

Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

Meeting Agenda

April 14, 2023, at 1000 AM

Location: Arrowheads Community Club

1000	Call to Order	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Moment of Silence	Vice-Chair David Eisele
	Pledge of Allegiance	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Introduction of Commission Members	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Vietnam Veterans Day Proclamation	Mr. Rick Hamp
	Tuskegee Proclamation	
	Oath of Office	MG Mark Schindler
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Stanley Majoeka	
	Chairman's Open Remarks	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	TAG's Opening Remarks and Comments	MG Mark Schindler
	Approval of 03 February 2023 Meeting Minutes	Requires Vote
	Reading of Official and Other Communications	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	DAG-VA Opening Remarks and Report	BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">PPL, BVH, PIROPrograms Report	Requires Vote
	VISN 4	Mr. Timothy Liezert
	Committee Reports	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">VSO GrantRETXLegislativePensions/Relief/Grave MarkingsWomen VeteransVeterans' HealthGovernance CommitteePAWVC Update	Mr. Matthew Hollenbeck Mr. David Eisele Mr. Robert Heister Mr. Larry Googins Ms. Lisa Kaye Mr. Mark Baylis Mr. Michael Brooker President Mr. Bernard McDonald
	Unfinished Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussion on Bylaws	Requires Vote
	New Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Good of the Order	SVC Commissioners
	Agenda Items for Next Meeting	SVC Commissioners
	Closing Remarks	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Next Meeting	
	June 2, 2023, 10AM	
	Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville	
	Retiring of the Colors	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Adjournment	Chairman Nicholas Taylor

State Veterans' Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2023

10:00 AM to 11:38 PM

Arrowheads Community Center, Fort Indiantown Gap

Call to Order		Chairman Nicholas Taylor
The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.		
Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance		
The moment of silence was presented by Vice-Chairman Mr. David Eisele. Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.		
Commission Introductions		
Mr. Marc Ferraro	Executive Deputy Secretary-DMVA	
BG (PA) Maureen Weigl	DAG DMVA-OVA	
Mr. Nicholas Taylor	SVC Chairman; Commander, Catholic War Veterans	
Mr. Henry Manella	Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars	
Mr. Bernard McDonald	Commander, AMVETS	
Mr. Gerald Hawk	Executive Director, AMVETS	
Mr. John Getz	Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars	
Ms. Terri Lynn	Commander, Disabled American Veterans	
Mr. David Gui	Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans	
Mr. William Albert (on phone)	Commander, Blinded Veterans of America	
Mr. David Eisele	President, PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Robert Heister	President, Military Officers Association of America	
Mr. Phillip Arnold	Adjutant, Military Order of the Purple Heart	
Mr. Larry Googins	President, Vietnam Veterans of America	
Ms. Constance Snavelly	Designee, Keystone Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America	
Mr. Richard Fine	Commander, Jewish War Veterans	
Mr. David Brady (on phone)	Commandant, Marine Corps League	
Mr. Craig Wilhelm	Commander, The American Legion	
Mr. James Hogan	Adjutant, The American Legion	
Ms. Lisa Kaye	Member-at-Large	
Mr. Charles Jackson	Member-at-Large	
Mr. Michael Brooker	Member-at-Large	
Mr. Tim Liezert	VHA, VISN-4	
Absent Members		
Mr. Mark Baylis	Member-at-Large	
Mr. Frank Boken	President, Military Order of the Purple Heart	
Others Present		
Brig Gen Michael Regan	PANG-Air	
CSM Jon Worley	PANG-Army	
Mr. Joseph Batt	DMVA-OCC	
Mr. Dave Cowgill (on phone)	VISN-4 (Communications Manager)	

Mr. Nate Silcox	Office of State Senator Patrick Stefano	
Mr. Cory Bender	DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration)	
Ms. Susan Meighen	DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration)	
Mr. Daniel Dudkiewicz	DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration)	
Mr. Rich Hamp	Special Assistant to DAG-VA	
Mr. Joel Mutschler	Director DMVA-PIRO	
Mr. Travis Davis	Executive Director DMVA-BVH	
Ms. Barbra Raymond	Director DMVA-BVH	
Mr. Nicholas Gilliland	DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration)	
Mr. Brian Natali	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)	
Ms. Kathy Knaub	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)	
Mr. Jeffrey Wallitsch	DMVA-OCC	
Mr. Michael Woody	DMVA-PPL	
Mr. Sam Dunkle	Commander DMVA-BVH Hollidaysburg Veterans Home	
Ms. Christina Dambeck	Deputy Commander DMVA-BVH Hollidaysburg Veterans Home	
Ms. Joan Nissley (on phone)	DMVA-Public Affairs	
Mr. Tom Cherry	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)	
Ms. Jennifer Hagaman	DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration)	
Mr. Thomas Coreau	PASACDVA-Dauphin County	
Mr. David W. 'Spike' Gyger	VFW-Senior Vice-Commander	
Mr. Leonard Sam M. Johnson	DAV	
Mr. D. Robinson III	DAV	
Mr. Joseph Neild	PASACDVA-Dauphin County	
Mr. Mike Rang	CWV	
Mr. Matthew Hollenbeck	TAL	
Mr. Richard Hudzinski	VVA	
Ms. Rogers (on phone)	Penn State Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness	
Oath of Office		EDS Marc Ferraro
N/A		
Recognition		
EDS Marc Ferraro and Chairman Taylor presented the PA Achievement Award to Mrs. Susan Meighen DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration), and Ms. Kathy Knaub DMVA-PIRO for their outstanding and dedicated work for PA Veterans.		
Chairman's Opening Remarks		Chairman Nicholas Taylor
<p>Chairman Taylor opened by congratulating Mrs. Meighen and Ms. Knaub for receiving their awards and their outstanding work for PA Veterans. And welcoming new commander of the IAWV Mr. Stanley Majocka.</p> <p>Chairman Taylor advised the members that beginning with the April 2023 meeting the SVC meeting will be streamed live utilizing MS Teams, invitations to MS Teams will be sent out along with the option to dial into the meeting. Instructions on how to secure Teams and how Teams works. Chairman Taylor also directed the members to the informational card at their seats; he advised them to use it as a resource for veterans' registry, and VetConnect resources on the webpage. He also requested members to share the information with their organizations and requested they use the resources as well.</p> <p>Chairman Taylor requested the DMVA develop a QR Code for easy access to the DMVA website (it was noted that is in process). Chairman Taylor advised the members that the committees are established, the chairs of the committees have received the direction for their committees, and the members assigned. The Women Veterans' committee is still in process Chairman is working with MAL Kaye and DAG-VA, and the Transportation</p>		

committee will need to have a DAV member added. All SVC members will receive copies of the appointment orders of committees and assigned members.

Questions/Discussion

None.

TAG's Opening Remarks

EDS Marc Ferraro

EDS Ferraro congratulated the awardees, Mrs. Meighen, and Ms. Knaub. He informed the members that TAG was in Europe attending a conference. He then briefed the members that TAG will continue in his position, and the current leadership team will remain the same. He also informed members that Ms. Elizabeth Pettis will be leaving to take a position with the Office of Chief Counsel in Harrisburg, and Mr. Jeffrey Wallitsch will be the temporary chief counsel at FIG.

EDS Ferraro informed members that TAG had participated with Military Family Day and with Veterans involved in agriculture at the Farm Show in January. EDS briefed members that currently PANG has 800 troops deployed through the theaters of operation, including along the southwest border of U.S.

EDS reported that the PA Senate had stood up their VAEP committee and Senator Mastriano is Chairperson and Senator Muth is minority Co-Chairperson. The PA House is still forming committees. He said the Governor will release his budget on March 8, 2023, and DMVA has not seen the budget yet.

EDS told the members that the Delaware Valley Veteran Home celebrated their 20th year anniversary which included the employees, and particularly the employee who had been there since its opening. He noted the great job BVH Executive Director Mr. Davis and Director Ms. Raymond in bring it all about.

Questions/Discussion

None

Approval of the January 6, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. Bernard MacDonald, AMVETS, motioned to approve the meeting minutes

Second: Mr. Robert Heister, MOAA, seconded the motion

The body agreed; motion carried. Minutes approved.

Reading of Official and Other Communications

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

None

Deputy Adjutant General-VA Remarks

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl

DAG-VA gave a shout out to the Northeast PIRO team for their outstanding job for holding a Mind Over Matters meeting which was directed at suicide prevention and substance abuse treatment. DAG-VA said over a 100 people attended. She noted that northeastern PA has one of the highest ratings for suicide/substance abuse problem. Several Veterans shared their personal stories, and how they overcame their problems with the help of The American Legion. DAG-VA informed the members how yoga, art therapy and music therapy had been instrumental in helping veterans struggling with suicide and substance abuse.

DAG-VA noted that GAC-VS had a great meeting and noted Governor Shapiro's Deputy Chief of Staff for Public Safety Mr. Mike Pipe attended the meeting, and she was looking forward to working with him.

DAG-VA informed the members that she and DMVA staff will be meeting with their counterparts from other states at the NASDVA conferences. She noted this gives all advocates throughout the U.S. to push together on behalf of veterans.

She then gave a shout out to PIRO Director Mr. Mutschler and his team for an outstanding job they did at the Farm Show.

Questions/Discussion

None

DMVA PPL

Mr. Michael Woody

Mr. Woody informed the members that the legislature had not official met, and the PA House hadn't formed any committees to date. He said it appeared the emerging issue from the Office of the Governor was homelessness. The Governor's Office will be working with the DMVA on homelessness.

Mr. Woody said he would defer to Mr. Nate Silcox the Director of the PA Senate VAEP Committee for an update on exclusion of veteran's compensation as income in calculating for RETX. Mr. Silcox said Senate Bill 126 contains the language for the exclusion, and the bill is moving forward which also contains the exclusion with all state programs.

Mr. Woody addressed the committee about some counties action on their own have removed some of the state requirements to qualify for the RETX program-such as, war time service. He noted legislators are receiving inquires.

Questions/Discussions

None

DMVA Bureau of Veterans Homes

Mr. Travis Davis

Executive Director Mr. Davis introduced Commandant Mr. Sam Dunkle and Deputy Commandant Ms. Christina Dambeck to the SVC members. He informed them that Commander Dunkle will do a presentation on the progress of the new construction taking place at Hollidaysburg Veterans Home. He noted the tremendous leadership both are doing at Hollidaysburg.

Mr. Davis then requested Director Ms. Barbara Raymond DMVA-BVH to provide the members with a COVID update.

- Ms. Raymond said that BVH had several days of no reported COVID. She unfortunately said a visitor to Hollidaysburg had reported after the visit that they tested positive for COVID, outbreak testing was done, and three individuals tested positive. They are all fine. She said the bivalent vaccine has reduced the severity of the COVID symptoms traumatically.

Hollidaysburg Veterans Home Commandant Sam Dunkle provided an update on the new construction plan.

Commandant Dunkle briefed the members utilizing slides [slides and audio are attached to the April 14, 2023, read ahead for a more comprehensive review of his presentation which can be found on the DMVA-SVC webpage <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Veterans/Commissionsandcouncils/Pages/StateVeteransCommission.aspx>] Below are a few highlighted bullet points.

- Hollidaysburg Veterans Home (HVH) was originally constructed in 1850 and was a state hospital treating mentally challenged individuals. HVH became a veteran's home in 1977 with only 5 residents. HVH now has 474 beds devoted to veterans with 560 employees. 350 of those employees are either RNs, LPNs, or nurse's aides.
- HVH will begin the construction on the new building in May 2023. HVH move to a 200-bed skilled nursing facility. The building will have the 200 beds in 8 neighborhoods (formally referred to as units) on two floors. The first floor will contain a 160-person auditorium that will be used for functions, and dietary. Currently dietary is in a separate building and prepared food must be trucked to other buildings.
- To help facilitate the new constructions HVH has sold 100 acres of its 300 acres.
- HVH had been listed as the 14th best long-term care facility out of 700 long-term care facilities in PA.
- The location of the new HVH construction will go where a previous structure was torn down on the campus.
- Commandant Dunkle will be requesting once the new HVH building is completed in two years that the building be named after SFC Daniel R. Lightner. SFC Lightner 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division Pennsylvania National Guard. SFC Lightner was killed by an IED in Iraq in 2005. SFC Lightner is

a native of Hollidaysburg and is a hometown hero, he was 28 years old. He was also a PA State Police Officer. His career epitomized selfless service to our Commonwealth and our Country.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Rich Hudzinski-VVA asked why BVH was going to a 200-bed skilled nursing at HVH. Commandant Dunkle said demographics and recent census were the driving forces. The number of veterans throughout PA has gone from 1 million to around 700,000 in the last two decades.

