and fight in defense of the United States from World War II through today. The Memorial's walls are engraved with the names of nearly 12,000 service members from Virginia who perished in combat during World War II; the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf; and, more recently, those who have lost their lives in the Global War on Terrorism. Through educational outreach, exhibits, documentary films, patriotic programming, staff and volunteers ensure that veterans who live in Virginia will thrive.

Over the past year, in-person access to the Memorial allowed for deeper engagement and collaborations with our partnerships, including the WWII Heritage Alliance, which includes the National D-Day Memorial, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, the MacArthur Memorial, the Virginia Holocaust Museum, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum, and the Military Aviation Museum. The Virginia War Memorial is an active member of the Virginia Association of Museums.

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING EXPANDS VIRTUALLY

During FY24, the Virginia War Memorial provided educational programming to meet the needs of the State, with programs being offered virtually and in-person.

The virtual learning initiative “Livestreams: Learning from the Home Front” continues to take place about three times per month, with special programming for important dates and interesting topics:



These presentations were free to the public and reached audiences across the nation and internationally. During FY24, the Memorial conducted 31 public livestreams with 364 individual participants. Partnering with Streamable Learning, the Lifelong Learning Institute, and the Battle of the Bulge Association, programs were created for specific audiences based on the educational preferences of the groups totaling 9 private livestreams with 250 individual participants. Many programs are recorded and are available at [www.vawarmemorial.org](http://www.vawarmemorial.org).

Outreach programming continued as traveling interactive education tables were created for various organizations and events. Presentations were given at nursing homes, veterans posts, historic societies, schools, museums, and special events throughout the state. At schools, informational presentations would be set up and given to hundreds of students throughout the day. The education department did 48 offsite programs reaching 3279 learners. The education department would also set up activity stations and informational presentations for field trips coming into the Virginia War Memorial in total there were 77 formal tours on the Virginia War Memorial encompassing 2846 learners.

The annual Teacher Institutes were held in person this year, with 38 teachers who registered to attend. Two Teacher Institutes were held with two guest speakers. The topics for this year were: Winning the Cold War, the POW Experience, From Headlines to the Front Lines: Virginia and the Great War, and Connecting Students to History: A Workshop on Research, Writing and Photography.

### **USS BIRMINGHAM RESEARCH LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES**

During FY24, the Virginia War Memorial Research Library and Archives has expanded its collaboration with community partners and increased the accessibility of its collections.

Twenty-four oral history interviews were conducted with Virginia veterans in and out of the state, representing five branches of the military. Several of these interviews have been made accessible to the public via the Virginia War Memorial Vimeo Page.

This year, 115 collections, including oral histories, have been used by outside researchers and the VWM Educational and Curatorial departments. Other efforts to increase accessibility include working with the VWM Educational Department to use collections for livestreams, presentations, and other programming.

### **2023/2024 EVENTS**

#### **Beirut 40<sup>th</sup> Ceremony – October 23, 2023**

This ceremony marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. It was well attended to include 10 Gold Star Families and coincided with the release of our latest documentary: *One Week in October*, about Beirut and the Grenada invasion. In conjunction with the ceremony, a special book talk was held featuring acclaimed author Jack Carr, who spoke about his upcoming book about the Marines in Lebanon and the terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks.

#### **Commonwealth's Veterans Day Ceremony – November 10, 2023**

The annual ceremony to honor all Americans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Virginia Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears delivered the keynote address. Other speakers included

Commissioner Daniel Gade of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, Major General James Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia. Winners of the Virginia War Memorial's Veterans Day Essay Contest were recognized at this ceremony. There were over 440 in-person attendees and over 35,000 virtual views (TV and livestream).

**Commonwealth's Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Ceremony – December 7, 2023**

Honored those killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. 212 in-person attendees.

**.9K-K9 Veterans Day Memorial Walk – March 16, 2024**

The VWM created the first .9K-K9 Veterans Day memorial walk around the VWM grounds. Honoring 7 K9 Working Dogs and their handlers. 140 in-person attendees.

**Vietnam War Veterans Day – March 29, 2024**

In recognition of Vietnam War Veterans Day, the Memorial held a special open house, presented Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins to eligible veterans, and had special screenings of Vietnam-related "Into Battle" films. Docents were on hand for the last two weeks of the "50 Years Beyond: The Vietnam Veteran Experience" exhibit.

**Military Signing Day – May 17, 2024**

In coordination with the Virginia Department of Education, the VWM coordinated a Military Signing Day for graduating high school seniors who enlisted in the military. Over 200 young men and women took the Oath of Service at the Memorial.

**Commonwealth's Memorial Day Ceremony – May 30, 2024**

Broadcast on CBS-6 TV and livestreamed, the ceremony reached nearly 50,000 TV and online viewers across the Commonwealth and 700 people attended the ceremony held in Veterans Hall with overflow in VMI Alumni Hall. Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin was the keynote speaker. Other speakers were Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Craig Crenshaw and Major General James Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia. Marocchi Memorial Scholarships were awarded to two graduating Virginia high school seniors and two Virginia university students.

**D+80: Virginians in the Normandy Invasion**

June 6th, 1944 is one of the most recognizable dates in history. This was the day that the allied nations invaded occupied Europe and was the start of the end of the Axis regime and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich. D-Day as it would become to be known, was the combined naval landing and airborne assault on a 50 mile stretch of the Normandy peninsula. Within ships, landing craft and aircraft were sailors, infantry and paratroopers many of which were from Virginia. Now 80 years later, the Virginia War Memorial opened the D+80 exhibit that will run from June 6, 2024 through the Summer of 2025. Throughout the exhibit there are 10 touch screens where visitors can watch 60 short segments of oral history interviews from over 40 different WWII veterans. Artifacts, uniforms, weaponry, photos, maps and other items from the Virginia War Memorial collections are also on display.



**Richmond Philharmonic Orchestra – June 16, 2024**

The Richmond Philharmonic Orchestra performed in Veterans Hall. This concert was conducted by Assistant Conductor Will Pattie.

**Hill of Heroes – 6th Annual Community Event – June 28, 2024**

Memorial staff and community volunteers totaling over 320 people installed 12,000 American flags on the hillside in honor of each name inscribed on the Shrine of Memory. The flags were displayed through July 12, 2024.

**Commonwealth’s Patriot Day Ceremony – September 11, 2024**

Partnered with Freedom Flag Foundation for the annual ceremony. The September 2024 Program included keynote speaker Lynn Wright, the former Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence and featured speaker – Department of Veterans Services Commissioner Chuck Zingler. 225 in-person attendees.

**Commonwealth’s Veterans Day Ceremony – November 10, 2024**

The annual ceremony to honor all Americans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Virginia General Gary Brito, Commanding General, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, delivered the keynote address. Major General James Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia, was a featured speaker. Winners of the Virginia War Memorial’s Veterans Day Essay Contest were recognized at this ceremony. There were over 1,000 in-person attendees and over 35,000 virtual views (TV and livestream).

**The World of a Marine Combat Artist – Veterans Art Gallery**

This exhibit featured the photography work of Marine Combat Artist Kris Battles.

<b>Annual Services Provided</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
Visitors	41,134	52,030	61,275

## **DVS Budget and Staffing**

### **DVS FTE LEVEL: FY24**

### **AS APPROVED BY THE 2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SPECIAL SESSION I (CHAPTER 2)**

<b>Staffing by Service Area</b>	<b>FY24 FTEs</b>
Benefits	121
Education, Transition, & Employment	48
Virginia Veteran and Family Support	61
Veterans Care Centers	1,081
Veterans Cemeteries	38
Virginia War Memorial	10
Administration	22
Totals	1,382

**DVS FY24 BUDGET (APPROPRIATION)  
AS APPROVED BY THE 2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SPECIAL SESSION I  
(CHAPTER 2)**

(NOTE: DOES NOT INCLUDE CENTRAL ACCOUNT DISTRIBUTIONS)

Notes:

1. Does not include central appropriation distributions
2. For special, dedicated special, and federal trust, the appropriation amount reflects spending authority and does not necessarily reflect actual revenues.

Program	Fund Source				Program Total
	General Fund	Special (fee for service)	Dedicated Special (Donations)	Federal Trust (federal contract)	
Benefit Services	\$14,122,092	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$14,122,092
Virginia Veteran and Family Support	\$11,373,051	\$0	\$0	\$3,282,054	\$14,655,105
Education, Transition, and Employment	\$4,183,557	\$0	\$0	\$1,075,130	\$5,258,687
Care Centers	\$50,000	\$45,732,518	\$0	\$46,505,221	\$92,287,739
Cemeteries	\$1,982,178	\$348,466	\$0	\$1,749,636	\$4,080,280
Virginia War Memorial	\$2,263,114	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,263,114
Administration	\$2,782,884	\$375,434	\$0	\$0	\$3,158,318
Granting Freedom	\$200,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$200,000
Donated Funds (through the Veterans Services Foundation)	\$0	\$0	\$796,500	\$0	\$796,500
<b>DVS Total:</b>	<b>\$36,756,876</b>	<b>\$47,934,496</b>	<b>\$796,500</b>	<b>\$52,612,041</b>	<b>\$138,099,913</b>

## **Boards**

The Department of Veterans Services' work is guided and supported by two boards, comprised of legislators and citizen appointees:

1. Board of Veterans Services
2. Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

Listed below is a short report for each board, which includes:

- Mission statement of the board;
- The board's powers and duties (from the Code of Virginia);
- A message from the board's chairman;
- A list of board members.

## **BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES**

### **MISSION**

*The Board of Veterans Services supports the Department of Veterans Services by providing expertise and insight into best practices in benefits claims services, medical and health care management, and cemetery operations; performance measurements and general management principles; and nonprofit volunteer operations and management. The Board develops reasonable and effective policy recommendations related to the services provided to veterans of the armed forces of the United States and their eligible spouses, orphans, and dependents by the Department of Veterans Services.*

### **§ 2.2-2454. Powers and Duties of the Board**

1. Advise and make recommendations to the Commissioner of Veterans Services upon such matters as may arise in the performance of his duties;
2. Investigate issues related to the provision of care and services to veterans, upon request of the Commissioner of Veterans Services or the Governor;
3. Study all matters affecting the welfare of Virginia citizens who are veterans or dependents or survivors of such veterans, and make recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services;
4. Develop recommendations for policies and procedures related to the efficient and effective delivery of the services provided by the Department of Veterans Services;
5. Establish policies related to the coordinated delivery of veterans services, in consultation with those agencies, entities, and organizations, including counties, cities, towns or other political subdivisions of the Commonwealth capable of providing such services;
6. Monitor the administration of all laws concerning veterans and their dependents;
7. Review and advise the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services on the Department's strategic plan;
8. Based on rigorous cost-benefit-value analysis, provide recommendations to the Department of Veterans Services regarding future projects and the acquisition of facilities that may benefit the State's veterans, including but not limited to veterans cemeteries and veterans care centers; and
9. Provide recommendations to the Department of Veterans Services and the Veterans Services Foundation created in § [2.2-2715](#) regarding gifts, grants, and other resources from public and private entities and organizations to support veterans services.

(2003, cc. [657](#), [670](#); 2004, c. [697](#); 2005, c. [758](#); 2008, cc. [467](#), [768](#); 2010, c. [64](#); 2012, cc. [33](#), [162](#); 2015, c. [319](#); 2017, cc. [89](#), [501](#); 2019, cc. [40](#), [204](#).)

## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) works with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to ensure the welfare of Virginia's veterans and advises the DVS in developing policies that enhance the support of veterans throughout the Commonwealth. The BVS is comprised of 26 members, including seven legislative members, 15 non-legislative citizen members, and four *ex officio* members.

This year was a transition year for the BVS. We welcomed nine new members, and the leadership of the Board turned over. Major General (Ret.) Malcolm Frost, Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Hoffman, and Colonel (Ret.) Wendell Warner joined the Board as citizen members. Senators Jennifer Carroll Foy, Tara Durant, and Russet Perry, and Delegates Michael Feggans, Jackie Glass, and Joshua Thomas joined as legislative members. Following two four-year terms of service to the BVS, Colonel (Ret.) Michael Dick concluded his chairmanship and transitioned off the Board. Scott Davidson and I were elected to serve as the new Vice-Chair and Chair respectively.

To better understand the operations (and resulting needs) of DVS, the Board began visiting various DVS facilities, attending veterans-related events, and has planned future meeting to be held at DVS locations across the Commonwealth. This exposure provides BVS members the ability to serve as a valuable sounding board for policy development, identify areas of concern and/or future opportunities, and act as a vital link for providing feedback to the DVS on policy decisions and associated initiatives.

To further understand the issues affecting Virginia veterans, the BVS is working to build relationships with veterans committees at the county and city levels and with college and university student veteran groups across the Commonwealth. We have also initiated a subcommittee to better understand how DVS can interact with transitioning service members so that these individuals are informed about the benefits of becoming a Virginia veteran.

Along with the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC), the BVS was a staunch supporter of restoring full funding to the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). BVS members served on the Governor's task force to preserve VMSDEP and we are encouraged that the General Assembly voted to restore the funding and look forward to a long-term solution to protect this benefit.

The Board continues to work closely with the JLC, the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation, and the Virginia War Memorial Foundation to promote the interests of Virginia veterans and looks forward to another year of supporting DVS and solidifying Virginia's place as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

Respectfully,

Carl Bedell  
Chairman



**Board of Veterans Services members – as of December 1, 2024**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Position</b>
Carl Bedell	Chair; Attorney, U.S. Army veteran
Scott Davidson	Vice Chair; Captain, U.S. Army (Retired), Chief Executive Officer, The GCO Consulting Group
Victor Angry	A is for Angry, LLC Retired Command Sergeant Major, ARNG
David Ashe	Attorney, Alperin Law Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
Delegate Jason S. Ballard	General Assembly of Virginia U.S. Army veteran; U.S. Army Reserves
Joe Campa	11th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy CEO, Kent, Campa and Kate Incorporated
Senator Jennifer Carroll Foy	General Assembly of Virginia
Senator Tara Durant	General Assembly of Virginia
Robert Eisiminger	Founder Knight Point Systems, U.S. Army Veteran
Delegate Michael Feggans	General Assembly of Virginia, U.S. Air Force Veteran
Malcolm Frost	Retired Major General, U.S. Army; President, Malcom Frost and Associates, LLC
Delegate Jacke Glass	General Assembly of Virginia
Vincent Griffith	President, MRO and International Solutions, Noble; RADM USN Retired
Joyce Henderson	Retired Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Kevin Hoffman	Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Carlton Kent	16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (Retired) President, Kent, Campa and Kate Incorporated
Terence McKnight	VP Government Relations, CAES - Microelectronics Solutions; Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Matthew Miller	Chief of Staff to Representative Ben Cline; U.S. Navy Veteran
Senator Russet Perry	General Assembly of Virginia
Delegate Joshua Thomas	General Assembly of Virginia, U.S. Marine Corps veteran
Wendell Warner	Retired Colonel, U.S. Army. Director for Combatant Command Support, Senior Executive Services, Under Secretary Defense
Melissa Watts	Director of Procurement, Virginia ABC Authority
Charles Zingler (ex officio)	Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Bill Aramony (ex officio)	Chair, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Brad Williamson	Chair, Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees
Rick St. John	Chair, Virginia War Memorial Foundation Board

## **JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS (JLC)**

### **MISSION**

*The Council provides advice and assistance to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Department of Veterans Services on matters of concern to the veterans community and provides a conduit of information to and from the veterans service organizations on policy and legislation, pending and enacted, as well as information on existing services.*

### **§ 2.2-2682. Powers and Duties of the Council**

A. The Council shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Advise the Department of Veterans Services and the General Assembly regarding (i) methods of providing support for ongoing veterans services and programs, and (ii) addressing veterans issues on an ongoing basis;
2. Recommend issues that may potentially impact veterans of the armed forces of the United States and their eligible spouses, orphans, and dependents;
3. Advise the Department of Veterans Services and the Board of Veterans Services on matters of concern to Virginia-domiciled veterans and their eligible spouses, orphans, and dependents;
4. Promote and support existing veterans services and programs;
5. Recommend and promote implementation of new efficient and effective administrative initiatives that enhance existing veterans services and programs or provide for necessary veterans services and programs not currently provided; and
6. Maintain a nonpartisan approach to maintaining and improving veterans services and programs in the Commonwealth.

B. The chairman shall report to the Commissioner and the Board of Veterans Services the results of its meetings and submit an annual report on or before November 30 of each year.

C. The Council may apply for funds from the Veterans Services Foundation to enable it to better carry out its objectives. The Council shall not impose unreasonable burdens or costs in connection with requests of agencies.