Mr. Leonard Johnson-DAV complimented BVH on the outstanding job it is doing, and how well the Delaware Valley Veterans Center is operating. He said as a member of DAV they hold meetings and functions at the DVVC, and the reception is tremendous.

Chairman Taylor asked Executive Director Travis Davis how many 5-star homes BVH currently has. Mr. Davis informed members that BVH has three 5-star homes, one 4-star and one 3-star.

DMVA PIRO

Mr. Joel Mutschler

Mr. Joel Mutschler briefed the members on DMVA-PIRO activities and functions.

- Mr. Mutschler updated the members on the roll-out of the new improved VETConnect interactive platform. It was a soft launch and PIRO is in the process of training staff and partners on the functional uses. He noted Outreach and Reintegration supervisor Mr. Cory Bender’s instrumental and professional assistance in making the new VETConnect platform a success.
- Mr. Mutschler highlighted the relationship with GAC-VS by informing the members about how the veterans at SCI Muncy will be hosting a ‘seed drive’ during the month of February to plant new flowers, herbs, and vegetables in their VSU Victor Garden. In 2022 the garden produced over 2,300 pounds of produce which was donated to the Central Food Bank in Williamsport, and was used in the institution’s salad bar, and the restaurant trades vocational class. And the collaboration between the DMVA, DOC and Department of Agriculture to stand-up greenhouses.
- Mr. Mutschler informed the members that all town halls will be held in-person this year, and the PACT Act will be stressed.
- Mr. Mutschler noted he was very proud of the Outreach staff; they supported 112 events and 2,565 veteran interactions this fiscal year.
- Mr. Mutschler concluded with a compliment of the relationship between SVC members and DMVA and noted SVC member Mr. James ‘Woody’ Hogan-TAL in particular.

Questions/Discussion

None

Approval of State Veterans’ Programs Reports

Motion: Mr. James Hogan, TAL, motioned to approve the programs reports

Second: Mr David Eisele PASACDVA, seconded the motion

The body agreed; motion carried. Programs reports approved.

VISN-4

Mr. Tim Liezert

Mr. Liezert reviewed the VISN-4 talking points that were presented in the February 3, 2023, read ahead. There were no add-ons to the talking points.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Leonard Johnson asked the following question: We spoke earlier, and I mentioned the presumptive diseases from Vietnam, Gulf War, 9/11. And on 9/11, it has melanoma as a presumptive. Vietnam veterans are also suffering from that disease. It's been deadly to us. If you can investigate that for us, why that's not on there? Thank you.

Mr. Liezert, VISN-4: Thank you. I'll take that back and try to find out more.

VISN-4 provided the following answer: PACT Act allows VA to improve the decision-making process for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status. This will allow us to make more timely decisions regarding disabilities.

If a Veteran has a cancer or illness that's not on our list of presumptive conditions, but he/she believes it was caused by Agent Orange exposure, the Veteran can still file a claim for VA disability benefits. Veterans are encouraged to file a claim for any condition that they believe is linked to serving in the military, whether from an injury or illness that was incurred in service or a disability that didn't appear until after service. If the illness was not diagnosed in service, a medical link between the disability and conditions of service is also needed.

What evidence will I need to submit with my claim?

You'll need to submit these records:

- A medical record that shows you have an Agent Orange-related health condition, **and**
- Military records to show how you were exposed to Agent Orange during your service

If your condition isn't on the list of presumptive conditions, you'll also need to provide at least one of these types of evidence:

- Evidence that shows the problem started during—or got worse because of—your military service, **or**
- Scientific or medical evidence stating that the condition you have is caused by Agent Orange. Scientific proof may include an article from a medical journal or a published research study.

For information about eligibility specific to exposure to Agent Orange, please visit: [Agent Orange Exposure And VA Disability Compensation | Veterans Affairs](#)

Committee Reports

VSO Grant Committee

Mr. Matthew Hollenbeck

Mr. Hollenbeck provided following statistics from the Act 66 for July/22-12/22: 23485 vet interactions, 1368 outreach events separate and w/DMVA, 3120 referrals to DMVA, 714 enrolled into VA health care, 687 referrals to commonwealth programs, 1268 referrals DMVA state programs, 371 referrals to county programs, 120 into vet registry, held 68 training events. And committee working with DMVA on making grant adjustments.

Questions/Discussion

None

RETX Committee

Mr. David Eisele

No Report

Questions/Discussion

None.

Legislative Committee

Mr. Charles Jackson

No Report

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussions</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>Pensions/Relief/Grave Marking/State Military Cemetery Committee</p> <p>No Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussions</u></p> <p>None</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Mr. Larry Googins</p>
<p>Women Veterans Committee</p> <p>No Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussions</u></p> <p>None.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Ms. Lisa Kaye</p>
<p>Veteran Health Committee</p> <p>No Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussions</u></p> <p>None</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Mr. Mark Baylis</p>
<p>Governance Committee</p> <p>Mr. Brooker brief on the committee’s progress with the Bylaws.</p> <p>The Governance Committee is looking forward to questions and a robust discussion from the commissioners regarding the proposed SVC Bylaws and Operating Procedures and Policies or OPP. Together, the Bylaws and OPP provide commissioners the necessary tools and requisite guidance to effectively perform their duties. The Bylaws are a more general and overarching document. The OPP complements the Statute and Bylaws, providing nuts-and-bolts detail. It is envisioned as dynamic document that can evolve to meet future needs of the commission.</p> <p>Regarding the Bylaws, the Committee received input and incorporated suggestions from DMVA’s General Counsel. To date we have not received input from the Commission. It is the Committee’s recommendation that our discussion today focus on any final questions or comments on the Bylaws.</p> <p>The OPP is a new document that establishes a set of operating procedures and policies to codify and guide our work as commissioners. The OPP provides thorough, but not exhaustive, guidance concerning roles and responsibilities, procedures for commission and committee meetings, reporting, and general administrative matters regarding the commission. The GC’s intent was to produce a document predicated on each commissioner taking an active and participatory role in our work. It is only through this commitment to action and rigorous debate that the commission can truly meet the intent of the statute, and work in concert the Department to best serve PA veterans and their families.</p> <p>Mr. Chairman, I request we open the floor to thoughtful discussion from the commission and look forward to their input.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussion</u></p> <p>Mr. David Brady-MCL requested that committee review Bylaws section 4.6 regarding votes and proxy votes and executive secretary’s role Committee Chair Mr. Brooker said he would take that under advisement.</p> <p>Mr. Charles Jackson-MAL requested that all members get a copy of the final draft before the next meeting. Committee Chair Mr. Brooker said members will get a final draft before the next meeting.</p> <p>Acting Chief Counsel-OCC Mr. Jeffrey Wallitsch informed the members that OCC has reviewed the Bylaws and requested a change. He said the legal definition of commissioners has specific meaning which could complicate</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Mr. Michael Booker</p>

<p>the document, and suggested the committee change from State Veteran Commissioners to State Veteran Commission Members. It said it would eliminate confusion.</p> <p>Committee Chair Mr. Brooker requested that A/Chief Counsel Mr. Wallitsch provide his legal opinion in writing to the committee for advisement. Mr. Wallitsch stated he would provide the citations, and it would be sent by Wednesday February 8, 2023.</p> <p>An overall discussion then occurred along the members and different approaches to the commissioners/commission members were mentioned. Chairman Taylor asked for a show of hands of members who would like to keep the wording as State Veteran Commissioners. Majority agreed with keeping it. Chairman Taylor then requested A/Chief Counsel Mr. Wallitsch to provide “chapter and verse” as to why the committee needs to change that. Mr. Wallitsch said he would.</p> <p>Committee Chair Mr. Brooker closed the discussion by informing the members that the Bylaws are imperative to the successful operation of the SVC. He stated in the Bylaws it requires the SVC Chairman to act as a collaborator and not a commander making decision without the approval of the body. He then suggested that a separate mailbox be added to the SVC webpage which would allow veterans to speak directly to the SVC. Committee Chair Mr. Brooker said in the OPP committee did define commissioners and appointees by Governor. Chairman Taylor told the members to be prepared to vote on the Bylaws at the April 14, 2023, meeting.</p>	
PA War Veterans Council Update	Mr. Bernard McDonald
No Report	
Unfinished Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
None	
New Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
<p>Mr. Brian Natali-PIRO briefed the members about the upcoming changes on being allowed onto FIG through the check points. He informed them that their driver’s license or military ID will be all they need. He stated to make it a smooth on-boarding to the campus SVC members should let SVC coordinator Mr. Greg Holler know they are attending, and he will forward the list to the guard posts.</p> <p>EDS Mr. Marc Ferraro informed the members about the timeline of the changes and the number of check points. He also informed them of the different access points.</p>	
Good of the Order	
Mr. Charles Jackson-MAL requested all members receive all committee assignments/directions.	
Items for Next Meeting	
Chairman Taylor said the item for next meeting is the movement of to the use of MS TEAMS	
Closing Remarks	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
None	
Next Meeting	
<p>Friday, June 02, 2023, 10:00 AM Forum: Arrowheads Community Center, FIG</p>	

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General
Veterans Affairs



STATE VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
APRIL 14, 2023



DMVA MILITARY UPDATE

CURRENT MOBILIZATIONS & TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS



PAARNG Current Deployments						
MDATE	MSAD	UNIT	OPN	PAX	MISSION	Projected Return Date
02 JUN 22	04 JUN 22	252 QM	OSS	191	T10, 12304B	29 MAR 23
28 JUN 22	03 JUL 22	192FFT	APO	7	T10, 12304B	24 APR 23
08 OCT 22	10 OCT 22	28 ID HQ	OSS	555	T10, 12302	04 AUG 23
07 OCT 22	10 OCT 22	55 MEB	SWB	102	T10, 12302	03 AUG 23
ARNG Soldiers at MOB/DEMOB Sites				2	Various Missions	Various based on tour
Various Individual MOB Soldiers				2	Various Missions	Various based on tour
Total PAARNG Deployed: 859						

PAANG Current Deployments		
Unit	Opn	Pax
193 SOW	OFS-OIR-OSS, Other	8/1
111 ATKW	IPR (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS, TS	36/6/40
171 ARW	Alert Status (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS	37
Total PAANG Deployed		128

Total PANG Deployed 806

[OVA Legislative Roundup 20 Mar2023](#)

Bills Under Review:

SB 126 - Disabled Veteran Benefit Payment Exclusion

SB 138 - Free Fishing Licenses for First Responders

SB 177 - Disabled Veterans Property Tax Relief

SB 189 - Pension Enhancement for Blind, Amputee, and Paralyzed Veterans

SB 194 - Excluding VA Aid/Attendance Income for Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption

SB 446 - Providing Vaccine Exemption for National Guard personnel

SB 447 - Establishing support for PA VETConnect

SB 89 - Veteran Homelessness

SB 91 - Veteran Property Tax and Rent Rebate Assistance

Note: No bills to report from OVA-BVH Legislative end.

PVH Current Licensure Status



SVH	Regulatory Agency	Survey Reason/Type	Survey Date(s)	Status/comments
DVVH	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	03/01/23 - 03/06/23	POC under development
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	05/10/22	Cleared
	VA	Recognition Survey	12/14/22 - 12/16/22	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification (next due Dec 23)	06/07/22 - 06/10/22	Cleared
GMVC	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	10/11/22 - 10/14/22	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	10/18/22	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	03/01/23	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaints, Follow-Ups	09/22/22	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	08/17/22	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	02/14/23 - 02/17/23	Cleared
HVH	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	08/22/22 - 08/26/22	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaints	11/29/22	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	08/30/22 - 08/31/22	Cleared
	DHS	Annual Recertification	08/16/22 - 08/17/22	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	06/06/22 - 06/10/22	Cleared
PSSH	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	05/17/22 - 05/20/22	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	05/24/22	Cleared
	DHS	Annual Recertification	02/21/23 - 02/23/23	POC submitted, awaiting reply
	DHS	Abbreviated - Incident	03/09/23	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	02/13/23 - 02/17/23	POC under development
SEVC	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	08/23/22 - 08/26/22	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Event	03/16/23	Results Pending
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Event	12/14/22	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	08/30/22	Cleared
	DHS	Annual Recertification	09/07/22	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	02/27/23 - 03/03/23	Results Pending
SWVC	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	07/11/22 - 07/15/22	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	01/26/23	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	12/23/22	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint, Incident	08/18/22	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	07/20/22 - 07/21/22	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification (next due May 23)	08/02/22 - 08/05/22	Cleared

Each DMVA Pennsylvania Veterans' Home is currently licensed by the PA Department of Health, PA Department of Human Services and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. HVH, PSSH and SEVC have a Personal Care program.