(2003, cc. [657](#), [670](#); 2008, cc. [467](#), [768](#); 2014, c. [809](#).)

## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) is made up of 26 Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) found throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and informing the Governor and General Assembly about the interests of military service members in Virginia, veterans, and their families. JLC also teams with the Board of Veterans Services, the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation, and the Virginia War Memorial Foundation to further these servicemember, veteran, and family interests.

The prior JLC Chair, Kevin Hoffman, oversaw multiple bills and legislation to help our military servicemembers, veterans and their families. For example, even as he was about to leave JLC, budget cuts were made by the General Assembly to the Veteran Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). After two special sessions called by the Governor, the budget was restored and a legislative committee and Governor task force began study of the issue, with two JLC members assigned to the task force. During recent elections, moreover, Virginia voters overwhelmingly approved a state constitutional amendment to expand property tax exemptions to include spouses of servicemembers who died in the line of duty, in addition to those killed in action. JLC members worked for years towards this constitutional amendment.

Other JLC work continues. 2024-2025 legislative initiatives by the JLC include: verification and identification of veterans in jails, to help them; stopping unscrupulous firms from exploiting veterans and their benefit claims; transitioning the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program to an upfront payment model; expanding the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk; and establishing a Women Veterans Day in Virginia. JLC also asked that the Governor include funding for the Virginia War Memorial Carillon restoration project in this year's budget. Different VSOs sponsor these initiatives year-round and January 9, 2025 is JLC Day on the Hill, a day JLC members are recognized and engage members of the General Assembly.

Not only Day on the Hill, but year-round, JLC works closely with multiple legislators, including Delegates and Senator on the bi-partisan General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus (GAMVC) and with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs and the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services. Each official and legislator with whom JLC works is committed to meet military, veteran, and family needs, and we work together to meet needs, but also to enhance the strengths of servicemembers and veterans. We welcome continuing this cooperative work into 2025.

Very respectfully,

William ("Bill") Aramony, Chair, JLC  
The American Legion representative to the JLC

**Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations members – as of December 1, 2024**

<b>Veterans Service Organization</b>	<b>JLC Member</b>	<b>Alternate</b>
Air Force Association	Gary Dean	
Air Force Sergeants Association	Richard Mansfield	John R. Cooper
American Legion	William Aramony	Bill Feasenmyer
AMVETS	Matthew Klym	Ralph Hensley
Association of the U.S. Army	Glenn Yarborough	Michael Flanagan
Disabled American Veterans	Lisa Gregory	Charmonia Odom
Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry	Thad A. Jones	Elaine Reed
Fleet Reserve Association	Sha'ron D. Martin	Martin Wood
Hope for the Warriors	Robin Kelleher	
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America	Lance Leshner	
Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.	Jack Hilgers	Richard Rinaldo
Marine Corps League	John Clickener	
Military Officers Association of America	John Down	Monti Zimmerman
Military Order of the Purple Heart	Mark Atchison	James Cuthbertson
Military Order of the World Wars	Vernon Peters	Owen Waltman
Navy Mutual Aid Association	Michelle Domingue	Meredith Burns
National Vet Court Alliance	Daniel Cortez	
Paralyzed Veterans of America	Mark Hartney	
Reserve Organization of America	David Sitrer	Terrence Moore
Student Veterans of America	Katherine Martinez	
Veterans of Foreign Wars	Rick Raskin	Joanne Smith
Vietnam Veterans of America	George Corbett	Charles Montgomery
Va. Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Assn	Carl Holcomb	Clifton White
Virginia National Guard Association	Jay Marts	
Women Marines Association	Ann Crittenden	Patricia Fitzgerald
Wounded Warrior Project	Jose Ramos	Brett Reifer
Chairman, Board of Veterans Services	Carl Bedell	Scott Davidson
Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation	Brad Williamson	Craig Colucci
Commissioner of Veterans Services	Charles Zingler	

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Benefit Services

Table 1: Claims, Evidence, and Appeals Submitted to USDVA - Sorted by Office

### Appendix B: Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program

Table 1: Number of Unique Recipients of the VMSDEP Tuition/Fee Waiver and Stipend. Amounts Awarded by Institution

Table 2: Total number of VMSDEP Unique Students

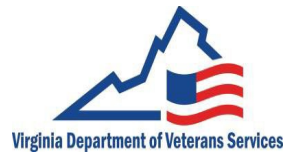
## APPENDIX A: BENEFIT SERVICES

### Table 1: Sorted by Office

### Claims, Evidence and Appeals Submitted to USDVA

Office	Total Claims		
	FY22	FY23	FY24
Abingdon	1,804	1,220	2,166
Accomac	754	594	1,331
Arlington (opened FY23)	--	1	1,389
Big Stone Gap	2,433	1,756	2,308
Charlottesville	2,778	2,629	3,750
Chesapeake (closed 2023)	1,915	928	2,042
Danville	2,399	1,568	1,735
Emporia	771	638	1,118
Fairfax	3,587	1,784	3,854
Fort Belvoir	2,121	1,087	889
Fort Gregg-Adams	2,683	1,980	4,297
Fredericksburg 1	4,166	2,377	5,832
Fredericksburg 2 (opened FY24, data combined with Fredericksburg 1)			
Front Royal (relocated from Strasburg in FY23)	1063	1613	2,115
Hampton VA Medical Center	3,263	1,491	3,438
Hampton	1,691	3,745	3,987
Harrisonburg (opened FY24)	--	--	425
Henrico	908	1,368	2,35

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services  
**COMMISSIONER'S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT**



<b>JBLE Eustis (opened 2023)</b>	--	420	3,806
<b>JBLE Langley (opened 2024, data combined with JBLE Eustis)</b>	--	--	--
<b>Loudoun</b>	1,746	1,763	5,069
<b>Lynchburg</b>	2,060	1,665	2,268
<b>Manassas</b>	2,128	750	1,279
<b>Norfolk</b>	7,713	5,531	11,300
<b>Pentagon</b>	2,406	1,895	2,841
<b>Petersburg – Virginia Community Resource Center</b>	1,418	1,970	3,011
<b>Portsmouth</b>	911	953	1,104
<b>Quantico</b>	5,755	5,345	6,740
<b>Richmond VA Medical Center</b>	6,581	4,742	5,201
<b>Roanoke/Salem VA Medical Center</b>	6501	4808	7,132
<b>South Hill</b>	613	425	484
<b>Springfield</b>	2,951	1,685	4,565
<b>Staunton</b>	2,084	1,616	1,992
<b>Tazewell</b>	1,726	1,091	1329
<b>Virginia Beach - Oceana</b>	1,621	2,531	1,549
<b>Virginia Beach - Pembroke</b>	1,470	1,374	1,818
<b>Williamsburg</b>	4,980	2,085	3,457
<b>Wytheville</b>	1,839	2,091	2,010
<b>Appeals (new FY23)</b>	--	129	112
<b>Totals</b>	<b>86,847</b>	<b>67,648<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>110,464</b>

<sup>17</sup> The Benefits tracking system and methodology was upgraded in FY23, affecting Claims (other than Compensation and Pension), Contacts and Evidence numbers. The lower numbers in FY23 should not be interpreted as a decline in services. Compensation & Pension Claims were unaffected.

## Appendix B: Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

**Table 1: 2022-2024: Number of VMSDEP Stipend Recipients and Amount Awarded<sup>18</sup>**

	2022-23		2023-24	
	#	Dollars	#	Dollars
<b>Four-Year Publics</b>				
Christopher Newport University	90	149,569	133	218,030
College of William and Mary	120	173,920	168	254,190
George Mason University	356	509,320	570	834,172
James Madison University	229	387,670	309	572,070
Longwood University	91	137,670	93	131,710
Norfolk State University	96	150,190	152	235,730
Old Dominion University	504	725,510	650	1,101,910
Radford University	87	123,580	122	160,680
University of Mary Washington	76	119,990	102	179,440
University of Virginia	126	209,580	165	284,960
University of Virginia's College at Wise	10	14,490	17	27,080
Virginia Commonwealth University	439	720,913	613	1,019,539
Virginia Military Institute	31	51,300	36	55,100
Virginia State University	75	117,130	114	183,430
Virginia Tech	309	531,840	424	779,985
<b>Four-Year Public total</b>	<b>2,639</b>	<b>4,122,672</b>	<b>3,668</b>	<b>6,038,026</b>

<b>Two-Year Publics</b>				
Richard Bland College	12	18,770	25	37,560
<b>Two-Year Public total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18,770</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>37,560</b>

<b>Community Colleges</b>				
Blue Ridge Community College	4	3,100	14	19,965
Brightpoint Community College (JTCC)	75	84,640	82	93,440
Central Virginia Community College	5	6,180	10	10,240
Danville Community College	2	1,900	0	0
Eastern Shore Community College	0	0	0	0
Germanna Community College	91	115,740	149	185,990
Laurel Ridge Community College (LFCC)	14	14,300	17	22,170
Mountain Empire Community College	4	6,910	5	6,180
Mountain Gateway Community College (DSLCC)	3	4,750	1	950
New River Community College	5	6,660	11	14,040

<sup>18</sup> This table captures the number of unique recipients of the VMSDEP Waiver and stipend.

Northern Virginia Community College	151	165,430	262	289,910
Patrick & Henry Community College	5	6,450	6	6,900
Paul D. Camp Community College	7	5,480	6	8,810
Piedmont Virginia Community College	7	10,460	14	16,410
Rappahannock Community College	11	11,660	13	11,750
Reynolds Community College	23	22,310	32	33,120
Southside Virginia Community College	1	1,900	4	2,880
Southwest Virginia Community College	8	9,500	12	18,540
Tidewater Community College	193	226,770	338	414,070
Virginia Highlands Community College	0	0	3	2,140
Virginia Peninsula Community College (TNCC)	56	69,290	81	90,300
Virginia Western Community College	11	15,730	24	30,240
Wytheville Community College	2	3,800	3	4,540
<b>Community College total</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>792,960</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>1,282,585</b>

<b>Other Publics</b>				
Eastern Virginia Medical School	9	16,170	20	26,400

<b>Stipend Grand Total</b>	<b>3,338</b>	<b>4,950,572</b>	<b>4,800</b>	<b>7,384,571</b>
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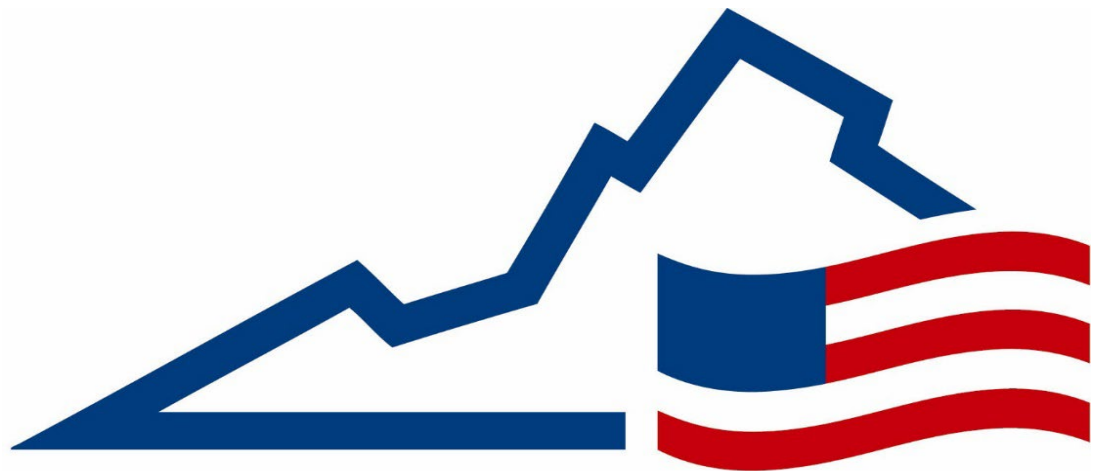
Source: SCHEV May 2022, 2023, and 2024 Reports to the General Assembly

**Table 2: 2021-2024: Total Number of Unique VMSDEP Waiver and Stipend Students**

All VMSDEP students qualify for the waiver of tuition and required fees. Students whose parent’s qualifying condition is related to combat service also qualify for the VMSDEP stipend.

	2021-2022	2022-23	2023-24
Waiver #	4,451	6,120	8,091
Stipend #	2,065	3,338	4,800





**Virginia Department of Veterans Services**



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## *Department of Veterans Services*

Charles A. Zingler  
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220  
Fax: (804) 786-0302

October 1, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin  
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia

The Honorable Craig Crenshaw  
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs

The Honorable Luke Torian  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas  
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations  
Committee

### ***Delivered via electronic mail***

Re: 2024 Annual Report on the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Employment Grant Program

Dear Governor Youngkin, Secretary Crenshaw, Delegate Torian, and Senator Lucas:

The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) creates employment opportunities for Virginia's veterans by educating and training employers to implement nationally recognized best practices in recruiting, hiring, and retaining veterans. Over 3,600 private and public sector employers participate in the V3 Program, and V3 partners have hired more than 148,000 veterans to date.

The V3 Employment Grant Program was created to incentivize small to medium-sized V3 partners to hire and retain veterans. A V3 Certified employer with 300 or fewer employees can earn \$1,000 per Veteran hired and retained for one year, up to \$10,000 annually per company.

\$100,000 from the General Fund was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) to support the grant program. An annual report on the V3 Grant Program is mandated by Chapter 2, 2024 Acts of Assembly Special Session I, Item 456A.4.

October 1, 2024

Page 2

In FY24, the V3 Employment Grant Program awarded \$100,000 to small and medium sized V3 Certified Employers.

The table below details the number of applications approved, the number of grants awarded, and the total amount of grant funds disbursed in Fiscal Years 2020-2024.

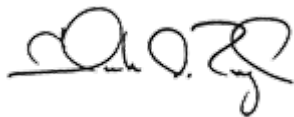
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Number of new applications approved</b>	85	117	75	108	98
<b>Number of grants awarded</b>	85	100	92 <sup>1</sup>	108 <sup>2</sup>	100 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Number of approved grants that could not be awarded in current FY</b>	0	17	0	0	45 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Available funding</b>	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
<b>Amount of grant funds disbursed</b>	\$85,000	\$100,000	\$92,000 <sup>1</sup>	\$108,000 <sup>2</sup>	\$100,000
<b>Unspent amount</b>	\$15,000	\$0	\$8,000	\$0	\$0

1. Includes 17 grants (\$17,000) from FY21.
2. Utilized \$8,000 from V3 operating funds.
3. Includes two grants that could not be paid FY23 (awarded at end of FY).
4. These grants will be awarded in FY25.

Future initiatives to improve the V3 program include integration into the Virginia Veterans Network (VVN) digital hub.

Please let me know if we may provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Zingler



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## *Department of Veterans Services*

Charles A. Zingler  
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220  
Fax: (804) 786-0302

November 20, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin  
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Craig Crenshaw  
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Don Scott  
Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas  
President Pro Tempore, Senate of Virginia  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

### ***Delivered via electronic mail***

Re: 2024 Overview of the Activities of the Virginia Military Spouse Liaison

Dear Governor Youngkin, Secretary Crenshaw, Delegate Scott, and Senator Lucas:

The Code of Virginia, §2.2-2004 (18) directs that the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) provide an overview of the activities of the Military Spouse Liaison, as outlined in the Code of Virginia § 2.2-2002.2, including any legislative recommendations, on or before December 1 of each year to the Governor, Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, and the General Assembly.

Ms. Kayla LaFond serves as the Department's Military Spouse Liaison (MSL) and leads DVS Military Spouse (MilSpouse) programs and initiatives. The MSL advocates for military spouses across the Commonwealth by conducting outreach, research, identifying barriers, and creating pathways for spouses to find meaningful employment in Virginia. The Military Spouse Liaison gives a voice to military spouses within the Commonwealth to make Virginia the most veteran and military spouse friendly state in the nation.

This year, one of the program's primary objectives was help with internal DVS processes to attract military spouses to state employment and identify certified Virginia Values Veterans (V3)

companies as being military spouse friendly. One of these accomplishments is that DVS became a Department of Defense (DoD) Military Spouse Employment Partner (MSEP), only the second Virginia state agency to do so. By being a MSEP, DVS has access to a free system to recruit military spouses and a DoD-vetted resource for the Spouse Ambassador Network in which the MSL can now participate.

The second objective for the MilSpouse program was to promote resources, referrals, and information available to military spouses at events, community engagement meetings, and one-on-one interactions. Areas of focus in FY24 were childcare, licensure reciprocity, and employment.

Of the many activities and efforts conducted by the MSL this year, a few are highlighted here:

- The MSL attended the Association of Defense Communities *Installation Innovation Forum* in Orlando, Florida in November 2023. At the forum, the MSL was part of a panel discussion with the Washington State Military Spouse Liaison (Virginia's counterpart) and Alabama Military Family Liaison (a LT Governor initiative). The liaisons highlighted their positions, accomplishments, and call to action for more states to create similar positions. There were approximately 70 participants that included leaders from veterans groups and the military, community organizations, and employers.
- Collaborated with the V3 program to conduct the first military spouse-focused employer survey. This survey was sent to over 3,000 certified employers to identify the employers that are going above and beyond in hiring military-connected spouses to include formal partnerships with the Department of Defense, Employee Resource Groups, and spouse hiring preferences.
- During Alaska's General Assembly Session, the MSL provided insight into Virginia's MilSpouse program to help make changes to an upcoming Alaska House Bill to create a similar role, the Military Spouse Help Desk, within the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. In February, the MSL provided virtual testimony for an edit to the proposed legislation to make a line item more generic to allow more flexibility in creating pathways to successful spouse employment opportunities.
- In April, the MSL identified military-connected spouses employed by DVS through an optional survey. The purpose of the survey was to create a baseline of DVS staff who identify as a military-connected spouse and to show appreciation on Military Spouse Appreciation Day in May. The MSL also provided remarks at the first Military Spouse Appreciation Day pinning ceremony at the Jones & Cabacoy Veteran Care Center (JCVCC) in Virginia Beach and pinned 14 military-connected spouse staff members with the first *Virginia Military Spouse* lapel pin.
- Provided opening remarks at *Hiring Our Heroes Amplify* events in Hampton and Virginia Beach. These two-day employment events were tailored for military spouses and focused on career preparation, professional development, and networking. In addition to the Amplify events, the MSL has presented position and DVS overviews at the Langley Spouse Transition Too quarterly workshops, Northern Virginia Total Military Community

Governor Youngkin, Secretary Crenshaw, Delegate Scott, and Senator Lucas  
November 20, 2024

Alliance, and a joint leadership meeting with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and DVS.

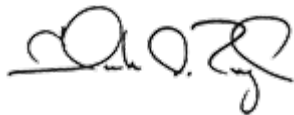
- In March, the MSL was on the *Crucial Convo* panel discussion, *Five and Thrive – Advocates for Change (Part 2)*, moderated by Ms. Sharene Brown, co-founder of Five and Thrive and spouse of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General CQ Brown, Jr., USAF. The MSL was joined by representatives from Hiring Our Heroes, Department of Defense (DoD) Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO), and the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs. The panel discussed how states can support the military spouse community, navigating challenges of being a foreign-born military spouse, and quality of life concerns for military families. The panel was conducted virtually and had over 70 participants.
- Participated in three working groups focused on childcare for military families: the Association of Defense Communities (ADC) Childcare Subcommittee, Hampton Roads Military Advisory Council Childcare Subcommittee, and Operation Child Care Project. The ADC Childcare Subcommittee was initiated during the ADC Installation Innovation Forum to focus on the challenges military families face and potential solutions that ADC can champion at the federal level.

During FY 23-24, the MSL proposed legislation for state exemption for DoD regulated Family Childcare Centers (FCC) located on and off military installations. The proposed legislation – HB739 (Sewell) and SB702 (Subramanyam) – passed the 2024 General Assembly session unanimously.

For FY 24-25, the MSL has proposed legislation for the Liaison to become a member of the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission to advocate on behalf of the military families across the Commonwealth.

Please let me know if we may provide additional information.

Sincerely



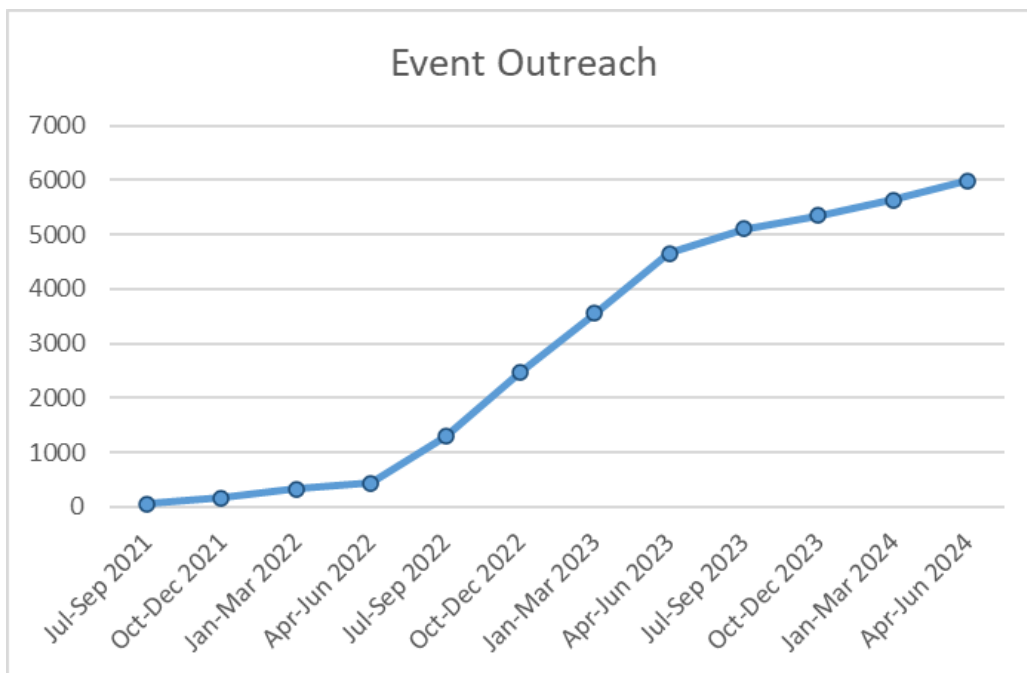
Charles A. Zingler

Cc: Mr. Carl Bedell, Chair, Board of Veterans Services  
Mr. William Aramony, Chair, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

### Appendix 1: Military Spouse Cumulative Metrics



*First newsletter publication was sent in April 2022 for Month of the Military Child with a 35% open rating. Current average open rate is 55%.*



*The first two years were focused on building the milspouse program, connecting to key stakeholders, and establishing networks with Virginia military spouses.*

## **Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) Program**

### **Summary**

In 2022, The General Assembly of Virginia, through the Appropriations Act (Chapter 2, 2022 Acts of Assembly Special Session I, Item 470.F) allocated general funds of \$5,000,000 for the first year (FY23) and \$5,000,000 the second year (FY24) to the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to establish a program for prevention and intervention of suicide and opioid addiction for service members, veterans, and their families throughout the Commonwealth. In FY25, SOS was appropriated \$5,175,000 for grants and program administration (this includes a separate line item of \$175,000 for a program director position, employee benefits, and operating costs).

Specifically, DVS was directed to collaborate with federal, state, local and community organizations, public and private institutions, and other service providers to develop programs to prevent suicide among service members and address opiate/opioid addiction suffered by service members and veterans. The SOS program provides outreach and training to Federal, State, and local partners and used the general funds to initiate a new community and research grant program to enhance prevention, intervention, and recovery services statewide.<sup>1</sup>

The Appropriations Act directed DVS to coordinate with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), and the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), whenever possible, to promote the use of evidence-based practices in continuity with other suicide and opiate/opioid misuse prevention and intervention programs administered by the Commonwealth.

Dr. Angela Porter joined DVS in September of 2022 as the Director of the **Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) Program**. Initial program development research and partnership formation began in December of 2022.

### **Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Resource Utilization**

During fiscal year 2023 (RFA 1 and RFA2), 24 community-based grants totaling \$2.35M were awarded to community providers for capacity building. These grant awardees had the opportunity to apply for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of funding with an expanded scope of service for which 22 of the original 24 decided to apply. These 1<sup>st</sup> year grantees needed to meet SOS program and evaluation performance metrics to be considered for 2<sup>nd</sup> year funding. FY23 SOS program expenses totaled \$817,655, including personnel expenses, marketing and outreach, harm reduction items, and other expenses. The remaining FY23 balance of \$2.4M was reappropriated in FY24 for additional grant awards.

<sup>1</sup> Opiate- An opiate, in classical pharmacology, is a substance derived from opium. In more modern usage, the term opioid is used to designate all substances, both natural and synthetic, that bind to opioid receptors in the brain.



**FY23 Spending Summary**

Appropriation	Grant Spending FY23	Program Administration FY23 (staff salaries and benefits)	Total Spending FY23	Carry Forward to FY24	Program Expenses –FY23
\$5,000,000	\$2,350,000 (24 Grants in 2 RFA cycles)	\$215,655	\$2,565,655	\$2,434,345	\$817,655

**Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Resource Utilization**

Five research grants totaling \$747,400 were awarded to Virginia public universities in FY23, but funding was not disbursed until FY24. \$600,000 was disbursed in July 2023 to four universities, with remaining \$147,400 from the first tranche to be disbursed to Norfolk State University (NSU) in November 2023 following signing of the SOS-NSU Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which went through the University’s review process.

FY24 SOS Program Administration totaled \$494,272 to include salaries and benefits. Program Expenses totaled \$245,296, including marketing and outreach, harm reduction items, and other expenses.

All SOS grantees were offered the opportunity for a second year of funding (awarded in late FY24) if they met SOS program and evaluation performance metrics by at least 80%. The remaining FY23 balance of \$2.4M was reappropriated and added to the \$1.1M FY24 budget to equal \$3.5M for disbursement for 2<sup>nd</sup> year community grants. The payments were issued in June of 2024. Of the 41 community grantees, 37 applied and were approved for 2<sup>nd</sup> year funds. An additional \$260,000 was reappropriated from the larger VVFS budget to allow for 2<sup>nd</sup> year awards to be fully funded.

**FY24 Spending Summary**

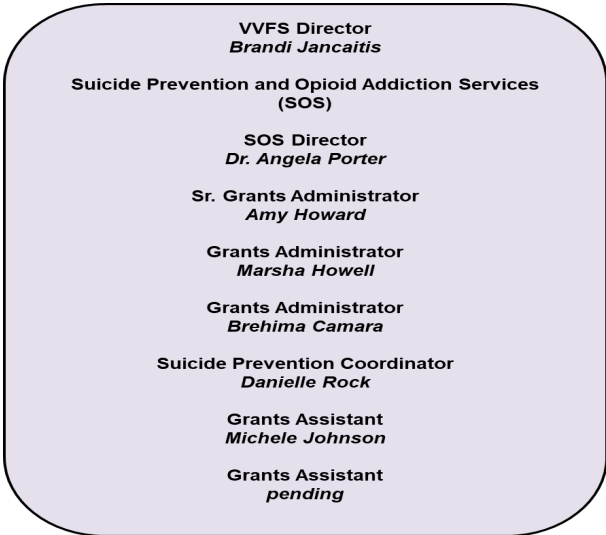
Appropriation	Grant Spending FY24	Program Administration FY24 (staff salaries and benefits)	Total Spending FY24	Carry Forward from FY23 to FY24	Program Expenses
\$5,145,000 (includes \$145,000 for Program Director position and operating costs)	\$7,139,645	\$494,272	\$7,879,213.49	\$2,434,345	\$245,296

**FY25 Projected Spending Summary**

Category	Projected FY25 Outlays
18 community provider grants – awarded November 2024 (FY25/RFA4)	\$3,214,000
Pending 2 <sup>nd</sup> year Research Grant funds	\$786,000
Projected Program Administration (staff salaries and benefits)	\$1,172,982
<b>SOS Program Total</b>	<b>\$5,172,982</b>

**Program Structure and Staffing**

The Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) Program is an integral part of the DVS Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) service line and seamlessly coordinates with VVFS’s overall behavioral health focused programs across the spectrum. DVS and VVFS team members provide procurement and administrative support for the SOS program along with three Grants Administrators, and two part-time SOS Grants Assistants. The program design includes five full time positions and a Department of Defense (DOD) SkillBridge intern (as candidates are available) to meet internal and external outreach, training, grant development/monitoring and oversight capacity. Please see the SOS organizational chart and position descriptions below.



**Director of Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (1 position)**

The Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services Director is a senior level role within the Virginia Veteran and Family Support Services (VVFS) section of DVS. The SOS Director serves as

the agency's subject matter expert on suicide prevention, opioid addiction, and behavioral health among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF).

The Director designs, develops, implements, and monitors new programs within DVS and among Federal, State, and local programs and organizations to prevent suicide and address opioid addiction and other behavioral health concerns. The SOS Director focuses on data collection and coordination with DVS partners and grantees related to incidence and prevalence of suicide and lethal means as well as behavioral health challenges and suicide risk factors with the SMVF population.

The Director also provides resources and technical assistance to constituents, Federal, State, and community partners and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). The SOS Director is the program administrator for the new community and research grants awarded by DVS to enhance prevention, intervention, and recovery services.

### **Suicide Prevention Coordinator (1 position)**

The Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) coordinates and collaborates on a wide variety of outreach, training and suicide prevention initiatives with various partners, grantees, and VSOs. The SPC coordinates relevant data and outcomes from Federal, State, and local entities to capture and track suicide prevention, outreach, and training programs, resources, and best practices. The current SOS SPS is a Master ASIST Trainer. The SPC is responsible for the development, organization, and coordination of the SOS program training and outreach initiatives for community and research grantees and broader community partners.

### **Senior Grants Administrator (1 position)**

SOS has a Senior Grants Administrator that is a Certified Grants Administrator. This position has a training component related the DVS Grants Management portal in addition to other Grants Administrator duties. The Grants Administrator provide expertise and oversight through the entire life cycle of a grant, from pre-award to post-award to include ongoing monitoring and technical assistance. The Grants Administrator performs duties in support of program procurement, financial assistance, budget management, and maintains a database of monitoring reports and files to capture progress.

### **Grants Administrator (2 positions)**

The Grants Administrator provide expertise and oversight through the entire life cycle of a grant, from pre-award to post-award to include ongoing monitoring and technical assistance. The Grants Administrator performs duties in support of program procurement, financial assistance, budget management, and maintains a database of monitoring reports and files to capture progress. SOS Grants Administrators work with both community and research grants and strive to enhance customer service and technical assistance throughout the application and review

process.

### **Grants Assistant (2 positions/P14)**

The grants assistant positions were created in order to provide administrative and programmatic support to SOS Grants Administrators. Thus, allowing SOS Grants Administrators to focus on core Grants Administrator duties and technical assistance,

### **Interns and DVS/VVFS support**

The SOS team also utilizes a partnership with the Department of Defense SkillBridge Program to provide additional capacity with interns as candidates are available. SOS also utilizes VVFS Operations staff for administrative and purchasing support. The DVS Finance Department and Communications Department also provide procurement, outreach/advertising and purchasing support for SOS.

### **Collaboration in Program Design and Operations**

Developing this new program was a collective effort with many Federal, State, and local partners. Specifically, the SOS team collaborated with various state agencies including the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), and the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to share informational resources, data, and evidence-based practices and alignment with other suicide and opioid misuse prevention and intervention programs administered by the Commonwealth.

The SOS team collaborates with Commonwealth of Virginia stakeholders in key working groups such as:

- “*Right Help Right Now*” Initiative (serves on the Support for Substance Use Disorders workstream)
- The Community Engagement Partnership Coordinators (CEPC) Working Group (provides connection to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) suicide prevention staff and veteran- focused community coalitions in multiple Federal healthcare service networks including D.C., Maryland, West Virginia, and North Carolina)
- Suicide Prevention and Interagency Group or SPIAG (hosted by DBHDS and VDH and includes members from local suicide prevention and behavioral health services programs statewide)
- Community Services Board (CSB) Service Member, Veteran, and Family SMVF Navigator Working Group (includes veteran-focused staff from CSBs statewide)
- 988 Virginia Campaign (streamlines behavioral health and suicide lifeline support statewide)
- Virginia Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide (GCPS) among SMVF (National Call to Action for a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention that started in Virginia in 2018)

Over the past 2 years, the SOS team has worked closely with leaders and stakeholders in the National GCPS, including Veteran Affairs (VA), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and national Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). The team joins monthly working groups and the National Governor's Challenge Community of Practice meetings with the other 54 States and Territories participating in the Challenge.

The SOS team continues to serve on the Steering Committee for the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide's (GCPS), *Virginia's Identify, Screen and Refer* (VISR) initiative. The VISR initiative provides training and technical assistance for community services providers in military and veteran culture and resources, suicide prevention, and lethal means safety. The SOS team leads the VSO working group and coordinates best practice training (Examples include training in grant writing, suicide risk screening and intervention, and safety planning) for all VISR stakeholders. To date, over 130 individuals have become VISR certified with many of our community partners boasting large numbers of VISR certifications within their agencies.