Last updated: 3-24-2023

BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES



Resident COVID-19 Update

Residents		01	02	03	04	05	06	07	09	10
Home	Data Date	# of Residents with S/S of COVID-19	# of Residents Currently Positive in Facility	# of Residents Waiting Test Results	# of Residents in Hospital for COVID-19 Reasons	# of Total Residents Tested	General Resident Population Testing, Enter round # and S-Started C-Complete	# of Residents Positive for COVID-19 Cumulative	# of Residents Recovered	# of Residents That Expired with a Positive COVID-19 Status.
DV VH	3/22/2023	0	0	0	0	2286	56-S	177	156	22
GMVC	3/22/2023	1	1	0	0	14536	108-C	216	182	33
HVH	3/22/2023	1	1	1	0	21086	120-C	395	329	33
PSSH	3/22/2023	0	0	0	0	1565	194-C	210	170	22
SEVC	3/22/2023	2	2	0	0	17425	158-C	209	147	47
SWVC	3/22/2023	0	0	0	0	20460	55-C	177	169	8
Total:		4	4	1	0	77358		1384	1153	165

As of 22 Mar 2023

> community > commonwealth

> country

BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES



Staff COVID-19 Update

Staff		01	02	03	04	06	07
Home	Data Date	# of Staff Currently Out for COVID-19 Reasons	# of Staff Currently Positive	# of Staff Waiting Test Results	# of Total Staff Tested	# of Staff Tested Positive for COVID-19 Cumulative	# of Staff Returned to Work Cumulative
DVWH	3/22/2023	0	0	0	14005	252	270
GMVC	3/22/2023	0	0	0	25758	253	242
HVH	3/22/2023	3	1	2	60502	767	2425
PSSH	3/22/2023	4	1	2	29580	314	663
SEVC	3/22/2023	2	2	0	24814	383	629
SWVC	3/22/2023	4	4	0	34114	313	535
Total:		13	8	4	188773	2282	4764

As of 22 Mar 2023

> community > commonwealth

> country

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Vaccinations (All Homes)

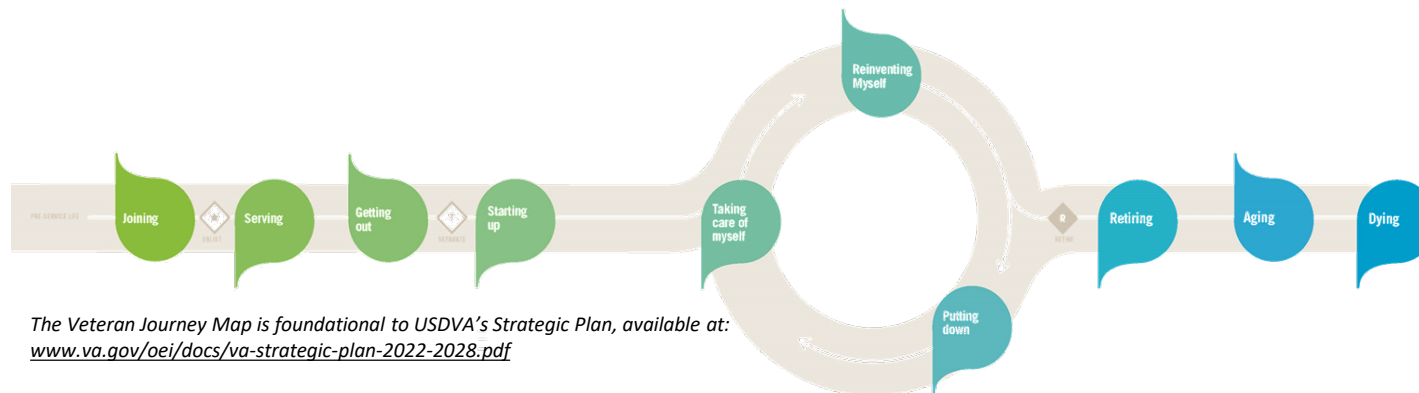
ResidentsBy Home	Vaccinations - Residents					
		Census	Fully Vaccinated	% Fully Vaccinated	Partially Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated
DVVH	Residents	135	131	97%	0	4
GMVC	Residents	139	139	100%	0	0
HVH	Residents	242	227	94%	0	15
PSSH	Residents	136	135	99%	0	1
SEVC	Residents	196	193	98%	0	4
SWVC	Residents	128	125	98%	1	2
Total		976	950	97%	1	26

Pennsylvania Veterans Homes COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 links for information related to the Veterans Homes and skilled nursing facilities.

- <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/LTCF-Data.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/SNF-Guidance.aspx>
- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19MpLoPxayE1MDwQJJYCZxISN64V4FJSJPGzfvVBb5Mw/edit#gid=1511961664>

- Veteran Centric in All We Do
- Top Issues Facing our Veteran Community
 - Homelessness, Transportation, Employment, Mental Wellness, and veterans benefit awareness.
- Impact of PACT Act
 - visit www.va.gov/PACT to get the latest information and updates
- Expanding Outreach Efforts
 - Connect with us visit dmva.pa.gov and click on PA VETConnect.



The Veteran Journey Map is foundational to USDVA's Strategic Plan, available at:
www.va.gov/oei/docs/va-strategic-plan-2022-2028.pdf

Partnership Spotlight

Northwest PA Veteran Suicide Prevention Program

Healthcare providers, community organizations, Veterans and their families recognize the need for a comprehensive public health approach to addressing the growing rates of Veteran suicide in Northwestern Pennsylvania. The Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program is a collaborative effort to create significant and lasting change in our region through 2025.

This program is specifically designed for Veterans of all ages, their families, friends, and caregivers interested in reducing risks for suicide, promoting resiliency training, and overcoming the stigma of mental illness.

NW PA Counties Healthcare partners, community organizations, and Veterans residing in the 15 counties in Northwestern Pennsylvania: Erie, Warren, McKean, Crawford, Forest, Elk, Clearfield, Jefferson, Armstrong, Clarion, Butler, Venango, Mercer, Lawrence, and Beaver, are eligible to participate. Visit our Resources page to learn more about services available in each county.

The program aims to reduce Veteran suicide attempts, injuries, and deaths by 10% (on average) over five years. By improving access to treatment and support services, we will increase awareness of Veteran suicide risk through suicide prevention community activities and training opportunities.

Learn more at: www.theresilientveteran.org



Northwest Pennsylvania Counties



OVA / VSO Grant Program Summary



FY 22 - 23 Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary	
Monthly Content Count	Monthly Content Gross Amount Value
114,184	\$210,607,728.00
Year to Date Content Count	Year to Date Content Gross Amount Value
791,633	\$1,368,937,364.00

Note: Data is derived from monthly Federal Veterans Affairs reports. Content Count is the number the of recipients receiving VA compensation and pension. Content Gross is the dollar amount associated with compensation and pension payments.

Reintegration and Outreach Events Overview



Outreach Statistics					
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	61	42	11		114
Mobile Outreach Van Events	13	4	8		25
Veteran Interactions	1,196	775	625		2,596
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	452	237	118		809
Claim referrals to other state, county and local organizations assisting Veterans	225	194	8		427
Health Care Enrollment Referrals	162	71	113		346
Number of Veterans Registry Cards distributed	119	136	110		365
County Directors Office Attended	32	12	2		46
Legislative attended events	32	16	1		49

As of 28 February 2023

> community > commonwealth > country

VETERANS' TRUST FUND



VTF Report						
Source	Week	Month to Date	Fiscal Year Total		Total	# HOV Sold
Appropriation Transfer to VTF	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$1,700,000.00	
HOV License Plate	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,084.00	72	\$54,686.00	3,646
PA Monuments LP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0
HOV Motorcycle License Plate	\$0.00	\$15.00	\$15.00	1	\$3,494.00	233
HOV Women's License Plate	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$90.00	6	\$1,650.00	110
Checkoff & Donations	\$29,791.00	\$89,370.95	\$919,977.77		\$13,941,644.76	
Veterans Trust Fund Online Donations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$435.00		\$6,563.00	
SECA Donations	\$0.00	\$161.51	\$2,038.24		\$16,743.46	
County Juror Donations	\$0.00	\$1,049.12	\$56,631.89		\$109,418.10	
Interest	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$41,848.11		\$224,336.08	
VSO	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$700,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 16-17)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 15-16)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 14-15)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 13-14)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 21-22)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,346,748.65		\$1,346,860.15	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 20-21)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$782,833.48	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 19-20)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$800,000.00	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 18-19)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$780,137.46	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 17-18)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$763,749.14	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 16-17)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$641,329.75	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 15-16)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$502,126.03	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 14-15)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$472,473.67	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 13-14)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$442,020.00	
Veteran Programs Training	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$8,700.00	
Veterans Assistance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$22,901.34	
VTA	\$18,145.00	\$35,235.00	\$492,301.00		5,874,415.32	
Working Balance	\$11,646.00	\$55,361.58	-\$816,929.64		\$2,144,989.06	3,989