### **Successes**

The Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) grant program has awarded over \$12.7 million dollars to 59 community veteran services organizations, 2 private institutions of higher learning, 5 public institutions of higher learning and 1 research firm from FY23 thru FY25. SOS grantees cover expansive localities (representing urban, suburban, and rural) and diverse suicide prevention, behavioral health treatment and recovery, and opioid addiction services (please refer to the Grantee map Appendix I).

SOS grantees continue to provide critical services to enhance and save lives including community training and education in suicide prevention and harm reduction supports; Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT), Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy (R.E.S.T.), Photo Biomodulation Therapy (PBMT), peer support; service animals and developing, implementing, and/or evaluating clinical therapies for Service Members, Veterans, and their families.

### **SOS Outreach**

The SOS team has also participated in extensive outreach and education activities (please refer to Appendix III for a summary) including the following events for September Suicide Prevention Awareness and Recovery month at the Virginia War Memorial. SafeTALK was presented to teach grantees and partners to recognize and engage persons who might be having thoughts of suicide and to connect them with community resources trained in suicide intervention. SafeTALK emphasizes safety while challenging taboos that stifle open dialogue about suicide. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) was held with community partners, grantees, and DVS staff in attendance. The 2-day training program teaches participants how to identify individuals at risk and intervene with suicide first aid.

A virtual Recovery Day event was held in May of 2024. Recovery Day was held as a virtual event hosted by the SOS to bring awareness, education, and hope in the realm of substance use recovery. Guest speakers discussed the availability of substance use recovery resources for

service members, veterans and their family members. Presenters for Recovery Day included DVS staff and other partners (including Department of Corrections, DBHDS, VDH). Presenters also spoke on Veteran substance use (including opioid misuse) as well as data on overdose hospitalizations and deaths in Virginia. The SOS Program has designed both a Fall and a Spring Suicide Prevention Symposium to be held in the Eastern region of the Commonwealth and the Western region of the Commonwealth. The Suicide Prevention Symposium is designed to provide networking, resource connection, and technical assistance and training opportunities to grantees while connecting them to key partners. Grantees are invited to present a synopsis of the SOS funded services that are providing to SMVF throughout the Commonwealth. The grantees also participated in regional working groups to connect with Federal, State, and local partners in an effort to promote collaboration and address barriers and gaps in services for SMVF.

The Program Director also presented on the development of the SOS grant program at the VA/DOD Conference in Portland, Oregon before 5,000 staff from Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, various veterans service organizations and suicide prevention staff.

As a continuation of the inaugural DVS Naloxone Distribution program that rolled out in 2023, a second phase of distribution continues in order to replace any Naloxone throughout DVS that may be close to or has already expired. DVS leads the way for opioid overdose prevention, the SOS Team coordinated agency wide REVIVE training and certification and distribution of opioid overdose prevention/Naloxone kits to DVS staff to equip them to save the lives of veterans and other citizens of the commonwealth of Virginia.

The SOS Team disseminates harm reduction items such as medication lock boxes, locking medication bags, locking pill bottles, fentanyl test, Xylazine and strips, Dterra packets, and gun locks as part of harm reductions kits through the Lethal Means Harm Reduction and Outreach Program. The SOS team participated in extensive outreach and training events throughout the past year (refer to APPENDIX III for a summary).

### **Challenges**

During its first year, SOS experienced several challenges particularly around personnel retention. In May and June of 2023, two SOS team members left the agency, which created a major strain on remaining team members. SOS also experienced challenges due to the fast pace of program development as well as the specificity of knowledge and skills necessary for developing, reviewing, and overseeing new grant operations. The small SOS team is currently managing three cohorts of community grants and two cohorts of research grants. In support, the entire VVFS service line and multiple DVS support functions such as Human Resources, Finance, and Procurement have rallied to help overcome these challenges. The SOS team provided grantees with additional coaching and tutelage to assist them with meeting program metrics of at least 80% of the proposed goal. Two of the Forty-one community grantees experienced challenges

with hiring staff, staff retention and identifying SMVF for their proposed services. The SOS team increased their technical assistance and coaching to any grantees experiencing these difficulties and further connected grantees to fellow grantees to collaborate and be force extenders for one another.

## **Opportunities**

The SOS team has utilized creative opportunities to build staff capacity in an economical and efficient manner. For example, the team is utilizing the Virginia SkillBridge Program (from the DVS Education, Transition and Employment division and active-duty military personnel) to acquire interns for additional grants administration and operations/administration capacity.

SOS also has opportunities to offer DVS staff and partners a chance to be Grant Evaluators for both community and research grants. This is an important skill development and a resume building opportunity.

The SOS team applied for and was awarded a slot for the Veterans Affairs/SAMHSA's Suicide Mortality Review (SMR) Academy and Cooperative Agreement. Federal Veterans Affairs and the SAMHSA Suicide Mortality Review Academy and Cooperative Agreement was awarded to the Commonwealth of Virginia as one of just ten States and two Territories nationwide. The Suicide Mortality Review (SMR) process is a multidisciplinary process to help us better understand why people in our community die by suicide and to help us identify how we can prevent these unnecessary deaths. Suicide Mortality Reviews (SMR) are systematic and comprehensive reviews of deaths that are intended to help develop recommended strategies to prevent future deaths. SMRs are conducted by a committee of stakeholders (SMRC), which access multiple sources of clinical and non-clinical information to provide a deeper understanding of the circumstances surrounding a death. The SMRCs then develop recommendations for action to prevent similar deaths in the future.

The SMR Academy allowed a team of 10 Virginia partners to participate in skill building and interact with subject matter experts in the field. Virginia was 1 of 7 in the 2024 cohort of awardees. THE SMR Academy was sponsored by SAMHSA's SMVF Technical Assistance (TA) Center staff and Project Manager Partners Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRAI). The goal of the SMR- CA is to support the development, expansion and sustainment of suicide mortality reviews and committees, and to promote lethal means safety training, education and community outreach. The SMR-CA was created by section 303 of Division V of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), which states that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with States, territories, and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes for the development and implementation of veteran suicide prevention proposals through the Governor's Challenge Program. The population of focus for the SMR-CA is Virginia Veterans. Virginia veterans must be included as a population of focus for SMR-CA's as well as education and training.

Each team received technical assistance to strengthen behavioral health systems and services for SMVF Inter-agency cooperation to develop an implementation plan for SMR or SMR related efforts in Virginia. The importance of data gathering, analytics and storage were also brought forward

during the academy. With the additional award of \$282,000 from an SMR Cooperative Agreement (CA), the SMR Team will be able to deliver Lock and Talk training to 6 military connected communities within the commonwealth and partner with a prestigious Veteran Service Organization, America's Warrior Partnership (AWP) for SMR Project Management/Coordination, landscape/community analysis and data analysis.

The SOS team continues deepen our partnership with the Virginia Department of Health's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner related to suicide decedents, overdose deaths and violent deaths. The OCME will be an integral stakeholder in the SMR process along with local change makers/stakeholders. The process is one that will be intensive, but we hope to discover crucial data that will inform our outreach efforts and allow for more directed prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts.

### **Grantee Highlights**

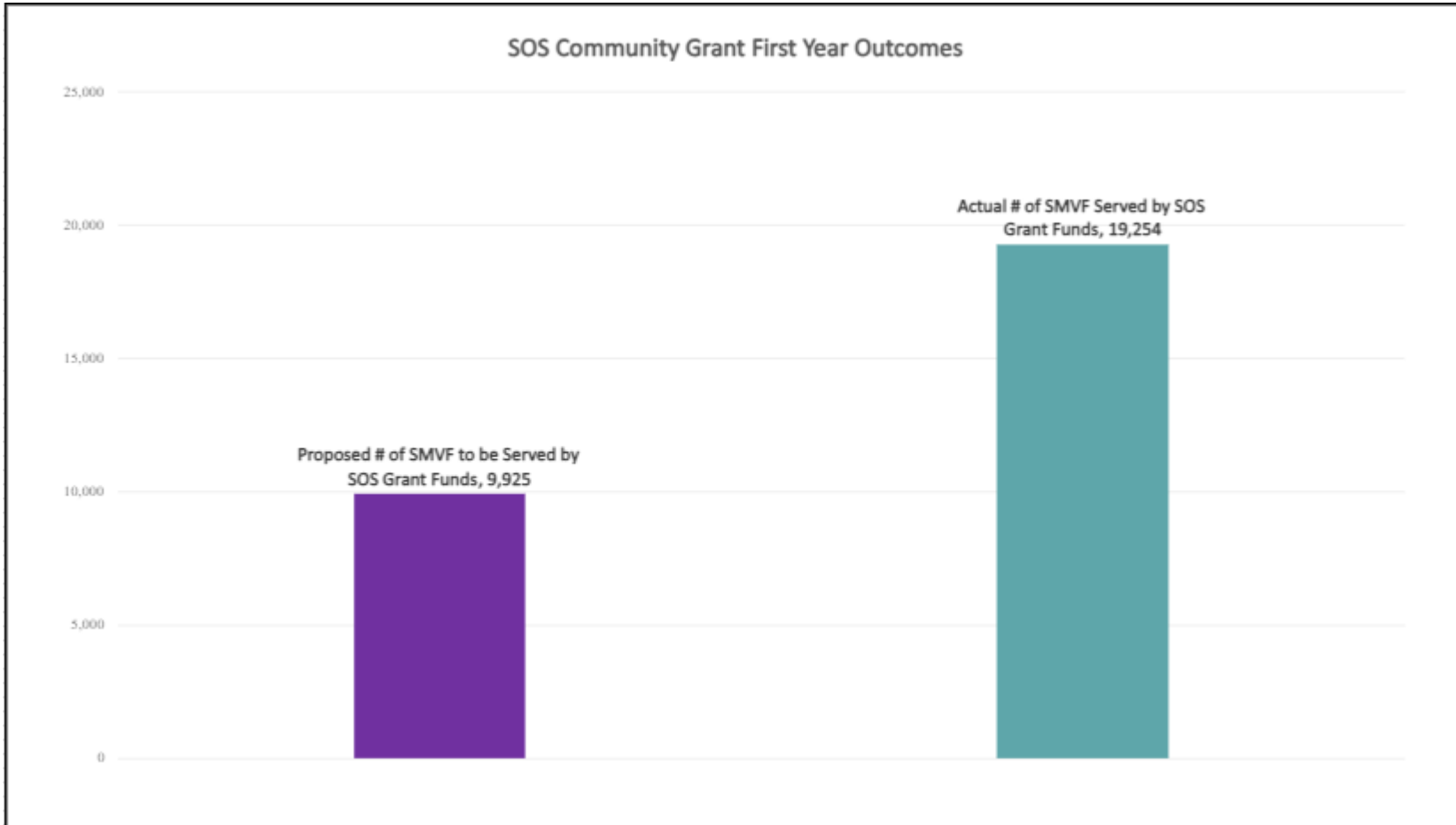
Several SOS grantees are collaborating with one another to build more capacity to assist SMVF with complex issues that could lead to suicide and/or addiction to opioids. These collaborations result in a monumental impact and overall increase in the number of SMVF served. These collaborations will yield contact numbers above their projected goal of SMVF to be served. The overall projected outcomes across the three community grant cohorts were double the projected in terms of number of SMVF served. Some of the grantees that have collaborated: LivingWorks, That Zen Life, GNUS Corporation, Weaver's Bond, Tier 1 Therapies, Help Our Wounded (HOW), Charlottesville Hyperbaric, Objective Zero, Supreme Homecare Assisted Living, Galax Treatment Centers (Acadia Healthcare), Military Retirees Club, The Up Center (Cohen Clinics) and Northern Virginia Vets (NOVA Vets).

For a synopsis of SOS grant funded services please see the list of all SOS Grantees below.

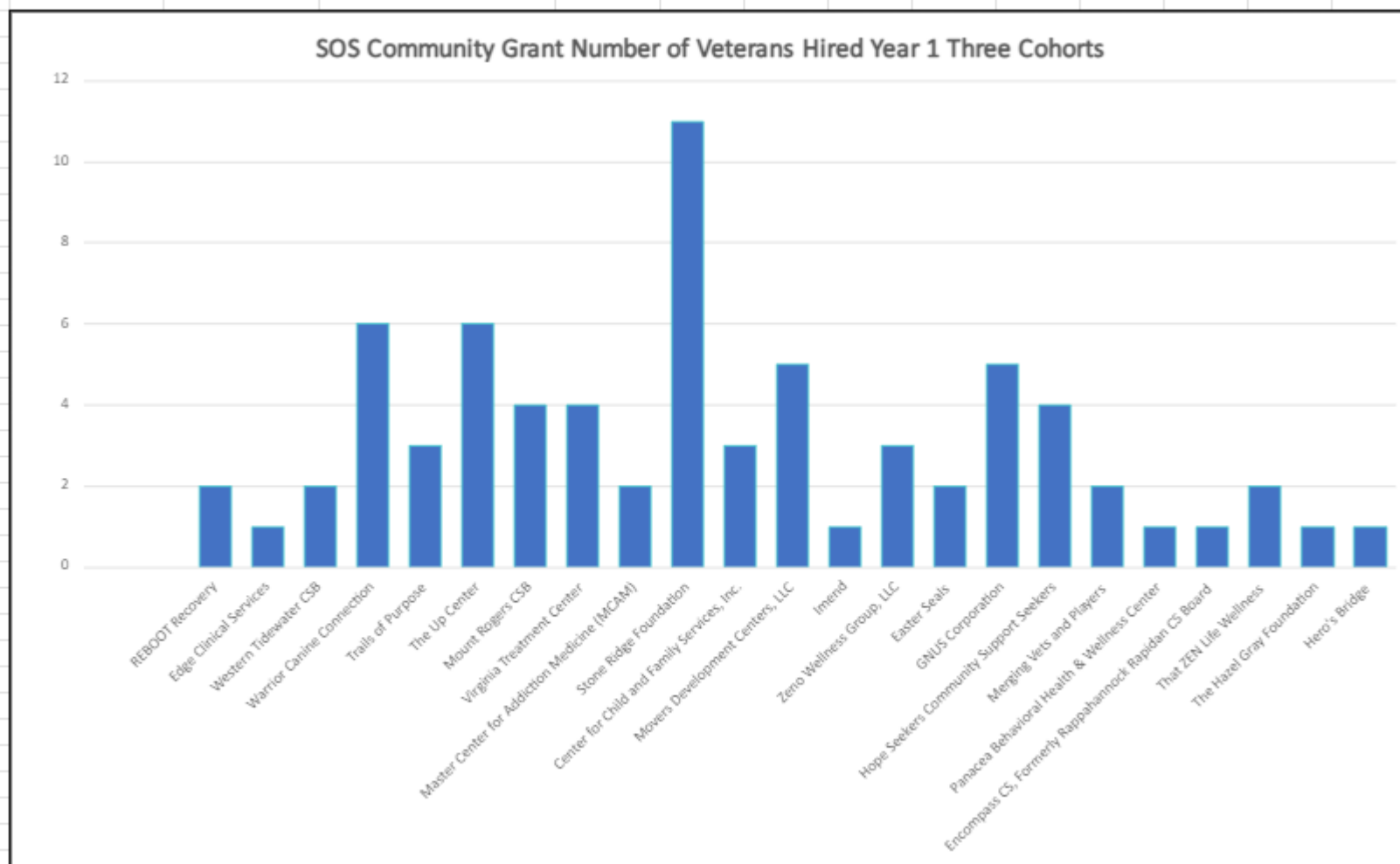


**SOS Grantee Data Reporting:**

The SOS community grantee data that is graphed below was extracted from quarters 1 through 4 of the 3 cohorts (June 2023 – June 2024). As you can see from data displayed in the graph, approximately 19,254 SMVF were assisted by grantees during this reporting period. This is notable as the projected outcomes in terms of veterans served was 9,925. Overall, grantees significantly exceeded projected target, and 41 grantee organizations engaged and supported 19,254 military-connected individuals and families.