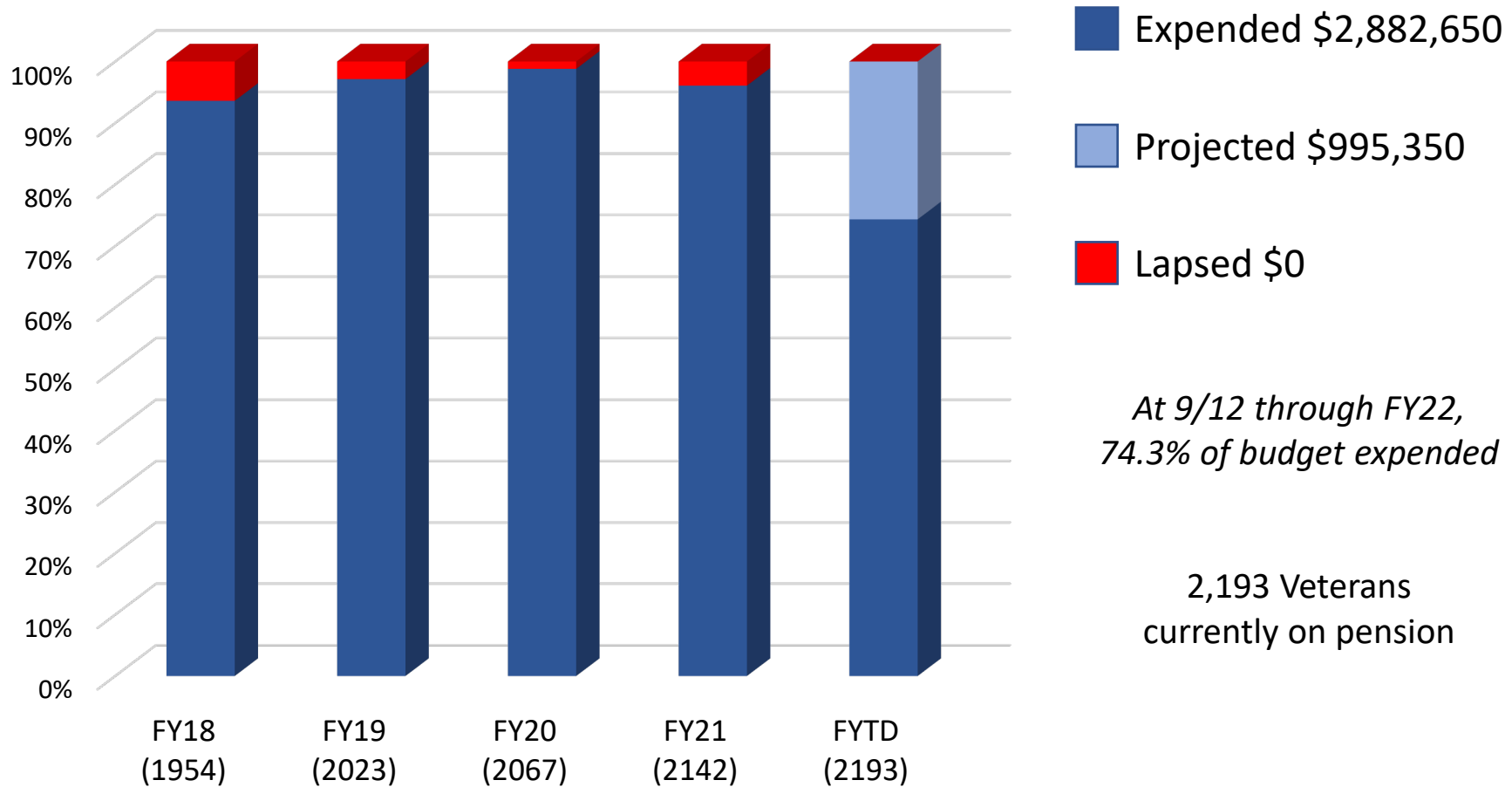
As of 15 March 2023

> community > commonwealth > country

AMPUTEE & PARALYZED VETERANS' PENSION



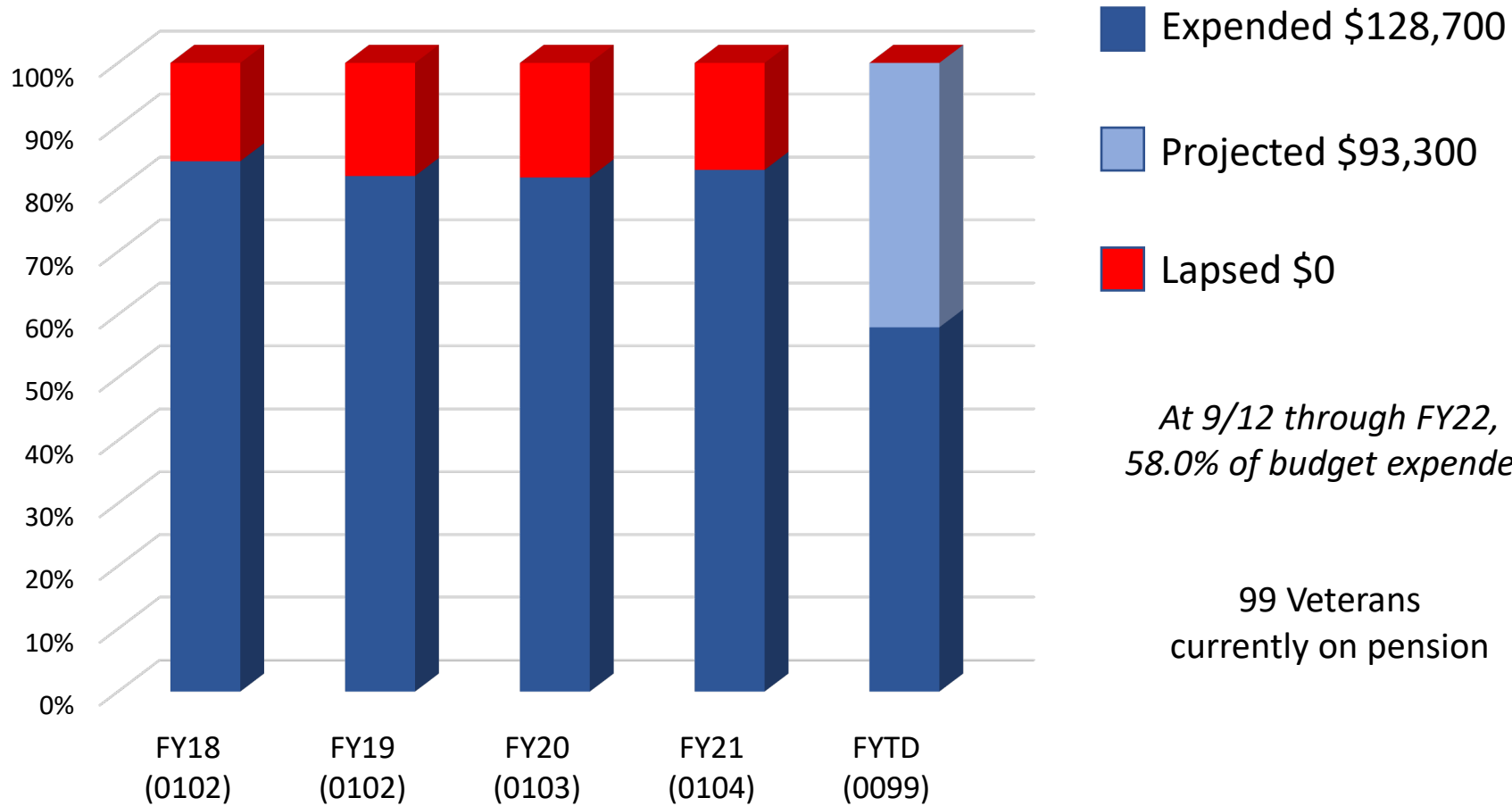
\$3,878,000



BLIND VETERANS' PENSION



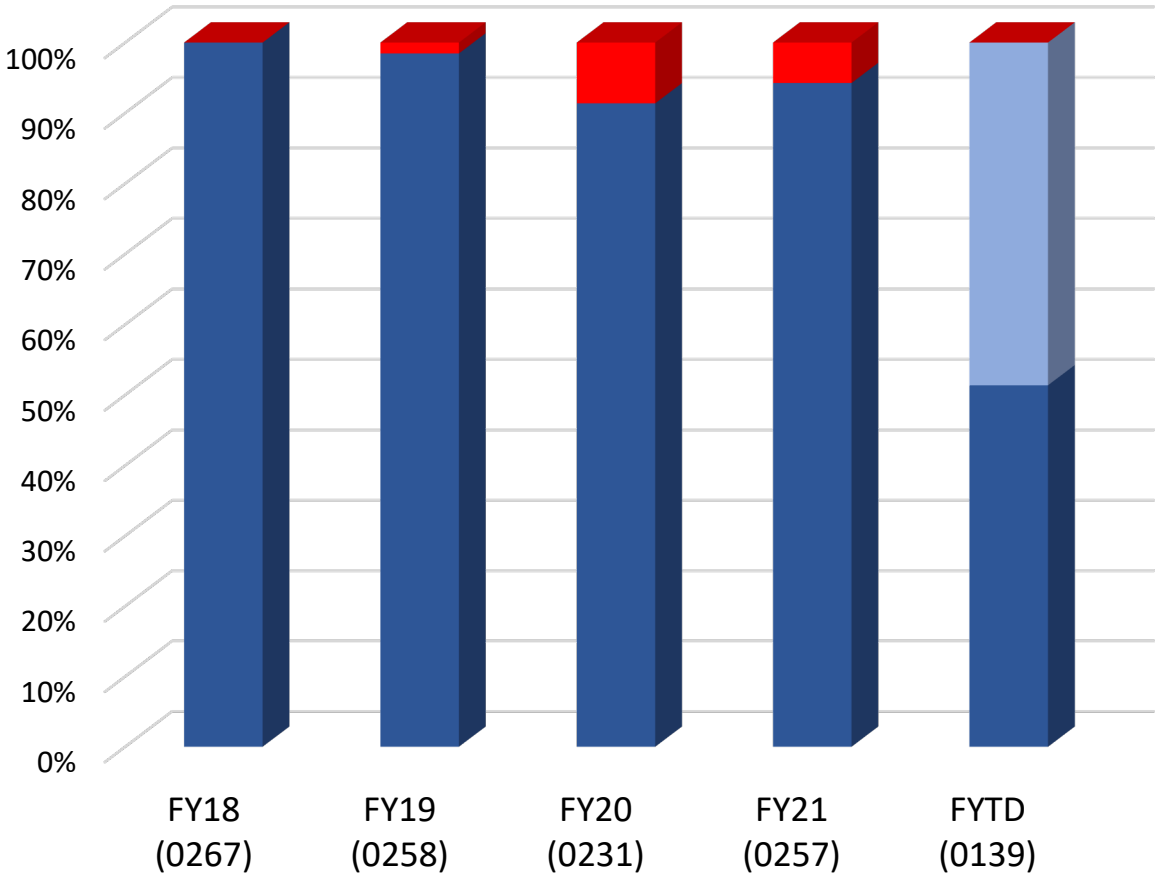
\$222,000



EDUCATIONAL GRATUITY



\$154,402



- Expended \$135,336
- Projected \$19,096
- Lapsed \$0

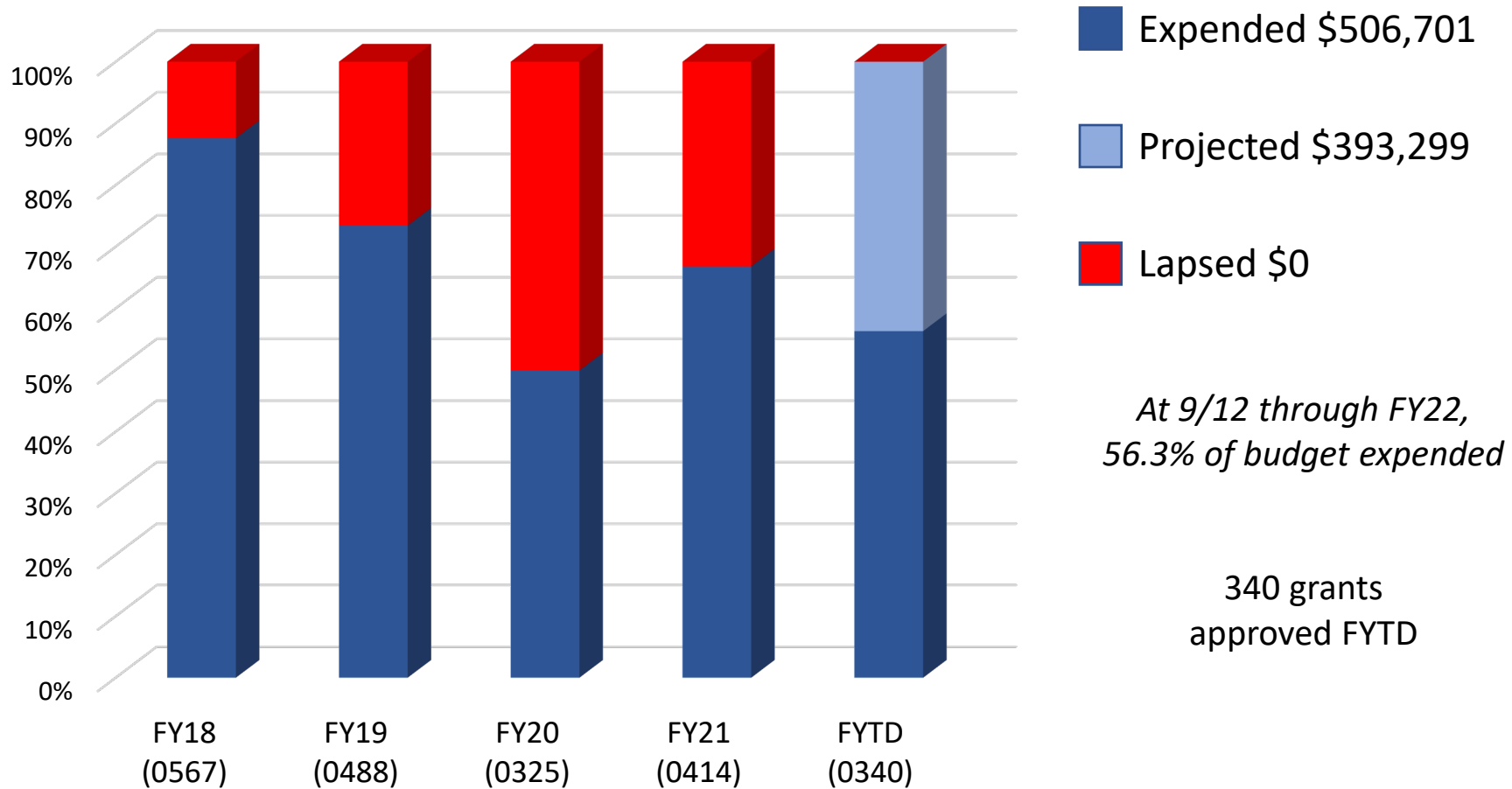
*At 9/12 through FY22,
87.6% of budget expended*

139 students
currently on gratuity

VETERANS' TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE



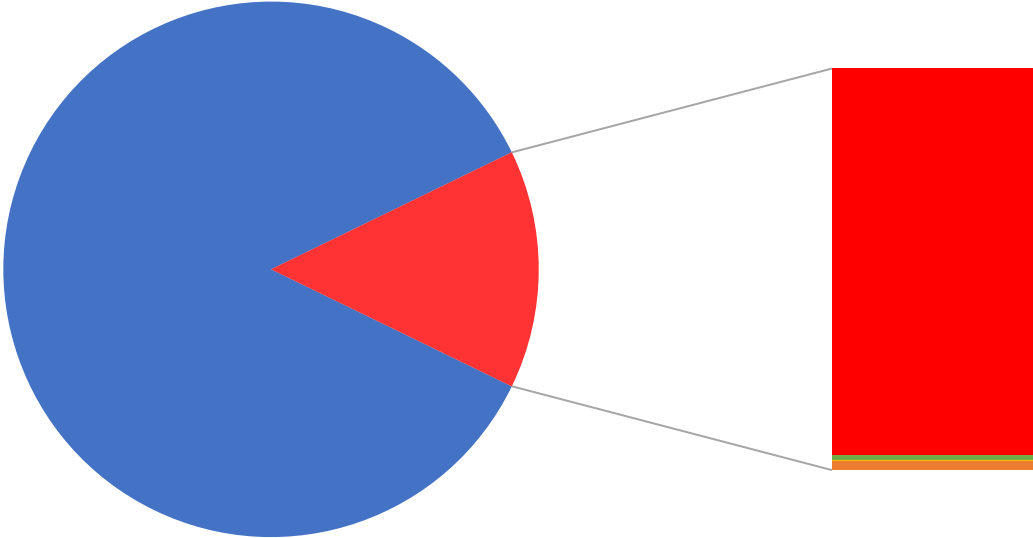
\$900,000



MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Total All Contributions FY2005-22 \$2,177,738.77



- Personal Income Tax Donations
- Personal/Corp/Org Donations
- Cash Donations
- Online Donations
- Other Dept of Revenue Transfers

Total Grants FYTD 2022

(\$ 45,765.00)

Total Grants FY 2005-22

(\$ 967,686.86)

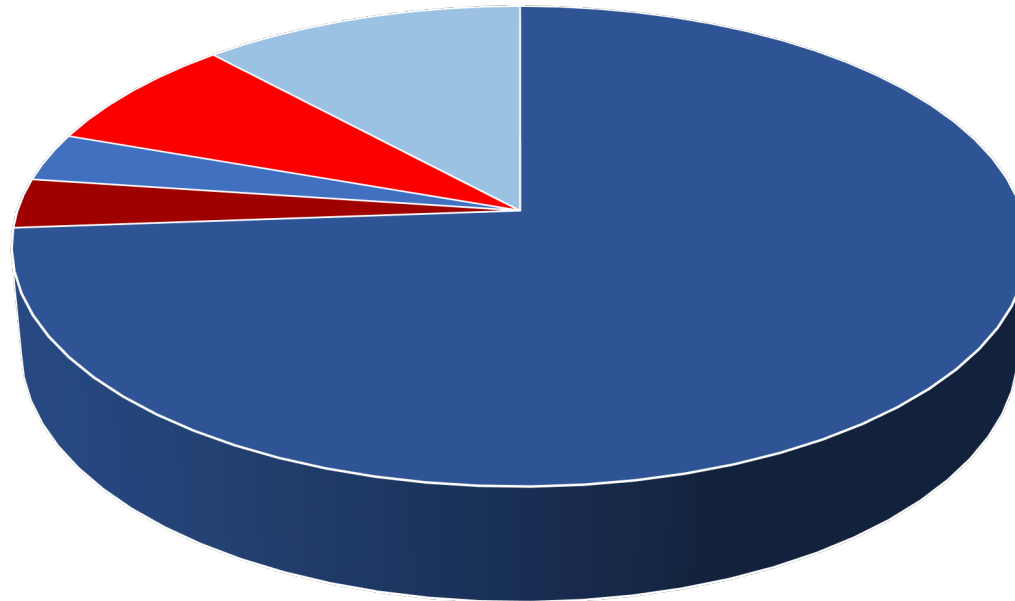
MFRAP Account Balance

\$ 1,210,051.91

DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



1,174 Total Adjudications
from 25 Jan to 27 Mar 2023

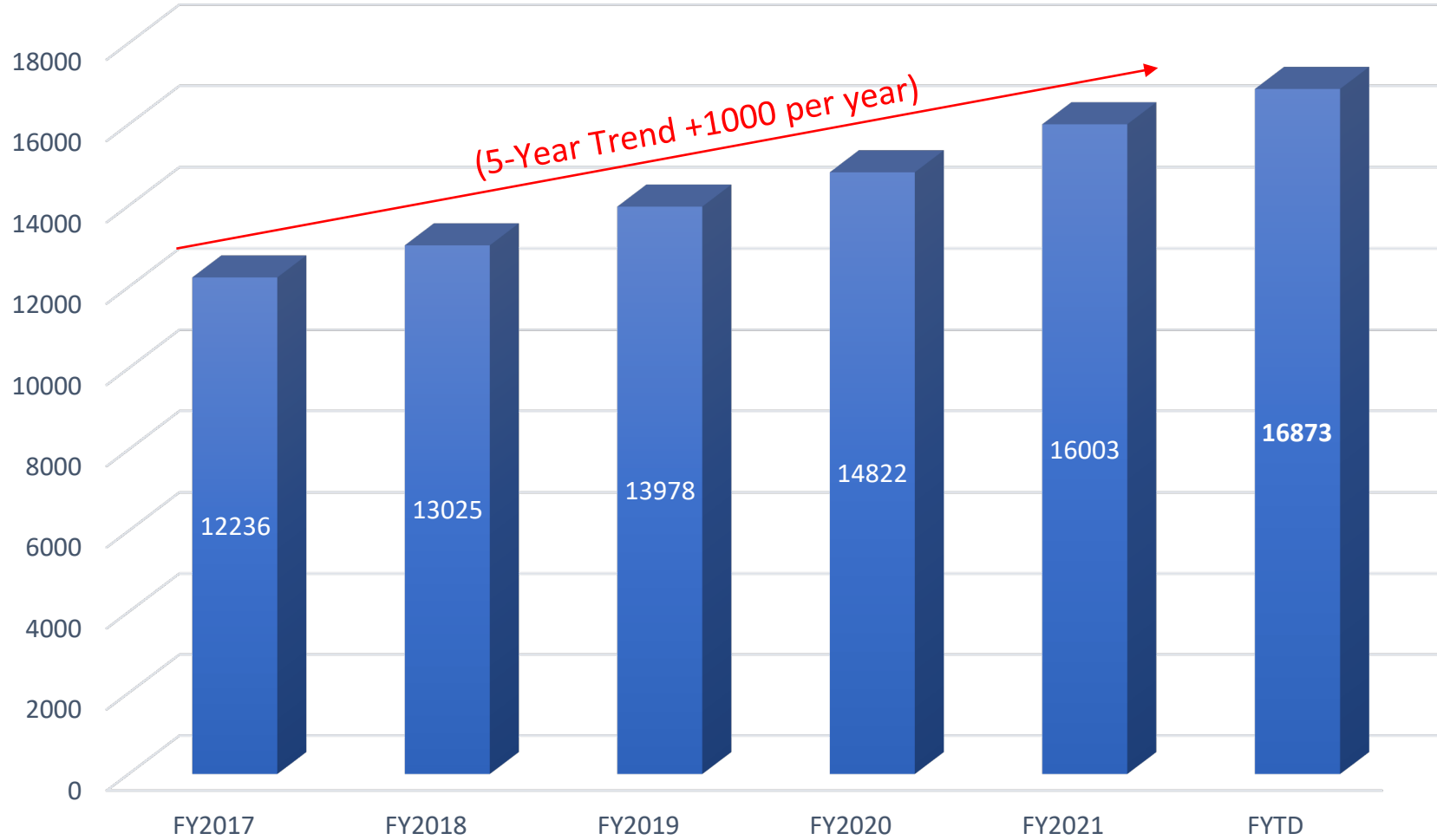


- 867 Approved (74%)
- 39 Denied: Financial Need
- 38 Denied: Ineligible*
- 91 Removed: No Response
- 139 Removed: Eligibility Change

* 38 Applications Ineligible by Reason

- 4 – Veteran did not have a total or 100% permanent disability during lifetime.
- 7 – Property not owned solely by veteran or jointly or estate by entirety with spouse
- 15 – Veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict.
- 12 – Veteran has future exam, therefore not rated as total or 100% permanent

DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



As of 27 Mar 2023

> community > commonwealth > country

VISN 4 Access – Fiscal Year 2023 Wait Times



Clinics FY23 thru March 19	Number of Appointments	Average Wait
Mental Health	154,703	5.1
Primary Care	233,549	5.2
Specialty Care	428,916	10.3
Other	315,771	6.1
ALL	1,132,939	7.3

FY23 data updated 3/20/2023 with appointment info as of 3/19/2023.

VISN 4 Access – Current Average Wait Times



VISN 4 Facility	Primary Care	
	New Patients	Returning Patients
James E. Van Zandt VAMC	18	2
Abie Abraham HCC	14	2
Coatesville VAMC	18	5
Erie VAMC	19	3
Lebanon VAMC	17	5
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC	22	6
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (University Drive)	31	14
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (H.J. Heinz)	18	11
Wilkes-Barre VAMC	16	3
Wilmington VAMC	10	8

FY23 data updated 3/20/2023 with wait times as of 3/5/2023 for the last 30 days.

www.accesstocare.va.gov

April 2023 Update

> community > commonwealth > country

Improvements to the Access to Care website

Average wait times for all VHA medical centers and clinics are now calculated to include additional steps in the appointment process that had not been captured in the past.

- For **new patient** appointments, average wait time is calculated from the earliest time a request for care is consistently recorded in the scheduling system to the date the appointment is completed – or the date it is scheduled to occur if not yet completed.
- For **established patient** appointments, average wait times are measured from the date agreed upon between a Veteran and provider for future care and ends on the date care is received, or the date that care is scheduled to occur if it has not yet occurred.

The upgraded calculation makes the website more reflective of the complete process of requesting and receiving care. Averages are representative of general performance and may not represent individual experience. Average wait times are never used to determine eligibility for community care.

VISN 4 Care in the Community



	Care in the Community Consults (Scheduled and Completed)	Non-VA Unique Patients*
FY 18	87,704	62,425
FY 19	101,068	70,376
FY 20	153,506	87,040
FY 21	155,823	85,443
FY 22	167,807	89,695
FY 23 (as of 3/20/23)	84,018	64,833

*Number of unique enrolled Veterans who receive community care at VA expense

FY23 data updated 3/20/2023 with consult info as of 3/20/2023.

NEXT MEETING



**Friday June 2, 2023
at 10:00AM**

**Arrowheads Community Club
Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003**

VISIT www.dmva.pa.gov/veterans/commissionsandcouncils FOR SVC INFO



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare–VISN 4

VISN 4 Update

April 14, 2023

Leadership Update

Vince Kane, Director of the Wilmington VA retired on January 31.

Jeffrey Beiler began serving as the interim director for Wilmington effective January 29. Mr. Beiler has been the executive director at the Coatesville VA Medical Center since October 2020.

Bob Callahan, Director of the Lebanon VA retired on March 31.

Margaret Wilson, Associate Director for Patient Care Services at Lebanon is currently serving as the Medical Center Director during the recruitment process. Ms. Wilson has been the Associate Director for Patient Care Services at Lebanon since June 2010.

Jennifer Harkins began serving as the acting executive director for Coatesville VA Medical Center effective Sunday, January 29. She has been the associate director of finance and operations at Coatesville VA since May 2017.

Patricia O’Kane, Deputy Director, Philadelphia VAMC has been selected as the executive director of the New Jersey Healthcare System.

Dr. Jaconda Lightburn, Associate Director from Lebanon VAMC, will serve as Deputy Director in Philadelphia while we recruit to fill the position.

Michelle Goetz has been selected as the Assistant Director at the Coatesville VAMC and Eastern Market Manager. Michelle joined the Coatesville VA in 2017 and most recently served as the Chief of HAS.

Kathryn Barley, CBOC Manger at the Lebanon VA was detailed as the Acting Associate Director at Lebanon effective February 20.

Nick Haller, VISN 4 Rehabilitation and Extended Care Clinical Lead is currently detailed to the position of Associate Director, Patient Care Services, Erie VA Medical Center.

Dr. Stephanie Coyne, Physician Assistant and Western Market Lead Clinician at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System will serve as the Acting VA Pittsburgh Assistant Director and Western Market Lead effective February 22. Alan Petrazzi, Assistant Director resigned from Federal service.