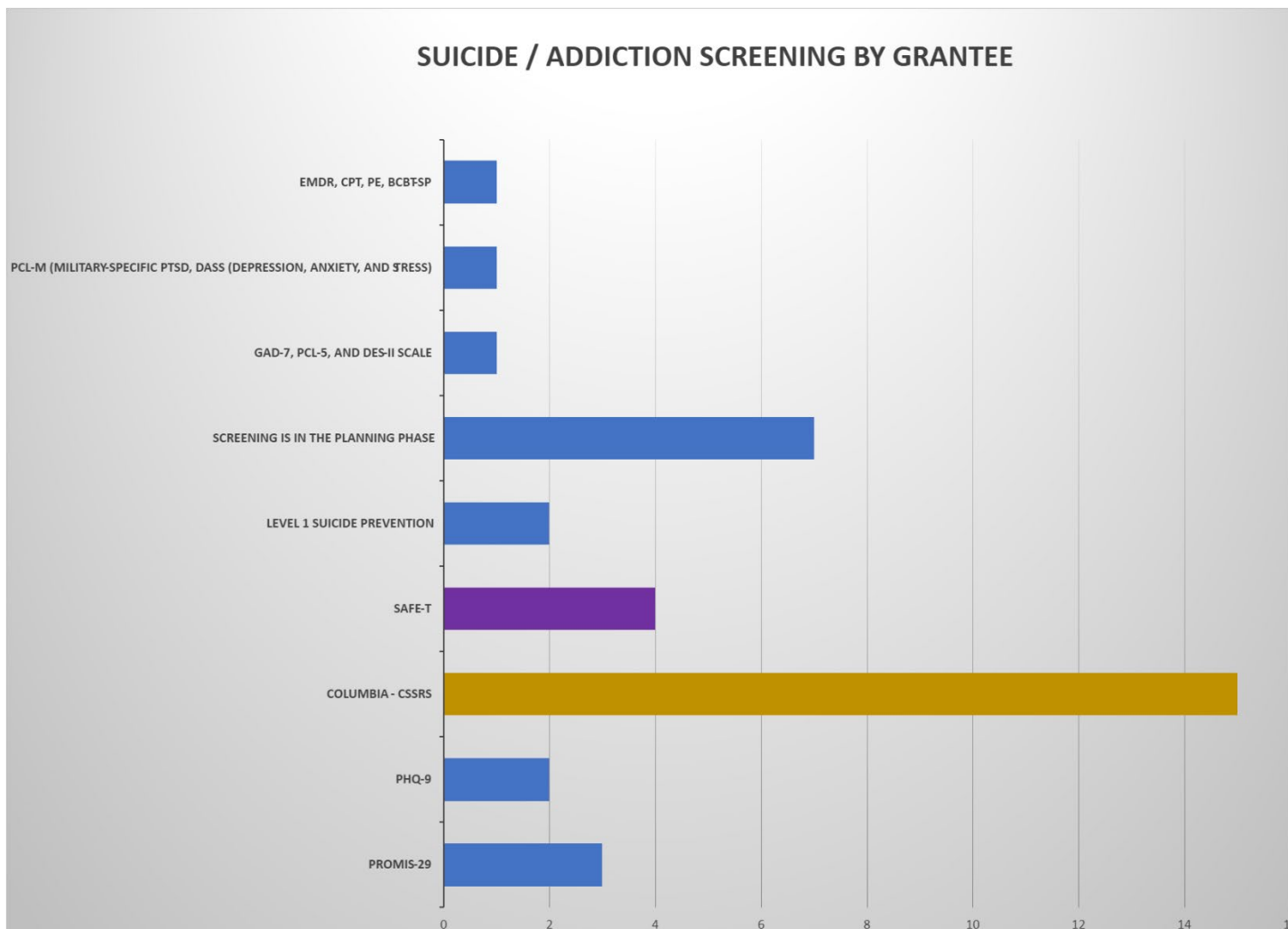


In addition to providing direct behavioral health and supportive services to individuals and families, SOS grantees hired military-connected individuals in their staffing models contributing to DVS priority to support the entrepreneurial and career development goals of SMVF in local communities.



SOS grantees utilize a variety of evidence-based assessments (listed below) to screen for behavioral health needs and suicide risk. After

screening, SOS grantees provide support directly or refer to other partner agencies for additional support.



## **Screening Instruments utilized:**

The PROMIS-29 adult profile is a brief generic health measure comprising 29-items from the PROMIS domains of anxiety, depression, fatigue, pain (intensity and interference), physical function, sleep disturbance, satisfaction with participation in social roles (social participation).

SAFE-T This resource gives a brief overview on conducting a suicide assessment using a five-step evaluation and triage plan. The five-step plan involves identifying risk factors and protective factors, conducting a suicide inquiry, determining risk level and interventions, and documenting a treatment plan.

The PHQ-9 is a multipurpose instrument for screening, diagnosing, monitoring and measuring the severity of depression: The PHQ-9 incorporates DSMIV depression diagnostic criteria with other leading major depressive symptoms into a brief self-report tool.

The C-SSRS is a short questionnaire that can be administered quickly in the field by responders with no formal mental health training, and it is relevant in a wide range of settings and for individuals of all ages.

The GAD-seven scale is a self-report measure of anxiety. It was developed by Stanley Rachman and colleagues in 1971 and has since been widely used in research and clinical practice. The scale consists of seven items, each of which measures a different aspect of anxiety symptoms.

The PCL-5 is a 20-item self-report measure that assesses the 20 DSM-5 symptoms of PTSD. The PCL-5 has a variety of purposes, including:

1. Monitoring symptoms change during and after treatment, 2. Screening individuals for PTSD and 3. Making a provisional PTSD diagnosis

The gold standard for diagnosing PTSD is a structured clinical interview such as the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS-5). When necessary, the PCL-5 can be scored to provide a provisional PTSD diagnosis.

The Dissociative Experiences Scale II (DES II) is a brief, self-report measure of the frequency of dissociative experiences. The DES was developed to serve as a clinical tool to help identify patients with dissociative psychopathology and as a research tool to provide a means

of quantifying dissociative experiences.

The PCL-M (military) asks about symptoms in response to "stressful military experiences." It is often used with active service members and Veterans. The PCL can be scored in different ways: A total symptom severity score (range = 17-85) can be obtained by summing the scores from each of the 17 items Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a psychotherapy treatment that is designed to alleviate the distress associated with traumatic memories.

Cognitive processing therapy (CPT) is a specific type of cognitive behavioral therapy that has been effective in reducing symptoms of PTSD that have developed after experiencing a variety of traumatic events including child abuse, combat, rape and natural disasters.

Prolonged exposure therapy (PE) is a theoretically based and highly effective treatment for chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related depression, anxiety, and anger. PE falls under the category of "exposure-based therapy" and is supported by scientific studies which reflect its positive impact on patient symptoms.

Brief Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Suicide Prevention (BCBT-SP)

Brief cognitive-behavioral therapy (BCBT-SP) to prevent suicide is an empirically supported treatment for those struggling with suicidal ideation and suicide attempts

### **Research Grantee Data Highlights**

SOS selected 8 research grantees in FY23 and FY24: Yale, Duke, Virginia Polytechnic Institution and State University (Virginia Tech, VT), Virginia Military Institute (VMI), George Mason University (GMU), Norfolk State University (NSU), New River Community College (NRCC) and W2 Consulting. Any research grantee that intended to conduct a survey or obtain protected personal data had to apply and receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

<b>Research Grantee</b>	<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>	<b>No Cost Extension (NCE)</b>	<b>Final Report Due Date</b>	<b>2nd Year Application</b>
Yale University (RFP)	Exemption Received	Approved	02/28/2026	N/A
Duke University (RFP)	Not Human Subject Research	Pending Dukes internal review	Pending extension date	N/A
Virginia Tech (VT) (MOA)	Not Human Subject Research	First Year Closeout	03/30/2025	Submitted/Awaiting Review
Virginia Military Institute (VMI)(MOA)	Approved	Approved	09/30/2025	Declined
George Mason University (GMU) (MOA)	Approved	Approved	03/30/2025	N/A
Norfolk State University (NSU) (MOA)	Does not require IRB approval	Approved	09/30/2025	Declined
New River Community College (NRCC) (MOA)	Does not require IRB approval	Approved	09/30/2025	N/A
W2 Consulting (RFP)	Exemption Received	First Year Closeout	03/30/2025	Pending

## **Yale University**

### **Scope:**

Objective 1: Obtain extensive survey data from a large sample of Virginia Veterans to understand and identify a wide array of factors associated with suicide risk, protective factors, and factors related to opioid disorders and the extent to which these are present in the Virginia Veteran population.

Objective 2 has three parts: (1) Examine current practice of suicide risk assessment and prevention at Virginia institutions and services use by Veterans, including both VA and non-VA healthcare; (2) Compare these practices with “best practices” guidelines for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention; and (3) use data gathered in phase 1 (Objective 1) to examine the “Goodness of fit” between veteran risk factors and needs in Virginia and the current practices for assessment, prevention, and intervention.

### **Progress to Date:**

The project is a survey study, using Qualtrics, being sent to the roughly 750,000 Veterans in the VDVS database. We have collaborated with all parties at VDVS to coordinate the mailing list, have compiled the survey, have loaded it into Qualtrics and are in the final stages of refining it while also in the final stages of IRB approval. Yale piloted the survey with veteran staff at VDVS and launched the survey to all veterans in the VDVS database in August of 2024. The year one final report is due February 28, 2026.

## **Duke University**

### **Scope:**

Objective 1: Pilot recruitment methods in the D.C.-Maryland-Virginia area designed to increase the representativeness and diversity of former service members included in suicide research studies and will collect and analyze interview data from the family and friends of this diverse group.

Objective 2: Conduct a census of suicide and opioid overdose deaths among Virginia’s former service members to provide veteran serving organizations with data on the former service members at high risk. Duke’s No Cost Extension is currently pending. Once the No Cost Extension is approved, a final report date can be generated.

### **Progress to Date:**

Duke University has developed their survey and has obtained their Qualtrics license in order to disseminate the SOS grant funded survey to Veterans around the Commonwealth. The survey data is still being collected. The results of their survey and research conclusions will follow. The last 6 months have been spent working on implementing and refining recruitment strategies for qualitative interviews. Recruitment strategies tried were (1) Facebook ads; (2) contacting veteran service organizations directly; and (3) contacting other Virginia grantees. Duke also pursued 2014-2022 death certificate data from Virginia Vital Statistics and completed an initial review to assess the scope of existing literature on suicide and overdose focused on populations within Virginia.

## **W2 Consulting**

### **Scope:**

Objective 1: To build a compendium of existing strategies and determine their effectiveness in facilitating the reach and delivery of community suicide prevention program services to the targeted population and delineate why they did or did not work as intended.

Objective 2: To explore with program stakeholders the extent to which existing suicide prevention programs can be improved by applying machine learning, out-of-care outreach, or educational communication strategies, and examine what other implementation strategies can optimally increase program effectiveness via implementation outcomes of applicability, acceptability, appropriateness, and sustainability.

### **Progress to Date:**

The W2 Consulting Team attended a *Grant Implementation Meeting* hosted by the Virginia Department of Veteran Services Grants Management Team on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023. During the month of December 2023, the W2 Consulting Team onboarded a dedicated Project Manager and Research Analyst to support the project's aims. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, the W2 Consulting Team hosted an internal kickoff meeting to discuss the project's scope, aims, personnel, and drafted workplan. From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the W2 Consulting Team engaged in the following: (1) hosted a kickoff meeting with our partner organization (WestEd), (2) refined and generated a final workplan and personnel assignments, (3) sought ethics review approval and data management training, (4) developed methodology for and initiated a rapid review of the literature, and (5) initiated formation of an advisory board, and (6) hosted project team meetings internally and with our partner organization to ensure forward progress. During the next reporting period, the Project Team aims to engage in the following: (1) synthesize findings from literature review in a report, (2) host the Panel Consultations, (3) host the Advisory Board, (4) host program consultations, and (5) develop a compendium of strategies to support effective implementation of suicide prevention programs serving Service Members, Veterans, and their families. The Project Team also aims to discuss and determine plans to proceed with Year 2 aims. The year one final report is due March 30, 2025.

## **Virginia Tech (VT)**

### **Scope:**

To gain a better understanding of the obstacles to care, VT will study both individual factors (including but not limited to demographic variables such as military service history, and disability rating) as well as greater systemic factors (such as access, policies, geography) that may impact veterans' decision to seek mental health care, as well as suicide and substance use risk.

### **Progress to Date:**

Since the grant was received the VT team accomplished the following: 1) Hired one research assistant at Penn State and one at Virginia Tech, to assist PI and co-PI with fulfilling research in



accordance with the grant has been used to pay Virginia Tech RA, Penn State RA is paid with Department of Economics funds at Penn State, until subaward made to Penn State has been completed. Then subaward funds will be used to reimburse department funds. 2) Collected publicly available data on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facility location, measures of VHA facility level backlog including wait times and patient load on a bimonthly basis, county and tract level socioeconomic characteristics, proxies for county level gun access, proxies for county level opiate use, state level suicide rates for veterans and non-veterans, state level military and contractor presence. This data will be merged with National Center of Health Statistics (NCHS) National Health Interview Survey merged with Department of Veterans Affairs Administrative (NHIS-VA) data. This data will allow the team to link veterans who were surveyed on health, mental health, treatment decisions, insurance coverage, work, and income to their local geographies to see how county level characteristics and local VHA facility backlog effect mental health and decisions to pursue treatment. Additionally, VT can begin analyzing aggregate level outcomes from publicly available data. 3) Submitted Application for restricted level NCHS NHIS-VA data. This is the main data set that will be used to analyze geographic, VHA facility, and administrative barriers to veterans' decision to pursue mental health treatment and veterans' mental health outcomes. NCHS has requested some modifications to the application to provide more information on research design. VT is communicating with NCHS to meet the requirements to gain access to data in a timely manner. Grant has been granted a no cost extension to continue research activities up until December 31, 2024. Accomplishments so far include 1) Hiring Graduate RAs to assist with analysis. 2) Collected data on VHA facility wait time, Geographic Characteristics 2) Performed preliminary analysis of publicly available data - important roles of perception of barriers, access to health insurance, and labor market outcomes for health outcomes/utilization. The year one final report is due March 30, 2025.

### **Virginia Military Institute (VMI)**

#### **Scope:**

The "Veteran Suicide: Examining the Role of Active Duty and Post-Discharge Experiences," project is investigating key risk and protective factors of veteran suicide that have not been adequately researched to date.

#### **Progress to Date:**

VMI has developed the survey and obtained Qualtrics license to disseminate the SOS grant funded survey to Veterans around the Commonwealth. The survey data is still being collected. Based on our Qualtrics survey, 354 (64.5%) participants reported having at least some thoughts of suicide over the past two weeks. This level was not unexpected given the nature of the population studied. However, all participants were given information to contact the principal investigators in case of current distress, and no participants expressed current distress to the principal investigators. Also, all participants received info on the Veterans Crisis Line and other info. The year one final report is due September 30, 2025.

## **George Mason University (GMU)**

### **Scope:**

To study the linkage between the misuse of prescription drugs and deaths by suicide.

### **Progress to Date:**

GMU began recruiting for staff upon receiving funding in Aug 2023 and confirmed and hired the Program Coordinator in October of 2023, confirmed 2 of 3 consultants for the project as of October 2023, and the 3rd in November. All are processed and working on the project now. The team hosted a kick-off meeting in Oct 2023; Treatment adaptation began in November 2023. As of December 2024, several modules were adapted; completion of adaptations that can be done without interview/focus group input is anticipated as of Jan 31, 2024. IRB materials prepared Nov 2023, finalized Dec 2023. As of Dec 31 – materials are scheduled for review in Jan 2024. Approval anticipated by Jan 31, 2024. Relationships with agency clinicians for training already established. Training anticipated April of 2024. The only foreseeable challenges at this point include recruitment of veteran participants, GMU has designed all procedures to be possible to complete remotely, so that no travel is required, the team has numerous connections throughout Virginia that should help ensure adequate recruitment. For recruitment of clinicians for focus groups and for training, we do not anticipate any issues. The Center for Evidence-Based Behavioral Health at GMU has extensive relationships with hundreds of clinicians throughout the Northern Virginia region, and this training is in line with specific requests that have come from numerous agencies in the region, Possible extension needed to complete work with a training anticipated in April 2024, the 6-month consultation period that follows the training would not be complete until October 2024. Ideally, GMU would complete final data collection after the end of the consultation period, which would require extending the project completion date to Dec 31, 2024. The year one final report is due March 30, 2025.

## **Norfolk State University (NSU)**

### **Scope:**

This research project is to examine the impact of belongingness and social support on cessation of suicidal ideation, plans, and behaviors among African American military veterans.

### **Progress to Date:**

NSU began to collect data in February of 2024. They have held 3 workshops focusing on mental health and veterans for the campus and broader community. They have held focus groups and interviewed African American Veterans. They have held social events in order to encourage social connection and participation in the study. Research data is currently being cleaned and analyzed from the study. Since May 2024, the group has contacted 35 veterans using the following methods: workshops and radio broadcast/advertisements about the study. Workshop one (belong and social support) was held on the campus of Norfolk State University with 3 participants and Workshop two (Dealing with Past While Coping for Today) was held on May 23 in Portsmouth, VA at the American Legion Post 190 with 32 participants. Additionally, one interview was conducted with a Navy Veteran. The year one final report is due September 30, 2025.