New VA Mission Statement

[VA announced on March 16, 2023, an updated version of its 1959 mission statement.](#)

The new mission statement is: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors."

The new mission statement is inclusive of all those who have served in our nation's military — including women Veterans — as well as Veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

VA currently serves more than 600,000 women Veterans, the fastest growing cohort of Veterans. VA also serves more than 50,000 Veteran caregivers, more than 600,000 Veteran survivors, and millions of Veterans who did not serve in combat.

In crafting the new mission statement, VA surveyed roughly 30,000 Veterans over two years. Among Veterans surveyed, the new version of VA's mission statement was chosen over the current version by every age group; by men and by women; by LGBTQ+ Veterans; and by white, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans.

VA is here to serve all Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors — and now, our mission statement reflects exactly that.

Patient Experience Update

Nationally, VA's trust score over the last 90 days was 90.4%. In VISN 4, our trust score over the last 90 days was 93.7% which is the highest VISN in the nation. The percentage of comments made over the last 90 days that were compliments in VISN 4 was 74.9%, also higher than any other VISN. The top compliment themes were quality of care, interactions with staff, cleanliness of facility, satisfaction with specialty care, and quality of care from students and resident staff.

VA 2024 Budget Request

The Biden-Harris administration released the [president's budget for fiscal year 2024](#) on March 9, 2023. This budget proposes critical resources to help VA serve all Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors as well as they have served their country.

The total FY 2024 request for VA is \$325.1 billion, a \$16.6 billion, a 5.4% increase above the FY 2023 budget enacted level. This is the *largest budget proposal in U.S. history for Veterans*, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

With these historic investments, VA can continue to deliver more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before in our nation's history.

More information on VA's 2024 submission is available at this [link](#).

PACT Act Update

On March 3, VA publicly [released](#) the [PACT Act Performance Dashboard](#), which highlights key performance metrics and data we are using to assess our success in implementing the PACT Act. VA is engaging members of Congress and Veterans Service Organizations to share this information widely and meet VA's commitment to transparency with all stakeholders—internal and external to VA. VA plans to share additional information as it becomes available, expanding and improving the Dashboard as PACT Act implementation continues. Data updates will be provided every two weeks on the [VA News Blog](#).

Links to the PACT Act Performance Dashboard and VA News Blog are provided in the read ahead material.

Preventing Suicide among Veterans

There is nothing more important to VA than preventing Veteran suicide — it's our top clinical priority.

VA announced on March 2, 2023, [the availability of the latest funding of \\$52.5 million in grants through VA's Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program](#).

The grants will provide funding for community-based organizations that provide or coordinate suicide prevention services for Veterans and their families – including conducting Veteran mental health screenings, providing case management and peer support services, delivering emergency clinical services, reaching out to Veterans at risk of suicide and more.

VA also recently [announced the 10 winners of Mission Daybreak](#), a [\\$20 million grand challenge aimed at developing innovations to reduce Veteran suicides](#) on Feb. 16, 2023.

During this challenge, VA received more than 1,300 innovation submissions from Veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, community-based organizations, health technology companies, startups, and universities – with solutions ranging from lethal

means safety concepts, to targeted virtual care programs, to other promising suicide prevention solutions that offer healing and recovery to Veterans.

Ending Homelessness among Veterans

VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans because it is our nation's duty to ensure all Veterans have a place to call home.

The Department of Veterans Affairs [announced on March 15, 2023, its 2023 goals for preventing and ending Veteran homelessness](#). Specifically, in 2023, VA will:

Place at least 38,000 Veterans experiencing homelessness into permanent housing.

Ensure that at least 95% of the Veterans housed in 2023 do not return to homelessness during the year. And of those who return to homelessness, VA will ensure that at least 90% are rehoused or on a path to rehousing by the end of 2023.

Engage with at least 28,000 unsheltered (PDF) Veterans to help them obtain housing and other wraparound services. This goal represents a more than 10% increase in the number of unsheltered Veterans reached during 2022.

As a part of ongoing efforts to prevent and end Veteran homelessness, [VA also announced availability of \\$30 million in grant funding](#) for organizations to help formerly homeless Veterans maintain their independence and housing stability.

Significant progress has been made to prevent and end Veteran homelessness.

- Since 2010, the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the United States has declined by more than 55%.
- Since 2010, more than 1,000,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through VA's homeless assistance programs.
- Since 2015, 83 communities and 3 states (Virginia, Connecticut, and Delaware) have achieved an effective end to Veteran homelessness.

COVID-19: Updated Masking Guidance

VA announced on March 3, 2023, it has [relaxed the masking requirement at VA medical facilities](#). This update ensures the safety of Veterans while accommodating individual masking preferences and aligning with CDC guidelines.

This new policy will ensure the safety of Veterans and VA health care providers, while accommodating individual masking preferences,

Moving forward, VA will base its masking guidelines on the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels (low, medium, and high) and healthcare facilities' conditions. When health protection levels are high, masking will remain required.

When health protection levels are low or medium, medical center leadership will conduct a facility risk assessment to determine if it is appropriate for masking to be optional in certain areas at their facility.

Connected Care Update

Emergency Management Text Messages

The new VEText Emergency Management features allows VA staff to send text messages to communicate important and time-sensitive information with patients during emergencies. Messages can be one-way or two-way which will allow Veterans to respond. VEText messages and responses are combined with other data in a near real-time report for our Emergency Management staff to identify Veterans who have been contacted and those who need follow-up assistance. All Veterans are enrolled in this system unless they previously opted out of the VEText.

Blood Pressures by VA Video Connect (VVC)

VA patients are able to take their blood pressure from home with assistance of their care team through VA Video Connect (VVC). Veterans no longer need to travel to a VA facility to check their blood pressure. They can avoid travel and inclement weather! Plus, there is never a co-pay for a VVC visit. Veterans should talk to their care teams or providers about VVC Blood Pressure checks from home!

Census as of Midnight February 28, 2023

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Peter Ojeda - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	141	97	44	69%	5	0	5	56	15		
Memory Care	30	30	0	100%	1	0	1	15	6		
Total	171	127	44	74%	6	0	6	71	21		
Non-Veteran Census Percent				6%							
Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Vito Ruggiero - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	156	113	43	73%	6	0	0	9	16		
Memory Care	40	29	11	73%	4	0	1	4	4		
Total	196	142	54	73%	10	0	1	13	20		
Non-Veteran Census Percent				12%							
Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home, Hollidaysburg PA - Sam Dunkle - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	231	147	84	64%	6	2	6	18	4		
Memory Care	26	20	6	77%	0	0	0	2	0		
Personal Care	167	74	93	44%	2	0	0	4	1		
Total	424	241	183	57%	8	2	6	24	5		
Non-Veteran Census Percent				20%							
Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	75	63	12	84%	3	0	1	13	7		
Memory Care	32	18	14	56%	3	0	1	3	3		
Personal Care	100	52	48	52%	0	2	0	3	1		
Total	207	133	74	64%	6	2	2	19	11		
Non-Veteran Census Percent				11%							
Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	208	133	75	64%	11	1	0	29	13		
Memory Care	30	28	2	93%	0	0	1	35	4		
Personal Care	54	35	19	65%	2	3	0	13	2		
Total	292	196	96	67%	13	4	1	77	19		
Non-Veteran Census Percent				8%							
Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA - Richard Adams - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	196	102	94	52%	4	1	4	12	9		
Memory Care	40	28	12	70%	2	0	0	5	4		
Total	236	130	106	55%	6	1	4	17	13		
Non-Veteran Census Percent				13%							
Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes											
Veteran Census/Events	Auth Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran	Waiting List Non-Veteran		
Nursing Care	1007	655	352	65%	35	4	16	137	64		
Memory Care	198	153	45	77%	10	0	4	64	21		
Personal Care	321	161	160	50%	4	5	0	20	4		
Totals	1,526	969	557	64%	49	9	20	221	89		
Veteran Status:	Total Non-Vets (f)	Male Non-Vet	% Non Vets (f)	Total Vets (f)	% Vets (f)	Male Vets	Total Male (f)	Female Non-Vets	Female Vets	Total Female (f)	VH Totals (f)
Non-Veteran/Veteran	7	0	6%	120	94%	119	119	7	1	8	127
DVVH	17	2	12%	125	88%	123	125	15	2	17	142
HVH	48	10	20%	193	80%	183	193	38	10	48	241
PSSH	14	2	11%	119	89%	112	114	12	7	19	133
SEVC	16	1	8%	180	92%	167	168	15	13	28	196
SWVC	17	2	13%	113	87%	109	111	15	4	19	130
Totals	119	17	12%	850	88%	813	830	102	37	139	969

Summary of Activity from 01/25/2023 to 03/27/2023

APPLICATIONS APPROVED	867
New	458
Review	409

APPLICATIONS DENIED	307
Financial Need	39
Ineligible	38
No Response	91
Change of Eligibility	139

OVER INCOME	79
New	29
Review	50

9%
6%
12%

APPLICATIONS CREATED	1069
TOTAL ADJUDICATED	1174

Summary of Current Applications (Exempt)

Count	No Activity	Review Process Started	Review App Received	New Apps Pending
16873	16332	472	69	412

Summary of Activity from 01/25/2023 to 03/27/2023

Apps Created: 1069	
New:	671
Review:	398
Apps Approved: 867	
New:	458
Review:	409
Apps Denied (Need):	39
Apps Denied (Eligibility):	38
Apps Removed (No Response):	91
Apps Removed (Eligibility Change):	139

Summary of Ineligible Reason

Reason	Count
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not have a total and/or 100% permanent disability during their lifetime.	4
The property for which you claim exemption is not owned solely by you, or as an estate by the entirety with your spouse.	7
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict.	15
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs stated that you have a future exam, therefore, your disability has not been rated as total or 100% permanent.	12

Veteran Homelessness in Pennsylvania



Pennsylvania is home to over 700,000 veterans – the 4th largest veteran population in the nation.

According to the latest available Point-in-Time (PIT) Count from January of 2022, a total of 778 veterans were identified as homeless in the commonwealth: 746 were identified in emergency shelter and transitional housing locations, and 32 were identified as unsheltered (living on the street, in cars, under bridges, etc.). The COVID-19 Pandemic greatly impacted the ability to properly count unsheltered homeless individuals, so the actual number of homeless veterans may be a bit higher. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development note Analysis of changes over time are generally limited to those between 2022 and 2020 or earlier. The PIT Count should be used as a tool regarding homelessness and should not be relied upon as the sole indicator of veteran homelessness.

The DMVA receives no funding to combat veteran homelessness, however, through the Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) provides grants through the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) to organizations who address housing insecurity and underlying issues. The OVA also administer the Veterans Temporary Assistance program (VTA) and the Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP), which both may assist veterans with emergent housing-related issues in addition to referrals to other governmental and community resources.

The DMVA also has two programs that allow for collaboration with multiple federal entities, sister agencies, and community partners regarding homelessness in Pennsylvania. PA VETConnect is a community-based outreach program to connect veterans and families who need assistance with resources. The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) is the commonwealth's first interagency collaborative approach to veteran's services. Through these successful programs, DMVA has increased awareness and engagement with current challenges and successes related to the veteran homelessness sector.

Continuums of Care (CoCs) are homeless assistance planning networks that exist at the city, county, and state levels, and coordinate efforts to identify needs, resources, and gaps in service for local homeless populations. Pennsylvania is divided into 16 CoCs, which seek to address all aspects of homelessness and the needs of those experiencing homelessness. The Eastern and Western PA CoCs are together known as the Balance of State and comprise 53 counties. The remaining 14 counties are each their own Entitlement CoC. Eight CoCs in PA have effectively ended veteran homelessness according to the criteria set forth by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), meaning that veteran homelessness in these communities is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 4, which covers 63 of PA's 67 counties, works directly with all federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center Homeless Veteran Care Teams to assist VA-eligible veterans. Luckily, veterans who may not qualify for assistance through the VA may still be able to obtain help with homeless issues. Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) are two flagship VA programs utilized to permanently house veterans. The HUD-VASH program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the VA. The VA also announced that 38,000 veterans will be permanently housed through the VA Permanent Housing Placement National Challenge during calendar year 2022. Each VA location will receive data on the number of veterans they are tasked with housing.

In federal FY 2022, twelve non-profits received funding in the amount of \$16,189,386 from the federal VA in the form of SSVF grants. These grants assisted 2,578 veteran households, or over 3,800 individuals. Of these households, 1,402 received Rapid Rehousing enrollments, meaning household members were literally homeless, and 1,176 received Homeless Prevention enrollments, meaning these households were imminently at risk for

becoming homeless, if not for the intervention from the SSVF provider. Some SSVF grantees also operate the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP), administered by the Department of Labor. This program aims to reintegrate homeless veterans back into meaningful employment and as of July 1, 2021, seven HVRP PA grants exist.

Under the GAC-VS, two workgroups have formed related to homelessness. The Hard-to-Place workgroup focuses on establishing networks of support to reduce the occurrence of veteran homelessness following reentry from incarceration and assisting those who are considered hard-to-place due to a criminal record. The Affordable Veteran Housing workgroup is fairly new, but focuses discussion on the lack of available units, and the need to engage landlords so they choose to rent to veterans. Landlords can obtain higher rent amounts with non-HUD-VASH tenants, so landlord engagement is crucial for developing a network of support.

Many challenges exist regarding veteran homelessness, which often results from a combination of drug or alcohol use and co-occurring behavioral health issues that can include Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, and poly-Trauma. These conditions make it difficult to find and maintain gainful employment to pay for housing. By percentage, women veterans are at a higher risk of homelessness compared to their male counterparts and face additional challenges when they must care for children. Other challenges exist when individuals facing homelessness have larger families to care for, when they have pets, or when they are members of the National Guard or Reserve Components who were never federally activated, meaning that they will not qualify for SSVF assistance.

Work must continue to uncover more resources for National Guard or Reservists who were not federally activated under Title 10, and therefore do not qualify for SSVF or other veteran homeless programs. Housing instability affecting the older veteran population, women veterans or veterans caring for children, and veterans who have a companion animal, need to be considered when developing plans for emergency shelter beds, transitional housing, and regular affordable units.

Homeless veterans who are couch-surfing are considered “housed” under the current homelessness definitions. However, these situations can change overnight, and individuals may find they suddenly do not have a guaranteed shelter. Also, individuals leaving institutions (such as hospitals or jails) where they have resided for 90 days or more must exit and actually spend one night homeless before they qualify for the more robust homeless services. Broadening or relaxing the definition of homelessness and the criteria that assists these individuals will allow for more wrap-around supports and cause less trauma to the situation.

All stakeholders should collaborate to share data, identify gaps, and create strategies to address unmet supportive service needs for veterans. Increasing access to case management to support triage services for homeless veterans will allow for quicker response once these situations are identified. We ask for support to help expand the awareness of existing programs for homeless veterans, and also assistance in researching and providing additional funding for veteran’s homeless programs. No service member or veteran should be left behind.

For additional information, please contact Brigadier General (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, 717-861-8808 / mweigl@pa.gov or Mr. Joel Mutschler, Director for the Bureau of Veterans Programs, Initiatives, Reintegration, and Outreach, 717-861-8771 / jomutschle@pa.gov.



Veteran Transportation in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is home to over 700,000 veterans – the 4th largest veteran population in the nation. Access to appropriate medical and mental health care, the ability to access gainful employment, and the ability for veterans to remain active and involved in their communities play a large role in the overall health and welfare of our Nation’s heroes. Transportation access is key to keeping veterans safe, healthy, and involved.

Veterans may struggle to find reliable and affordable transportation for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to age, disability or illness that make personal driving or use of fixed-route or shared-ride transportation programs difficult or impossible; lack of financial means to purchase, maintain or repair a personal vehicle; lack of family or informal support to assist with rides; residing in a rural area with great driving distances between services and a lack of nearby providers, which often necessitates travel into other counties; limitations of current shared-ride systems that result in veterans waiting long periods of time before or after appointments; low-income veterans being eligible for the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) but not being able to use this transportation program to get to VA appointments; Compensation and Pension exams being located out of county and sometimes several hours away from a veteran’s residence; and transit authorities being bound by county borders or coverage territories.

According to a 2020 research article on barriers faced by post-9/11 veterans¹:

- 16% of programs provided transportation with only 2.7% of veterans reported using or benefitting from programs that provided transportation.
- Veterans with probable PTSD symptoms were two-times more likely to utilize programs that offered transportation compared to veterans without PTSD symptoms.
- Veterans with physical health conditions were not significantly more likely to utilize programs that provide transportation.
- Transportation appears to be a key access assistance component particularly for veterans with serious injuries or disabilities that prevent them from getting around by themselves or for those who do not have the financial means to purchase and maintain their own transportation.

The PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) receives no funding to combat veteran transportation challenges; however, through the Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA), it provides grants through the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) to organizations that seek to address transportation challenges and underlying issues. DMVA also administers the Veterans Temporary Assistance program (VTA) and the Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP), which both may assist veterans with funds to address emergent transportation-related issues in addition to referrals to other governmental and community resources. Additionally, PA VETConnect is identifying transportation programs at the local and regional levels and is building relationships with organizations and programs at the community level that address transportation challenges for veterans. Furthermore, PA VETConnect staff are establishing or participating in veteran-centric coalitions across the Commonwealth. The State Veterans Commission has also recently established a committee focused on addressing the transportation issues facing our community. These spaces bring together stakeholders who can collaborate to better understand the transportation challenges veterans face and brainstorm potential solutions with the resources that currently exist.

For example, DMVA VSOs located in western PA are working with the VA’s regional director to address veteran transportation issues in that area, identifying barriers and brainstorming solutions. Personnel have canvassed the 27 counties in the western district to see what transportation options are available at the county and local levels. In addition to the VA, DMVA is seeking input from organizations including the Veterans Leadership Project and

¹ Morgan et al. BMC Health Services Research, 2020, *Reducing barriers to post-9/11 veterans’ use of programs and services as they transition to civilian life*

Advocate Health Advisors, hosting roundtable discussions with a goal of creating an actionable plan moving forward to minimize, and eventually eliminate, this transportation issue. With the success of this initiative, a more widespread program is possible to assist veterans across the Commonwealth. No veteran should miss a compensation and pension exam due to a lack of transportation.

Currently, there are several programs that exist from the VA and from Pennsylvania that may help to reduce transportation barriers for veterans who qualify for such programs. These are not one-size-fits-all solutions, however, and each has their limitations and drawbacks.

The VA Health Administration (VHA) offers three transportation programs that may benefit Pennsylvania's veterans if they meet eligibility criteria.

- [VA Travel Pay Reimbursement](#) pays back eligible veterans and caregivers for mileage and other travel expenses to and from approved health care appointments. Each medical center has a beneficiary travel point of contact.²
- [Veterans Transportation Service \(VTS\)](#) provides free, convenient, safe and reliable transportation to qualifying veterans who require assistance traveling to and from VA healthcare facilities and authorized non-VA healthcare appointments when they do not have access to transportation options of their own due to financial, medical or other reasons. The VTS partners with service providers in local communities such as Veteran Service Organizations, local and national non-profits, and federal, state, and local transportation services, to serve veterans' transportation needs.³ One example of this partnership is the Disabled American Veterans ([DAV Medical Transportation Program](#)) which operates a fleet of vehicles that provide free rides to VA medical facilities for injured and ill veterans. The provision of this service depends entirely on a pool of volunteers available in any given area; therefore, not all counties have equal access to the DAV Medical Transportation program. In fact, it is non-operational in some areas.⁴
- Finally, VA now offers a rideshare program for veterans enrolled in VA homeless or veteran justice outreach programs. Veterans can utilize rideshare programming such as Uber and Lyft where it is available to get to medical and mental health appointments, job interviews, substance use treatment, and court appearances. Due to the rural nature of many of Pennsylvania's counties, however, rideshare services are not readily available everywhere.

Pennsylvania offers transportation programs that may assist eligible veterans. Find My Ride (FMR) provides education on these services and explains programs specific to seniors age 65+, persons with disabilities, and low-income individuals. Since many veterans fall into one or more of these categories, these services may be of assistance in some circumstances. Veterans can apply online at [FMR Apply](#)⁵ or they can contact their [local transportation provider](#)⁶. Additionally, those interested in learning what services are available by county can use the [PennDOT Public Transportation Services and Program Map](#)⁷. More information about the following programs can be found on the [FMR education site](#)⁸.

² US Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA Benefits and Health Care," *VA travel pay reimbursement*, [VA Travel Pay Reimbursement | Veterans Affairs](#)

^{3 3} US Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA Benefits and Health Care, Health Benefits," *Veterans Transportation Service*, [Veterans Transportation Service \(VTS\) - Health Benefits \(va.gov\)](#)

⁴ Disabled American Veterans, "Medical Transportation," *Need a Ride?*, [The DAV provides FREE Rides for Veterans - Disabled American Veterans](#)

⁵ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, "Determine Transportation Eligibility," *Find My Ride Apply*, [PennDOT Find My Ride Apply \(pa.gov\)](#)

⁶ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, "Find My Ride Education," *Contact Us*, [FMR Education \(pa.gov\)](#)

⁷ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, "Public Transportation Services and Programs Map," [Transit Map \(penndot.gov\)](#)

⁸ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, "Find My Ride," [FMR Education \(pa.gov\)](#)

- Senior Shared Ride Program enables those 65+ to use shared ride services and pay only a small portion of the regular shared ride fare or perhaps nothing at all. The shared ride service picks up passengers at home and takes them directly to the destination (typically curb-to-curb service). The downside to this service is that it is often unable to travel outside of specified coverage zones and those riding often have long wait-times before and after their appointments.
- The Free Transit Program for Seniors provides a pass to seniors 65+ to ride for free on all public transportation bus services in PA. This is fixed-route service following repetitive, fixed schedules along consistent routes, picking passengers up from and delivering them to specific locations. If the location of a veteran's destination is not on or near a fixed route, this service will be of no value.
- The Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Program pays for those aged 18 to 64 to be picked up at their residence and travel to locations within their county, or in some cases, to locations outside of their county. Riders receive discounts on shared-ride services, which in most cases results in free or significantly reduced fare. Proof of disability must be provided. Prior-day advanced registration is required.
- The MATP may consist of mileage reimbursement, public transportation bus passes, or pick up by a vehicle at home. The county of residence provides the type of transportation that is least expensive. More information on MATP and other programs for low-income individuals may be obtained from a local county assistance office. Please note that this program cannot help to transport a veteran to a VA appointment since VA does not bill medical assistance. This program would only be beneficial to veterans who were receiving healthcare from a provider that will bill medical assistance.

Some community action agencies and non-profit organizations may offer grants or funds to help individuals with the cost of vehicle repairs or to purchase a used vehicle. These programs are not widely available however and are often restricted to one county or a specific coverage area. They also tend to have strict eligibility criteria. Some transit providers have started to offer rides for veterans going to VA medical appointments through donated funds meant for this specific cause. For example, RabbitTransit can provide York County veterans with rides to VA medical appointments through a pot of money donated and earmarked for this purpose.

A better understanding of the steps and elements necessary to support such a program could help other counties replicate this model. Funds to support these types of programs are essential however to being able to make them more widely available and expand the number of veterans who can benefit from them.

Additional Resources

- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2014). Community Tools to Improve Transportation Options for Veterans, Military Service Members, and their Families.
- National Center for Transit Research (2014). Improving Veteran Mobility in Small Urban and Rural Areas
- National Conference of State Legislatures (2013). State Activities to Help Military Veterans Access Transportation.
- Veteran Transportation Matters Report: Addressing the Transportation Needs of Veterans in Arizona (2021)

For additional information, please contact Brigadier General (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, 717-861-8808 / mweigl@pa.gov or Mr. Joel Mutschler, Director for the Bureau of Veterans Programs, Initiatives, Reintegration, and Outreach, 717-861-8771 / jomutschle@pa.gov.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Governor's Office

PROCLAMATION

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY March 29, 2023

WHEREAS, the Tuskegee Airmen were the first group of African-American military aviators, fighting with exemplary courage and distinction during World War II; and

WHEREAS, during this time under the Jim Crow laws, the United States military was racially segregated, and the Tuskegee Airmen were discriminated against in both military and civilian life; and

WHEREAS, 100 Tuskegee Airmen from Western Pennsylvania flew 1,578 missions, destroyed 261 enemy aircraft, and earned more than 800 medals. They have been honored for their excellent combat record and received three Distinguished Unit Citations; and

WHEREAS, these airmen comprised the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment, fighting with their fellow soldiers in Northern Africa, Italy, and Germany; and

WHEREAS, no matter your race, religion, or background, you have a place in Pennsylvania and the Commonwealth is proud to honor the history and contributions of black individuals in our state and throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, we honor and remember these outstanding Pennsylvanians, not only for their combat skills but also for their fight for equality, who put their lives on the line for our nation and our Commonwealth.