## **New River Community College (NRCC)**

### **Scope:**

This research grant is to develop a database of all veterans attending NRCC and living in the NRCC Region with the purpose of developing a contact list for checking on them and inviting them to events at the college.

### **Progress to Date:**

NRCC is utilizing SOS grant funds to create a Veterans Resource Center for Service Members, Veteran students and military dependents. Upon completion of the center, the Veteran Resource Specialist that is funded through the grant, will facilitate services to assist the students with meeting various needs to support them. A survey will then be sent out to the students to ascertain the impact of said service implementation in the center by the center staff/Resource Specialist. New River Community College (NRCC) served 53 Veteran students during the last quarter of the 2023 calendar year. Throughout the fall 2023 semester, Veterans Resource staff attempted to connect and create professional relationships with all Veterans. Numerous individual meetings were held to assist students with their academic and non-academic needs and to give staff the opportunity to get to know these students. NRCC held its first Veterans and Dependents Meet and Greet event, which allowed our Veterans to meet each other and spend quality time sharing military stories with one another, while also meeting Veteran families. Lastly, staff held a Veterans Day Ceremony event which saw the entire Veterans and dependents community come together to honor their brothers and sisters in-arms, connect with one another, and share lunch together. Throughout the fall 2023 semester, staff connected with 58 dependent students and family members. Staff met one-on-one with many dependents, and they also had many group meetings with multiple family members. As noted above, NRCC hosted a Veterans and Dependents Meet and Greet reception for our Veterans, dependents, and family members. Additionally, the annual Veterans Day Ceremony provided an opportunity for Veteran & dependent students to meet with college faculty, staff, and the rest of the Veteran community to honor all Veterans. NRCC served 68 veteran students during the first half of 2024. Veterans Services sponsored, organized, and coordinated a Transfer Fair, presenting veteran students with the opportunity to explore their future academic options. Veteran Services also hosted their first ever Resource Fair with over 20 veteran focused organizations and institutions attending, providing vital resources and information for veteran students and their families, and also providing lunch for all student veterans. The year one final report is due September 30, 2025.

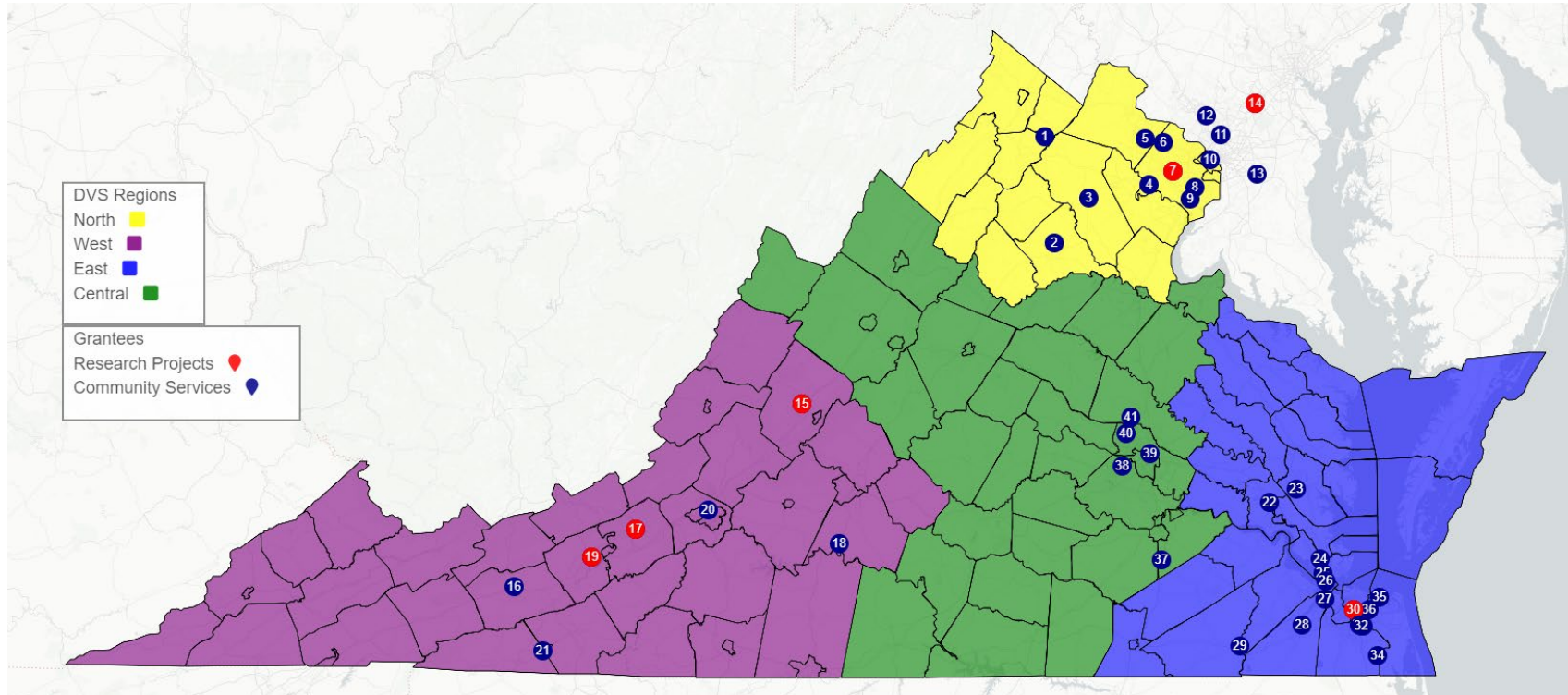
### **Recommendations**

DVS was able to utilize new general fund support to build the Commonwealth's first state-level community and research grant program to advance suicide prevention and opioid addiction services for Service Members, Veterans, and families. The SOS program illustrates the Commonwealth's immense commitment to the health and well-being of military-connected citizens. The DVS Virginia Veteran and Family Support service line in DVS provides peer and family support, care coordination and community resource linkages directly (with 57 staff members) and

the addition of SOS community grantee agencies has significantly expanded the number of SMVF that DVS can positively impact. The partnership between DVS and SOS grantees creates a critical safety net of community-based providers and supports to ease military transition, enhance behavioral health well-being and family stability. DVS recommends sustainment and growth for the Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services program to enhance best practices in prevention, intervention, and postvention services at the Federal, State, and local levels for military-connected citizens.

## APPENDIX I

The map below indicates the 67 grantees with 15 of the 67 that are headquartered outside of the Commonwealth but delivering SOS grant services/research within the Commonwealth. Those that are headquartered outside of the Commonwealth are Help Our Wounded (HOW), Easter Seals, Every Mind, Inc., JIA Staffing, Supreme Homecare Assisted Living, LLC, Warrior Canine Connection, The Headstrong Project Inc., Yale University, Duke University, LivingWorks, REBOOT Recovery, Objective Zero, Warriors Canine Connection, Merging Vets and Players and W2 Consulting. As a result of the scale of the map, some grantee pins are not visible due to overlap.





**Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services Grantee Contact List**

**APPENDIX II**

Award Recipient/Point of Contact	Location(s)	Number of SMVF Proposed for Year 1	Award Amount /2nd Year	Grant Funded Service
<b>COMMUNITY</b>				
REBOOT Recovery <a href="mailto:evan@rebootrecovery.com">evan@rebootrecovery.com</a> Evan Owens 615-715-2065	York, Stafford, Prince George, Hampton, Hanover	300	\$75,000/\$75,000	The goal of this program is to organize the “largest peer led response to suicide ever built.” According to their application, REBOOT courses are currently held in 43 states and 11 countries.
Edge Clinical Services <a href="mailto:ejones@eclinicals.org">ejones@eclinicals.org</a> Eric Jones 757-289-2571	Eastern and Western Regions of VA	72	\$100,000	The goal of this project would be to reduce the incidence of suicide and opioid addiction among SMVF populations in the eastern and western part of Virginia by providing culturally informed and tailored primary prevention-based strategies to homeless and incarcerated Veterans, especially in underserved areas.

Western Tidewater CSB <a href="mailto:Sreaves@wtcsb.org">Sreaves@wtcsb.org</a> Sheila Reaves 757-617-8795	Eastern VA	50	\$125,000/\$125,000	The goal of this program is to provide screening, assessment, and weekly or biweekly treatment for up to 40 concurrent SMVF in an outpatient setting for substance use treatment. The applicant is utilizing DVS funds to also improve capacity for treatment of substance use disorders in the Eastern Region by up to 50 individuals per year.
LivingWorks <a href="mailto:jerry.swanner@livingworks.net">jerry.swanner@livingworks.net</a> Jerry Swanner 910-670-9306	Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Staunton, Norfolk	1278	\$100,000/\$100,000	The goal of this program is to strengthen the suicide prevention Network of Safety by training up to 5,560 SMVF members using best practice LivingWorks suicide awareness and intervention skills programs.
Galax Treatment Centers/Acadia Healthcare-VA Treatment Centers <a href="mailto:scott.swinburne@CTCPrograms.com">scott.swinburne@CTCPrograms.com</a> Scott Swinburne 616-856-8352	Winchester City, Christiansburg, Cedar Bluff, Galax	30	\$124,968/\$125,000	The goal of this program is to screen and assess patients, develop individualized plans of care, share data at the clinic level and provide regular education for SMVF patients in addition to a Peer Recovery Support Specialist at each of their 4 clinics.
Lighthouse Beacon Church/Beacon Institute <a href="mailto:sharon.schlerf.newcomb@bi-vph.org">sharon.schlerf.newcomb@bi-vph.org</a> Sharon Schlerf 804-384-9325 804-384-9323	Williamsburg, Hampton Road area	44	\$60,000/\$60,000	The goal of program is to train 48 individuals to become Peer Support specialists which they estimate will serve 432 within the SMVF community over the course of one year.
Hope for the Warriors (HOPE) <a href="mailto:jhuffman@hopeforthewarriors.org">jhuffman@hopeforthewarriors.org</a> Jennifer Huffman 910-382-4940	Springfield	78	\$100,000/\$100,000	The goal of HOPE seeks to expand its presence in Virginia where, since 2021, it has partnered with the Virginia Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Military Service Members, Veterans, and Families and uses VISR 2.0 to screen veterans throughout the state.
The Hazel Gray Foundation	Eastern VA,	12	\$100,000/\$100,000	The goal of this program is to provide virtual

<a href="mailto:dsmith@hazelgrayfoundation.org">dsmith@hazelgrayfoundation.org</a> Desiree Smith 757-214-2934	Hampton Roads			individual and group psychotherapy for 8 to 12 eligible participants weekly for 90 minutes of intensive trauma recovery treatment with individual sessions scheduled as needed.
Veterans Moving Forward <a href="mailto:lsittner@vetsfwd.org">lsittner@vetsfwd.org</a> Lori Sittner 703-665-2129	Statewide	2500	\$100,000/\$100,000	With this project, the goal is to acquire and train four additional service dogs, six additional therapy/facility dogs, and one additional emotional support dog.
Warrior Canine Connection <a href="mailto:jenwilder@warriorcanineconnection.org">jenwilder@warriorcanineconnection.org</a> Jennifer Wilder 937-416-9245	Statewide	50	\$125,000/\$125,000	The organization seeks support to expand its services to more Virginia Veterans through the Rappahannock Regional Veterans Docket held at the Spotsylvania Circuit Court, at Fort Belvoir, and in partnership with fellow nonprofit organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).
Objective Zero <a href="mailto:glori@objectivezero.org">glori@objectivezero.org</a> Gloria Fernandez 202-573-9660	Statewide	15	\$75,000/\$75,000	Objective Zero's goal is to use DVS grant funds to expand, design, test, and implement a new feature that enables Objective Zero to better serve the SVMF community and enable them to better connect with peer support Pathfinders through an app.
Trails of Purpose <a href="mailto:kyle.arestivo@trailsofpurpose.com">kyle.arestivo@trailsofpurpose.com</a> Kyle Arestivo 757-447-4173	Hampton Roads and Eastern VA	80	\$125,000/\$125,000	Trails of Purpose goal is to (provide Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) that will address Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction by expanding the program's capacity to serve more SMVF and provide a deeper level of engagement with participants.
Hero's Bridge <a href="mailto:mbrooks@herosbridge.org">mbrooks@herosbridge.org</a> Molly Brooks	Fauquier, Culpeper, Tappahannock	150	\$75,006/\$75,000	Provides a Community Health Worker to support aging veterans and perform comprehensive suicide risk screenings/assessments utilizing the trauma



540-341-5378	, Madison			informed care concepts to improve their Quality-of-Life scores.
Help Our Wounded (HOW) Foundation <a href="mailto:sarah@howfoundationsf.org">sarah@howfoundationsf.org</a> Sarah Crane 703-505-8682	Northern, Piedmont, Eastern, and Central VA	15	\$124,971/\$125,000	HOW's project goal to serve eight veterans impacted by TBI and PTSD with 20 daily 1-hour hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) treatments to decrease suicide ideation in SMVF by helping the brain recover from physical damage resulting from TBIs and PTSD.
The Up Center Andrea Long <a href="mailto:Andrea.Long@theupcenter.org">Andrea.Long@theupcenter.org</a> Kevin Ferguson <a href="mailto:kevin.ferguson@theupcenter.org">kevin.ferguson@theupcenter.org</a> office: 757-354-3819 X124	Eastern Region	600	\$125,000/\$125,000	TUC MFC will use the funds to continue the work with post 9/11 Veterans, active-duty military personnel and families SMVF from all military branches of services who are at risk of suicide in the Hampton Roads region with the primary focus in the five cities of South Hampton Roads.
Mount Rogers CSB <a href="mailto:Lakesha.mayes@mountrogers.org">Lakesha.mayes@mountrogers.org</a> Lakeisha Mayes 276-920-7001	Southwest VA	200	\$125,000/\$125,000	Mount Rogers' goal is to provide REVIVE! (Opioid overdose and Naloxone training) to community members, increasing the number of community members trained by 5% each year, with a minimum of 200 newly trained participants, and 2,400 medication deactivation kits to prevent the risk of medication misuse, Lock-and-Talk boxes, and Trigger Locks to SMVF and community stakeholders serving the target population.
Master Center for Addiction Medicine (MCAM) <a href="mailto:amckean@mastercenter.com">amckean@mastercenter.com</a> <a href="mailto:mtenney@mastercenter.com">mtenney@mastercenter.com</a> Melanie Tenney 804-200-0702	Eastern and Central Region	40	\$124,788.33	Master Center will use the funds provided to 1.) Provide specialized care for SMVF in the Eastern and Central regions. They would host a weekly group therapy session specifically catered to member of the SMVF community. 2.) Open new access points in Norfolk and Virginia Beach. 3.) Hire Staff to meet the focused education and increased service needs

Stone Ridge Foundation/National Center for Healthy Vets <a href="mailto:morganfisk@healthyveterans.org">morganfisk@healthyveterans.org</a> Morgan Fisk 910-769-2178	Richmond, VA	40	\$106,857.14/\$100,000	Stone Ridge Foundation will provide (1) virtual programs, (2) Topic-based classes followed by hands on coaching, (3) Counseling overseen by Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), (4) Speaking engagements to very large national training conferences (5) on-site and on-line small group sessions.
Center for Child and Family Services, Inc. <a href="mailto:michaeledmonds@healthyveterans.org">michaeledmonds@healthyveterans.org</a> Michael Edmonds 757-838-1960	Newport News	150	\$100,000.38/\$100,000	CCFS will use individual assessments to develop individual treatment goals for each client and they will also use pre and post assessments to measure depression, suicide, and posttraumatic stress symptoms throughout the client's duration of treatment evidence-based trauma treatments to include Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR), and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).
Movers Development Centers, Inc. <a href="mailto:ColeenC@M3BridgeRecovery.org">ColeenC@M3BridgeRecovery.org</a> Coleen Cherici 804-986-9970 804-439-0612	Richmond/Chesapeake	120	\$100,000/\$100,000	MDC proposes to provide services in four life domains to include: Intensive Program of Education and Guided Groups- 30 to 90 days, Monitored Residential Housing Program- 6 months to 2 years, Individual Therapy, Family Counseling, and reunification, Aftercare Follow-up.
Recovering By Numbers, Inc. <a href="mailto:c.morgan@recoveringbynumbers.com">c.morgan@recoveringbynumbers.com</a> Courtney Morgan 757-593-9795	Newport News, Hampton, Chesapeake	120	\$100,000/\$100,000	RBN proposes to provide individual and family counseling for underserved groups within SMVF, specifically: 100 active service members and/or veterans, and at least one additional family member for a minimum of 200 served over 12 months.

<p>IMend  <a href="mailto:Sfernandez@imentherapy.com">Sfernandez@imentherapy.com</a>          Sharon Fernandez          571-470-3266</p>	<p>Lorton, Fairfax,          Loudoun,          Prince William,          Arlington,          Alexandria</p>	<p>48</p>	<p>\$75,000/\$75,000</p>	<p>IMend intends to use its award to fulfill several objectives, including 200 SMVF for individual, couples, or family counseling, 50 SMVF for EMDR therapy, 100 SMVF for training in crisis intervention and suicide prevention strategies, and 500 SMVF for psychoeducation sessions on mental health-related topics.</p>
<p>Zeno Wellness Group, LLC  <a href="mailto:Info@zenowellnessgroup.com">Info@zenowellnessgroup.com</a>          Prescilla Zeno          757-567-5854</p>	<p>Franklin, VA          and East          Region</p>	<p>125</p>	<p>\$99,984.86/\$100,000</p>	<p>Zeno Wellness Group (ZWG) aims to improve access to peer support services for service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF) and reduce rates of suicide, behavioral health needs, and substance use challenges (including opioid use) in the East region of Virginia.</p>
<p>Virginia Treatment Center  <a href="mailto:Scott.Swinburne@CTCPrograms.com">Scott.Swinburne@CTCPrograms.com</a>          Scott Swinburne          616-856-8352</p>	<p>Lynchburg,          Roanoke</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>\$99,998/\$100,000</p>	<p>VTC goal is to develop the staff training program specific to SMVF and suicide prevention; have at least one counselor at each facility attend training and receive Addiction Treatment in Military and Veteran Culture Certificate; they will conduct individual and group counseling sessions with SMVF; each clinic will have a case manager/behavioral health assistant designated to provide case management and care coordination services to SMVF.</p>
<p>AA&amp; K Services LLC.  <a href="mailto:aakservices.23@gmail.com">aakservices.23@gmail.com</a>          Courtney Morgan          703-429-0105</p>	<p>Chesapeake</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>\$75,000</p>	<p>The goal is to provide a groundbreaking initiative designed to provide therapeutic and rehabilitative support to veterans through the power of music. The primary objective of the Veteran Music program is to support the process of healing and reintegration for veterans through the transformative power of creativity and personal growth.</p>

Easter Seals Suicide Prevention Services <a href="mailto:lbram@eseal.org">lbram@eseal.org</a> Larry Bram 301-920-9711	Northern Virginia	200	\$100,000/\$100,000	The program is designed to improve behavioral health outcomes for veterans and their families so that they have the foundation they need to counter the effects of the balancing act in their everyday lives, helping to keep them from feeling overwhelmed to the point where they feel suicide is their only escape.
EveryMind Inc. <a href="mailto:amazur@every-mind.org">amazur@every-mind.org</a> Ann Mazur 301-424-0656	Northern Virginia	200	\$100,000/\$100,000	Provide immediate safety planning and link to crisis care resources for Veterans who are at-risk of suicide. Educate SMVF on best practices and educate community service providers on military culture and suicide prevention best practices.
GNUS Corporation <a href="mailto:gnuscorp@gmail.com">gnuscorp@gmail.com</a> Francine R Williams 571-606-8037	Richmond, Petersburg, and surrounding areas.	1500	\$100,000/\$100,000	GNUS will provide Peer Support and Community Stabilization Services with a Mobile Opioid Addiction and Suicide Prevention Support Group Program utilizing Peer Group Sessions open to SMVF struggling with Opioid Addiction and thoughts of Suicide.
Headstrong Project Inc. (The) <a href="mailto:Sknowlton@theheadstrongproject.org">Sknowlton@theheadstrongproject.org</a> Shae Knowlton 480-310-6649	Statewide	410	\$100,000/\$100,000	THP's goal is to provide comprehensive mental health services that effectively address specialized trauma and culturally sensitive mental health treatment, along with targeted suicide prevention services, to Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF).
Hope Seekers Community Support Seekers <a href="mailto:SDREHER@HOPESEEKERSCSS.COM">SDREHER@HOPESEEKERSCSS.COM</a> Simone Dreher	Newport News	65	\$75,000/\$75,000	The project aims to provide comprehensive case management activities along with supportive housing that supports suicide prevention and/or opioid addiction services.

757-224-1480				
JIA Staffing <a href="mailto:Timi.Ugbade@Jiastaffing.com">Timi.Ugbade@Jiastaffing.com</a> Timi Ugbade 301-404-2245	Northern Virginia	100	\$75,000/\$75,000	The proposed project aims to address the urgent need for suicide prevention and opioid addiction services among SMVF, through virtual peer support.
Mahogany (The Mahogany Projek) LLC. <a href="mailto:shardeo.gray@themahoganyprojek.com">shardeo.gray@themahoganyprojek.com</a> Sharde O'Rourke 757-945-4005	Chesapeake	40	\$125,000/\$125,000	The desired high-level outcome is for both military couple's and children will report a decrease of depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, conflict, suicidal ideation, opiate use and an increase in communication, self-control, use of effective coping skills. The military service members and their family will report an overall increase in wellness and way of managing day to day stressors per the survey they are provided both pre and post services.
Merging Vets and Players <a href="mailto:lparmeter@vetsandplayers.org">lparmeter@vetsandplayers.org</a> Lisa Parmeter 502-417-4223	Statewide	1380	\$75,000/\$75,000	Our project intends to reach 500 veterans and 600 veteran family members through our suicide prevention and supportive services in and around the Arlington, Virginia, area. Our activities include (4) quarterly pop-up sessions, (6) MVP workouts, (20) MVP Core Sessions, and (12) virtual psycho-education courses. We plan to offer four total pop-up events, one per quarter, which will take place throughout Virginia to introduce our program and services to veterans and their families.
Military Retirees Club of Richmond, Virginia, Inc. <a href="mailto:sonjajohns13@hughes.net">sonjajohns13@hughes.net</a> Dr. Sonja Johns 804-500-5000	City of Richmond	100	\$75,000/\$75,000	The goal of our program is to prevent suicide and opioid abuse in the veteran community by bridging the gap between veterans in the Richmond Metropolitan Area and the resources available to them. One of our objectives is to have biannual resource fairs to connect veterans with invaluable resources, such as digital literacy assistance, counseling for emotional management, substance

				abuse groups, and shelters for veterans.
<p>Northern Virginia Veterans Association  <a href="mailto:President@novavets.org">President@novavets.org</a>;  <a href="mailto:Melissa@novavets.org">Melissa@novavets.org</a>;  <a href="mailto:SupportLead@novavets.org">SupportLead@novavets.org</a>  Angela H. McConnell  703-986-7444</p>	Northern VA	250	\$125,000/\$125,000	We support the veteran underserved population which includes elderly, minorities, low income, disabled and marginalized subpopulations. NOVA Veterans is the bridging nonprofit that provides our vulnerable veterans direct access to services. We provide personal support and coordinate services for our most vulnerable veterans and their families, at no cost, to a vast system of community resources addressing needs that support their quality of life.
<p>OMEGA (Innovative Strategies Consulting LLC.)  <a href="mailto:iscllc.consulting@gmail.com">iscllc.consulting@gmail.com</a>  Dr. Omega Wilson  804-218-1410</p>	<p>Richmond,  Petersburg,  Farmville,  Hampton,  Norfolk,  Newport News  and  Chesapeake</p>	50-100	\$100,000/\$100,000	They plan to enhance the well-being and quality of life through health therapeutic paths for mental health, resilience workshops, community cohesion initiatives, building a peer support network, providing opioid awareness and safety training, and hosting a holistic retreat. Other initiatives include, individual/family/group counseling services, youth engagement services, Highland Park movie nights, and a career and Technical Education program.
<p>Panacea Behavioral Health &amp; Wellness Center  <a href="mailto:sandra@panaceabhwc.com">sandra@panaceabhwc.com</a>  Sandra Nichols  757-251-0879</p>	Virginia Beach	500	\$125,000/\$125,000	The goal of Panacea is to provide community-based services that provides suicide prevention and opioid addiction services for SMVF.
<p>Encompass Community Supports,  Formerly Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services Board  Kristi South  <a href="mailto:Ksouth@ecsva.org">Ksouth@ecsva.org</a>  540-827-7122  <a href="mailto:georgenebrown@rrcsb.org">georgenebrown@rrcsb.org</a></p>	<p>Culpeper,  Madison,  Fauquier,  Orange, and  Rappahannock  counties</p>	150	\$100,000/\$100,000	The goal of this program is to increase the rate of engagement of local veterans in support and treatment programs, reduce SMVF involuntary crisis response call and to decrease SMVF Opioid overdose rates.

Georgene Brown 540-825-3100				
Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic (SAFE) Project <a href="mailto:jeff@safeproject.us">jeff@safeproject.us</a> Jeffrey Horwitz 703-216-9633  <a href="mailto:Kelley@safeproject.us">Kelley@safeproject.us</a> Kelley Niedvvicecki 775-762-5821	Statewide	80	\$100,000	SAFE Project's primary goal for this project is to develop a TOT program for the "Veteran Wellness: Journey from Coping to Thriving" program. We are focused on training trainers in Virginia communities, coalitions, and veteran-serving organizations to scale and sustain the effectiveness and impact of this evidence-based, trauma-informed program.
Vision Hope Healing LLC. <a href="mailto:Teresa.bowman@visionhopeandhealing.com">Teresa.bowman@visionhopeandhealing.com</a> Dr. Teresa Bowman 571-210-0268	Statewide	100	\$125,000/\$125,000	VHH will provide wrap around counseling services for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Specifically. Support men, women, and children by offering groups, Clinical counseling /therapy, Screening/assessment services, Peer support and Crisis intervention. Below you will find a detailed description of project services offered.
That ZEN Life Wellness Foundation Inc. <a href="mailto:admin@ThatZenLife.org">admin@ThatZenLife.org</a> Javieone Hibbler Luis Z.-Pimentel 757-544-9997	Suffolk, Norfolk, and Chesapeake	112	\$125,000/\$125,000	The overall goal of this project is to prevent opioid use and reduce the number of people who die by suicide while building the capacity to provide supportive services to SMVF in the urban areas of Suffolk, Norfolk, and Chesapeake City. Our proposed plan outlines a comprehensive approach to serve SMVF in a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive manner including recruitment, training, supervision, peer support, and referral to other supportive services.
Aerroc Group, LLC <a href="mailto:tcorrea@aerrocgroup.com">tcorrea@aerrocgroup.com</a> Thomas Correa 703-718-6455	Manassas	475	\$175,000.00	Suicide prevention and opioid addiction services such as telehealth counseling, support groups, and educational resources

<p>Armed Services Arts Partnership (ASAP)  <a href="mailto:grants@asapasap.org">grants@asapasap.org</a>          Brian Jenkins          703-999-4904</p>	Alexandria	500	\$200,000.00	Community arts programming
<p>Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare  <a href="mailto:saprice@brbh.org">saprice@brbh.org</a>          Sarah Price          540-266-9200</p>	Roanoke	300	\$39,000.00	Women Veteran Peer Support Group
<p>Calm Source, LLC  <a href="mailto:lzimmermann@calmsource.net">lzimmermann@calmsource.net</a>          Leon Zimmermann III          434-835-2370 ext. 102</p>	Danville	103	\$200,000.00	Comprehensive mental health and addiction recovery treatments to veterans, with a specific focus on understanding and addressing the underlying causes of suicidal ideation.
<p>Charlottesville Hyperbarics Corp  <a href="mailto:Jesse@charlottesvillehyperbarics.com">Jesse@charlottesvillehyperbarics.com</a>          Jesse Presson          434-320-8089  <a href="mailto:Jordan@charlottesvillehyperbarics.com">Jordan@charlottesvillehyperbarics.com</a>          Jordan Kristian          240-285-6312</p>	Charlottesville	75	\$175,000.00	Peer Support Program, Massage Therapy, Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy (R.E.S.T.), Photo biomodulation Therapy (PBMT), and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)
<p>Edge Clinical Associates LLC  <a href="mailto:ejones@eclinicals.org">ejones@eclinicals.org</a>          Eric Jones          757-289-2571</p>	Chesapeake	105	\$175,000.00	Peer and family support, care coordination, case management, substance abuse treatment, and education
<p>Lightbeam Solutions  <a href="mailto:lightbeamsolutionsllc@gmail.com">lightbeamsolutionsllc@gmail.com</a>          Zeb High          757-577-1257</p>	Chesapeake	60	\$200,000.00	Screening, individual and group therapy (with groups limited to 10 clients), family therapy, and relaxation prevention strategies
<p>Master Center  <a href="mailto:RMoore@mastercenter.com">RMoore@mastercenter.com</a>          Ryan Moore          224-406-3556</p>	Glen Allen	500	\$200,000.00	Prioritizing mental health and suicide prevention techniques, training staff to deliver specialized and culturally informed substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services, providing high-quality mental health group therapy options, and expanding de-



				stigmatization and collaboration efforts within the military community and the general public at large.
Mitchell Productions <a href="mailto:hello@mitchell-productions.com">hello@mitchell-productions.com</a> Sharvette Mitchell 804-806-4407	Richmond	130	\$200,000.00	Four 8-week Grief Recovery Group Programs
Music Theory Studios LLC <a href="mailto:info@musictheorystudios.com">info@musictheorystudios.com</a> Jazzarae Jones 757-961-6202	Norfolk	25	\$175,000.00	Combination of group psychotherapy protocols that utilize evidence-based clinical models with music therapy by certified trauma specialists and AVID Protocols Certified Audio Engineers.
Panacea Behavioral Health & Wellness Center <a href="mailto:sandra@panaceabhwc.com">sandra@panaceabhwc.com</a> Sandra Nichols 757-251-0879	Virginia Beach	500	\$200,000.00	Embedding psychiatric advanced practice providers (either a Psychiatric Mental-Health Nurse Practitioner or a Certified Physician's Assistant) and/or a professional counselor (LPC or LCSW) or counseling resident within at least two of the military installations in the Hampton Roads area.
Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic (SAFE) <a href="mailto:lissette@safeproject.us">lissette@safeproject.us</a> Lisette Kin 909-992-9309	Arlington	200	\$200,000.00	Veteran Wellness: Journey from Coping to Thriving. This evidence-based, 6-module, one-day training has consistently resulted in significant improvements in veterans' ability to identify emotional triggers and to recognize the early warning signs of stress
Stripped Raw <a href="mailto:writingraw2022@gmail.com">writingraw2022@gmail.com</a> DAVID HENDRIX 731-415-8387	Alexandria	1108	\$150,000.00	Peer-To-Peer support mechanisms, developed by Veterans.
Supreme Homecare Assisted Living, LLC <a href="mailto:Supremehomecare1522@gmail.com">Supremehomecare1522@gmail.com</a> Valarie Taylor 410-670-3890	Northern Virginia	500	\$200,000.00	Counseling services, support groups, community meetings, care packages, educational partnerships, resilience workshops, virtual financial wellness workshops
The Weaver's Bond	Norfolk	100	\$150,000.00	Implementing crisis intervention hotlines and

<a href="mailto:tanisha.weaver@ymail.com">tanisha.weaver@ymail.com</a> Tanisha Weaver 804-714-8261				support groups, conducting outreach to raise awareness and reduce stigma, and providing suicide prevention training and opioid addiction treatment programs.
United Community Solutions <a href="mailto:kimberly@unitedcommunitysolution.com">kimberly@unitedcommunitysolution.com</a> Kimberly Jackson 434-229-0172	Chesapeake	260	\$200,000.00	Prevention and education; crisis intervention; treatment and support services
Tier 1 Therapy Centers, Inc. <a href="mailto:cm@tier1tc.com">cm@tier1tc.com</a> Cara Mae Melton 757-452-3934	Norfolk	31	\$200,000.00	Evidence-based, personalized clinical intervention; neurotherapy (consisting of EEG guided neurofeedback and psychotherapy).
The Hazel Gray Foundation <a href="mailto:dsmith@paintedbirdtherapy.com">dsmith@paintedbirdtherapy.com</a> Desiree Smith 757-214-2934	Gloucester	48	\$175,000.00	The Couples Communication and Resilience Education Group (CARE) is an innovative psychoeducation group created by HGF which provides information for SVMF with a history of trauma and/or suicidal ideation who are in an intimate relationship
<b>RESEARCH GRANTS</b>				
George Mason University (GMU) <a href="mailto:krenshaw@gmu.edu">krenshaw@gmu.edu</a> Dr. Keith Renshaw <a href="mailto:ospaor@gmu.edu">ospaor@gmu.edu</a> Magge Ewell 703-993-4806	Fairfax, VA	40	\$150,000	The primary purpose of the proposed study is the development and pilot testing of misuse of prescription drugs – demonstrating a clear link with suicide attempts and death by suicide.
Norfolk State University (NSU) <a href="mailto:imarshall@nsu.edu">imarshall@nsu.edu</a> Dr. Isiah Marshall 757-823-8648	Norfolk, VA	20 - 40	\$147,400	This research project is to examine the impact of belongingness and social support on cessation of suicidal ideation, plans, and behaviors among African American military veterans.
New River Community College (NVCC) <a href="mailto:dkennedy@nr.edu">dkennedy@nr.edu</a>	Dublin, VA	Numbers based on	\$150,000	This research grant is to develop a database of all veterans attending NRCC and living in the NRCC

Dr. Deborah Kennedy 540-674-3690		veteran student population		Region with the purpose of developing a contact list for checking on them and inviting them to events at the college. NRCC is utilizing SOS grant funds to create a Veterans Resource Center for Service Members, Veteran students and military dependents. Upon completion of the center, the Veteran Resource Specialist that is funded through the grant, will facilitate services to assist the students with meeting various needs to support them. A survey will then be sent out to the students to ascertain the impact of said service implementation in the center by the center staff/Resource Specialist.
Virginia Military Institute (VMI) <a href="mailto:laroccam@vmi.edu">laroccam@vmi.edu</a> Dr. Michael LaRocca 540-464-7860	Lexington, VA	250	\$150,000	The proposed research is "Veteran Suicide: Examining the Role of Active Duty and Post-Discharge Experiences," and our purpose is to investigate key risk and protective factors of veteran suicide that have not been adequately researched to date.
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University <a href="mailto:sbarrera@vt.edu">sbarrera@vt.edu</a> Sergio Barrera 520-508-4296	Blacksburg, VA	Quality of Care Data	\$150,000	This research proposes to gain a better understanding of the obstacles to care, we propose to study both individual factors (including but not limited to demographic variables such as military service history, and disability rating) as well as greater systemic factors (such as access, policies, geography) that may impact veterans' decision to seek mental health care, as well as suicide and substance use risk. Penn State and Yale are collaborators.
Duke University/ <a href="mailto:gcmail@mc.duke.edu">gcmail@mc.duke.edu</a> Jennifer McCalister	Statewide	50	\$218,603	Aim 1, we will pilot recruitment methods in the D.C.-Maryland-Virginia area designed to increase the representativeness and diversity of former service

<p>919-684-5175  Vanessa Gordon, M.B.A.  <a href="mailto:vanessa.gordon@duke.edu">vanessa.gordon@duke.edu</a>  Grants &amp; Contracts E-Mail  <a href="mailto:gntconml@dm.duke.edu">gntconml@dm.duke.edu</a>  Cristiane Kopper  <a href="mailto:cristiane.kopper@duke.edu">cristiane.kopper@duke.edu</a>  Natalie White, J.D.  <a href="mailto:natalie.white@duke.edu">natalie.white@duke.edu</a>  Ashley Price <a href="mailto:ashley.e.price@duke.edu">ashley.e.price@duke.edu</a></p>				<p>members included in suicide research studies and will collect and analyze interview data from the family and friends of this diverse group. In Aim 2, we will conduct a census of suicide and opioid overdose deaths among Virginia’s former service members to provide veteran serving organizations with data on the former service members at high risk.</p>
<p>W2 Consulting/  <a href="mailto:Kwashington@w2consultingcorp.com">Kwashington@w2consultingcorp.com</a>  Dr. Kristin Washington  301-960-3717</p>	<p>Statewide</p>	<p>Quality of Care Data</p>	<p>\$297,215</p>	<p>Aim 1: To build a compendium of existing strategies and determine their effectiveness in facilitating the reach and delivery of program services to the targeted population and delineate why they did or did not work as intended. (Year 1)</p> <p>Aim 2: To explore with program stakeholders the extent to which existing suicide prevention programs can be improved by applying machine learning, out-of-care outreach, or educational communication strategies, and examine what other implementation strategies can optimally increase program effectiveness via implementation outcomes of applicability, acceptability, appropriateness, and sustainability. (Year 1)</p> <p>Aim 3: To spotlight successful implementation strategies utilized by Virginia’s existing suicide prevention programs that have been impactful in reaching and providing accessible services to SMVF communities. (Option - Year 2)</p>
<p>Yale University/</p>	<p>Statewide</p>	<p>Quality of</p>	<p>\$299,096</p>	<p>Objective 1: Obtain extensive survey data from a</p>

<p><a href="mailto:gcat@yale.edu">gcat@yale.edu</a> Danielle O'Brien 203-785-4689</p>		Care Data		<p>large sample of Virginia Veterans to understand and identify a wide array of factors associated with suicide risk, protective factors, and factors related to opioid disorders and the extent to which these are present in the Virginia Veteran population.</p> <p>Objective 2 has three parts: (1) Examine current practice of suicide risk assessment and prevention at Virginia institutions and services use by Veterans, including both VA and non-VA healthcare; (2) Compare these practices with “best practices” guidelines for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention; and (3) use data gathered in phase 1 (Objective 1) to examine the “goodness of fit” between veteran risk factors and needs in Virginia and the current practices for assessment, prevention, and intervention.</p>
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### SOS Outreach and Training Events:

#### APPENDIX III

DATE	HOST	LOCATION	PURPOSE
06/21/2023	The Salem VA Medical Center and Blue Ridge Behavioral Health	The Highlander Hotel and Conference Center, Radford, Virginia.	Joint Service Member, Veteran, and Family Mental Health Summit with resource vendors, guest speakers, and a panel.
07/01/2023	The Salem Fair	Salem Fair, High Five Event at the Salem Civic Center, Salem, Virginia.	A 24-hour awareness campaign to spread awareness for the Out of the Darkness Walks.
07/17/2023 - 07/18/2023	Mount Rogers Community Service Board	YWCA, NETN and SWVA, Bristol, Virginia	ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills). We were able to connect with 15 SMVF at this event and train partners.
07/20/2023	Delegate Rob Bloxom	Mary N. Smith Cultural Enrichment Center, Accomac, Virginia.	To educate the local clergy, and community on the dangers of Fentanyl use.
08/08/2023	Roanoke Marine Reserves Center, Marine Corps Reserve Unit	Marine Corps Reserve Unit, Roanoke, Virginia.	Resources for jobs, mental health, education, etc. For Marines and their family from the local area during drill weekend.

08/18/2023	Western Tidewater Community Services Board	Tidewater	SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SPGP) Symposium.
08/28/2023 - 09/01/2023	DVS-VVFS-SOS	Liberty University, Liberty Mountain Conference Center, Lynchburg, Virginia.	The Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services program coordinated with LivingWorks to host a Train the Trainer ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills) Training for staff and partners.
09/12/2023	DVS-VVFS-SOS	Virginia War Memorial, Richmond.	The SOS program coordinated with LivingWorks to host a SafeTalk training for 16 grantees and partners in how to talk to SMVF about suicide.
09/13/2023 - 09/14/2023	DVS-VVFS-SOS	Virginia War Memorial, Richmond, Virginia.	The SOS program coordinated with LivingWorks to host an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) for Community Service Boards, Virginia's Identify, Screen, and Refer (VISR) partners, Active Duty Airforce, and SOS,
09/17/2023	American Legion, District 3	American Legion District 3, Post 3, Salem, Virginia.	The set up a resource table with DVS information, and harm reduction items at the meeting.
09/21/2023	DVS-VVFS-SOS	Virginia War Memorial, Richmond, Virginia.	The SOS program hosted a Suicide Prevention Symposium. The event gave SOS grantees a chance to network and present their grant funded services.

09/25/2023	DVS-VVFS-SOS	Virtual	The SOS program hosted a Virtual Recovery Day for September, Recovery Month. Guest speakers from VADOC and FAACT spoke about veteran substance use and treatment best practice.
10/13/2024	VVFS-SOS Virginia's, Identify, Screen, and Refer steering committee	Virtual	The SOS program assisted the Virginia's Identify, Screen, and Refer steering committee in hosting a CALM Conversations training. CALM Conversations is a Lethal Means Safety Training that trains participants in facts about suicide, the importance of means safety, asking about suicide, and connecting to resources.
10/16/2023	New River Valley Community Services	Randolph Park Dublin, Virginia	The Out of the Darkness Walks are community events made to spread awareness about suicide in local areas. It is an event held every year around the nation by the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention.
10/26/2023-10/27/2024	VVFS-SOS	Virginia War Memorial Richmond, Virginia	Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is an in-person training that teaches participants about suicide, risk factors, beliefs about suicide, and how to have an intervention with someone having thoughts of suicide.
11/6/2023	Virginia Tech	The Y Center, 1000 N. Main St. Blacksburg, Virginia	Virginia Tech hosted a Veterans Day event for the veteran community. The event had numerous local resources, vendors, and food.



11/10/2023	Radford University	801 E Main St, Radford, Virginia	The Military Resource Center hosted their annual Veterans Day ceremony for the community. The event had veteran resources and guest speakers.
11/18/2023	Blue Ridge Behavioral Health	Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, Virginia	Blue Ridge Behavioral Health hosted a half day event for the suicide loss community. There were guest speakers with lived experience, videos on suicide loss by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, breakout groups, and crafts.
12/4/2023	Military Resource Center	Radford University 801 E Main St, Raford Virginia	The Radford University Military Resource Center invited VVFS-SOS staff to visit the students. The staff was able to speak with the students about programs and resources provided by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.
12/16/2023	VDVS Southwest Virginia Cemetery	Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery 5550 Bagging Plant Rd, Dublin, VA 24084	The cemetery hosted their annual Wreath Laying Ceremony. They invited veteran resources to set up outreach tables which included Virginia Veteran and Family Support. This event was open to the community.
1/26/2024	VVFS-SOS	Virginia War Memorial	VVFS and SOS staff hosted an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. This training was open to DVS staff and community partners.

1/22/2024	Buddy Check 22 New River Valley	Mission BBQ 2585 Market St. NE, Christiansburg Virginia Veterans Center 8333 Little River Turnpike Annandale, Virginia	Buddy Check 22 is a veteran group dedicated to suicide prevention and awareness for local veterans. They meet every month on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> at Mission BBQ in Christiansburg and Macado's in Radford, Virginia.
2/13-2/14/2024	VVFS-SOS	Embrace Waynesboro Community Center, Waynesboro, Virginia	VVFS-SOS hosted a Applied Suicide Interventions Skills Training for Virginia Veteran and Family Support staff and community partners.
2/29-3/3/2024	American Legion State Conference-Spring	Portsmouth Renaissance 425 Waterstreet, Portsmouth, Virginia	The American Legion held there Spring State Conference in Portsmouth, Virginia. They invited the Suicide Prevention Coordinator to set up an outreach table for the conference.
3/27/2024	Western Tidewater SGT Fox	Hub 757 6801 Bridgeway Dr, Suffolk, VA 23435	Western Tidewater's SGT Fox Grant program held a community event with resources and guest speakers.
04/27/2024	Big Lick Ruck March Committee	602 Elm Ave SE, Roanoke, Virginia	The Big Lick Ruck March was put together by local veterans to spread suicide awareness and make veteran connections in the community. VVFS-SOS was able to set up an outreach table for the event.
5/11/2024	Salem VAMC and Danville Veterans Coalition	12729 Halifax Road, Java, Virginia	The event was brought together by a local coalition and the Salem VAMC. It was an open community event for veterans and family members. There were games, resources, and food.

5/17/2024	SOS	Virtual	Recovery Day was a virtual event hosted by Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services. This event brought awareness, education, and hope in the realm of recovery. Guest speakers discussed recovery resources for veterans and family members.
5/27/2024	DVS Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery	5550 Bagging Plant Road, Dublin, Virginia	DVS Southwest Veterans Cemetery hosted their Annual Memorial Day event. This event had resources and was open to the community.
07/10/2024	New Horizons Crisis Center	401 W Main St, Radford, Virginia	The Suicide Prevention Coordinator was able to tour the 401 Crisis Center and present to the staff on Virginia Department of Veterans Services programs.
7/10/2024	NRV Veterans Leadership Council	Virtual	The Suicide Prevention Coordinator was able to provide updates to the leadership council on Suicide Prevention and Suicide Services.
7/21/2024	Army National Guard	203 Red Horse Drive, Virginia Beach, Virginia	SOS was able to set up an outreach table at the Virginia Army National Guard Family Day event in Virginia Beach.
7/27/2024	Far Southwest Virginia Veterans Coalition	UVA Wise Convocation Center Wise, Virginia	This was an outreach event hosted by the far Southwest Virginia Veterans Coalition. It was open to the veteran and family member community. They had resources tables, games, and food available for participants.
8/4/2024	Marine Corps	5301 Barns Ave NW, Roanoke, Virginia	VVFS-SOS was asked to set up an outreach table for the Marine Corps Reserves Family Day.

8/11/2024	Army National Guard	Harry L. Coomes Rec Center, 300 Stanley Street, Abingdon, Virginia	SOS was asked to set up an outreach table for the Army National Guard Family Day in Abingdon. Services members and their families were able to talk to resources, play games, and have lunch.
8/20/2024	Roanoke Vet Center	487 Maury River Rd; Lexington, Virginia	The Vet Center worked with a local veteran representative to host an outreach event in Lexington for veterans. This event brought resources to veterans and benefits information/assistance as well.
8/24/2024	Salem Red Sox	1008 Texas Street, Salem, Virginia	The Salem Red Sox held their Annual Military Appreciation Night. VVFS and SOS was able to set up an outreach table for the game.
9/7/2024	Veterans Coalition in Floyd	Crooked Mountain, Floyd, Virginia	A local veteran with the help of a veteran coalition in Floyd set up the first Mountain Valor Festival. The festival ran all day and was open to the community. They had veteran resources, concerts, food trucks, and vendors.
9/14/2024	Norfolk Fleet and Family Support	7928 14 <sup>th</sup> St., Norfolk, Virginia	VVFS-SOS was able to set an outreach table at the Norfolk Fleet and Family Support Center Mental Health Summit. VVFS presented on services and SOS had an outreach table.
9/17/2024	NRVCS CSB	New River Valley Community College-Edwards Hall	VVFS-SOS was able to set up an outreach table during the Kevin Hines public speaking event at New River Community College. This event was open to the community and around 50 people attended.
9/19/2024	SOS	New River Valley Community College, 5251 College Drive Dublin, Virginia	SOS held their Fall Suicide Prevention Symposium for SOS grantees. There were guest speakers and 55 participants.

9/21/2024	Western Tidewater Community Service Board	Kings Fork High School 351 Kings Fork Road, Suffolk, Virginia	Shatter the Silence is an annual event dedicated to raising awareness about suicide prevention and mental health support. VVFS-SOS was able to set up an outreach table. The event had guest speakers, resources, vendors, games, and food for the community participants.
10/11/2024	CVEB Inaugural Conference	Holiday Inn Express & Suites	Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) was able to set up a resource table to show the board members what SOS offers out to the community. The Director of SOS was able to present on the program.
10/12/2024	American Foundation of Suicide Prevention	Newport News Park, Newport News, Virginia	American Foundation and Suicide Prevention hold walks at the Nation, State, and local levels. These walks spread awareness and make community connections for participants. The Suicide Prevention Coordinator set up a resource table for the event.
10/17-18/2024	VVFS-SOS	Community Service Board 12N Hill Warrenton, Virginia	VVFS-SOS hosted an Applied Suicide Intervention Training for the VVFS North Region Staff and one Army National Guard staff member.
10/22/2024	Blue Ridge Behavioral Health Community Services Board- VVFS	Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center	Hidden Heros Appreciation Event is open to the community. SOS is able to set up an outreach table for the event.
10/24/2024	UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Virginia	Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Interpretive Center	Lenowisco Area First Responder Wellness Event. This day is focused on the wellness and overall well-being of First Responders. The Suicide Prevention Coordinator along with VVFS staff has

			been asked to set up an outreach table.
10/26/2024	American Foundation of Suicide Prevention	Cumberland Square Park, Bristol, Virginia	American Foundation and Suicide Prevention host Out of the Darkness walks at the Nation, State, and local levels. These walks spread awareness and make community connections for participants. The Suicide Prevention Coordinator will be attending and setting up an outreach table.
10/31-11/3/2024	American Legion Conference	Double Tree Williamsburg, Virginia	American Legion Fall State Conference is an annual event for the organization. The SOS Director was asked to be a keynote speaker. The Suicide Prevention Coordinator will be setting up an outreach table for the conference.