THEREFORE, I, Josh Shapiro, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim March 29, 2023 as TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY in recognition of these exemplary men. May their legacy and determination be an inspiration to all.

GIVEN under my hand and the Seal of the Governor, at the City of Harrisburg, this twenty-fourth day of March two thousand twenty-three, the year of the Commonwealth the two hundred forty-seventh.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Shapiro".

JOSH SHAPIRO
Governor



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Governor's Office

PROCLAMATION

VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY
March 29, 2023

WHEREAS, as we honor all the men and women who served in our nation's armed forces throughout history, Pennsylvania is proud to join in the national commemoration of Vietnam War Veterans Day; and

WHEREAS, this conflict defined an entire generation of Americans and numerous brave men and women served during the conflict, including 325,208 Pennsylvanians, of whom 3,147 Pennsylvanians were Killed in Action and eighty-nine are still unaccounted for; and

WHEREAS, as citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania we must never forget the pain and suffering that lingers today for the men and women who fought with honor and distinction, in the name of freedom and democracy for all; and

WHEREAS, we remember the men and women who so honorably served during more than a decade of fighting in challenging terrains of Southeast Asia, where they faced extraordinary and unprecedented dangers; we will never forget their sacrifice and we value their continued service to their fellow veterans today, as they embody the motto of the Vietnam Veterans of America: "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another;" and

WHEREAS, since their return, these Veterans have contributed tremendously to their communities, the Commonwealth, and the nation. They have displayed unparalleled support for those currently serving by providing welcoming celebrations for those returning and honors to those who have fallen; and

WHEREAS, through this commemoration the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Veterans Affairs join with all citizens of this great state and nation to honor and remember our Vietnam Veterans and their families for their courage, sacrifice, and valor.

THEREFORE, I, Josh Shapiro, Governor of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim March 29, 2023, as VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY. I encourage all citizens to participate in activities that bestow honor and commendation on American heroes past and present.



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 23, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Grant Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Grant Committee

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Hollenbeck	Matthew	The American Legion	Chairman
Getz	John	Veterans of Foreign Wars	Member
Hawk	Gerald	American Veterans	Member
Salvador	Liz	Veterans of Foreign Wars	Member
Susengill	Tim	Vietnam Veterans of America	Member
Gilliland	Nicholas	DMVA, Chief, Reint and Outreach	Advisor

2. Authority:

- a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.
- b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 23 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To make recommendations on policy, procedures, and business rules regarding providing for the grant program for designated accredited VSOs, for defraying the costs for wages, benefits, training, equipment, and for improving outreach and delivery of services to Pennsylvania's Veterans.

4. Period: Effective 23 January 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

5. Special Instructions:

- a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.
- b. This committee shall not override or otherwise change recommendations of other PASVC standing committees. Coordination with other committees is encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.

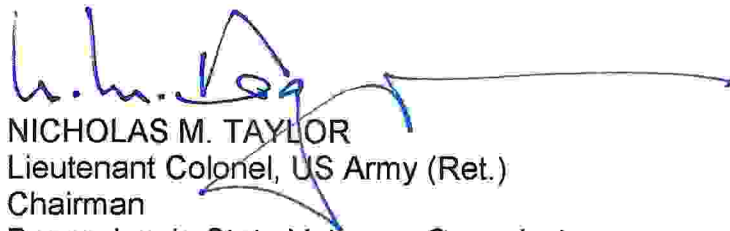
c. Specific tasks and procedures subject to recommendations and action shall include, but are not limited to:

- (1). Award allocation from specifically appropriated funds to support accredited Service Officers and associated costs.
- (2). Improvement of the coordination and distribution of veterans' benefits.
- (3). Maximization of the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars.
- (4). Increasing veterans' participation in available benefits programs.
- (5). Increasing interaction between the VSOs and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to enhance the delivery of services to Pennsylvania veterans.
- (6). Increasing the number of initial claims filed with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of Pennsylvania veterans for service-related disabilities or pension benefits.
- (7). Developing methods to increase rates of recovery paid by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to Pennsylvania veterans.
- (8). Expanding training opportunities for designated VSOs and Veterans' Service Officers.
- (9). Improving coordination among the VSOs and with DMVA to assure an integrated approach to claims processing.
- (10). Improving outreach services to veterans throughout Pennsylvania in all counties.

d. VSOs eligible for funding shall submit an annual spending plan to DMVA in order to be eligible to receive a grant.

e. The committee will be prepared to brief the PASVC on their activities at each scheduled meeting and those activities shall be made a matter of record.

f. Concerns or issues of the committee which cannot be resolved through coordination with other standing committees will be brought to the attention of the Commission Chairman prior to the next commission meeting.



NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 20, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Real Estate Tax Exemption Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Real Estate Tax Exemption Committee:

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Eisele	David	President, PACDVA	Chairman
Slep	Justin	Franklin County Office of VA	Member
Rang	Michael	Catholic War Veterans	Member
Natali	Brian	DMVA, PIRO Programs & Services	Advisor

2. Authority:

- a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.
- b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 20 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To make recommendations on legislation, policy, and procedures regarding the implementation of the Real Estate Tax Exemption (RETX) program for Veterans within this Commonwealth.

4. Period: Effective January 20, 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

5. Special Instructions:

- a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.
- b. The committee's primary purpose is to recommend and review eligibility criteria for applicants requesting exemption for paying real estate taxes in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for Disabled Veterans and their surviving spouses.
- c. This committee shall be prepared to periodically review the laws currently in effect, as passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor, and make the appropriate recommendations to DMVA through a vote by the sitting commissioners.

d. Coordination with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, all offices, is encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.

e. This appointment order supersedes the appointment order dated October 21, 2021.



NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 25, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Legislative Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Legislative Committee:

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Heister	Robert	Military Officers Assoc of America	Chairman
Arnold	Phillip	Military Order of the Purple Heart	Member
Gray	Robert	Military Officers Assoc of America	Member
Gui	David	Disabled American Veterans	Member
Durand	Gilbert	DMVA, Director, PPL Office	Advisor
Benge	Seth	DMVA, Exec Policy Specialist	Alt. Advisor

2. Authority:

- a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.
- b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 25 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To make recommendations on legislation, proposed legislation, regulations, licensure, financing, and other actions concerning Veterans and their activities within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

4. Period: Effective 25 January 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

5. Special Instructions:

- a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.
- b. The committee will be prepared to brief the PASVC on their activities at each scheduled meeting and those activities shall be made a matter of record.
- c. This committee shall not override or otherwise change recommendations of other PASVC standing committees. Coordination with other committees is

encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.

d. Concerns or issues of the committee which cannot be resolved through coordination with other standing committees will be brought to the attention of the Commission Chairman prior to the next commission meeting.

e. This appointment order supersedes the appointment order for this committee, dated January 5, 2022.



NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 23, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Pensions and Relief, Grave Marking, and Cemetery Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Pensions and Relief, Grave Marking, and Cemetery Committee:

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Googins	Larry	Vietnam Veterans of America	Chairman
Albert	Walter	Blinded Veterans Assoc	Member
Fidler	Chris	Keystone Paralyzed Veterans	Member
Snaveley	Constance	Korean War Veterans Assoc	Member
Wylie-Perry	Tracy	DMVA	Advisor
King	Jeff	DMVA	Advisor

2. Authority:

- a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.
- b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 23 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To make recommendations on legislation, proposed legislation, regulations, and programs specifically concerning Pensions, Veterans Relief, Grave Marking, and Cemetery issues for Veterans within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

4. Period: Effective 23 January 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

5. Special Instructions:

- a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.
- b. This committee shall not override or otherwise change recommendations of

other PASVC standing committees. Coordination with other committees is encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.

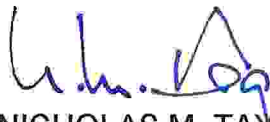
c. Specific programs subject to recommendations and action include, but are not limited to:

- (1). Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans' Pension Program.
- (2). Blind Veterans' Pension Program.
- (3). Educational Gratuity Program.
- (4). Veterans Temporary Assistance Program.
- (5). Military Family Relief Assistance Program.

(6). Coordination with the National Cemetery Administration and PA DMVA regarding burial eligibility, emblems of belief, headstone and marker inscriptions, and research and coordination to identify unmarked graves of Veterans.

d. The committee will be prepared to brief the PASVC on their activities at each scheduled meeting and those activities shall be made a matter of record.

e. Concerns or issues of the committee which cannot be resolved through coordination with other standing committees will be brought to the attention of the Commission Chairman prior to the next commission meeting.



NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 23, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Veterans Health Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Veterans Health Committee:

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Baylis	Mark	Member at Large	Chairman
Davis	Travis	DMVA, Ex Dir of Long Term Care	Advisor

2. Authority:

- a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.
- b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 23 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To make recommendations on legislation, proposed legislation, regulations, and programs specifically concerning issues unique to Veterans health within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

4. Period: Effective 23 January 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

5. Special Instructions:

- a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.
- b. This committee shall not override or otherwise change recommendations of other PASVC standing committees. Coordination with other committees is encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.
- c. The Committee Chairman will serve as the commission's representative to the Pennsylvania Long Term Care Council (LTCC) and attend scheduled meetings and activities.
- d. The committee will be prepared to brief the PASVC on their activities, including results of the LTCC, at each scheduled meeting and those activities shall be made a matter of record.

e. Recommended topics for consideration and action include, but are not limited to:

(1). Overall health care needs specific to Veterans.
(2). Quality of and access to mental health services and treatment resulting from PTSD and TBI.

(3). In-patient treatment availability.

(4). Improve the delivery of health care services, especially preventative maintenance.

(5). Recommend changes in the PA State statutes relating to the delivery of health care for Veterans in the Commonwealth.

(6). Reduction and prevention measures regarding Veterans suicide.

f. Concerns or issues of the committee which cannot be resolved through coordination with other standing committees will be brought to the attention of the Commission Chairman prior to the next commission meeting.



NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 30, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Governance Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Governance Committee:

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Brooker	Michael	Member at Large	Chairman
Majocka	Stanley	Italian American War Veterans	Member
Hudzinski	Richard	Vietnam Veterans of America	Member
Hamp	Richard	DMVA, DAG-VA Special Assistant	Advisor

2. Authority:

- a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.
- b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 30 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To establish a set of operating instructions for meetings, committee procedures and responsibilities, reporting, and general administrative matters regarding this advisory commission.

4. Period: Effective January 30, 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

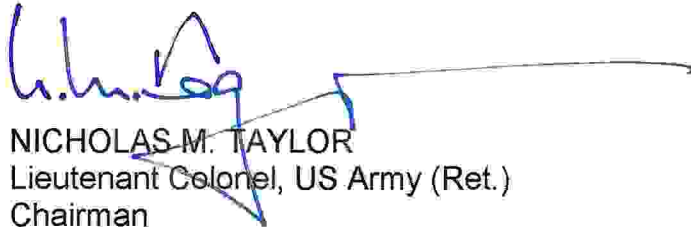
5. Special Instructions:

- a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.
- b. The committee's primary purpose is to produce a document, similar to a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Constitution and Bylaws, Operating Instructions, or authorization document that prescribes how the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission will operate.
- c. This committee may choose to name this document the Constitution and Bylaws, Operating Directive, or any other term that the committee feels that accurately reflects what these rules and processes are intended to codify.

d. This committee shall be prepared to periodically review the Bylaws and Operating Instructions and be prepared to make changes, additions, and modifications to such documents.

e. Coordination with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, all offices, is encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.

f. This appointment order supersedes the original appointment order dated May 29, 2022, and the CORRECT COPY dated July 1, 2022.



NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission



TO The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission Members

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE January 20, 2023

RE Appointment Memorandum – Transportation Committee

1. The following individuals are appointed to the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (PASVC) Transportation Committee:

<u>LAST</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Hines	William	Disabled American Veterans	Chairman
Hawk	Gerald	AMVETS	Member
Hudzinski	Richard	Vietnam Veterans of America	Member
Getz	John	VFW	Member
Mutschler	Joel	DMVA, Dir. PIRO Bureau	Advisor

2. Authority:

a. Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 51, Chapter 17, Subchapter A, § 1703 and § 1704.

b. Verbal Order of the Commission Chairman (VOCC) on 20 January 2023.

3. Purpose: To establish a standing committee commission that is responsible for investigating and recommending to this commission actions, processes, and procedures regarding transportation issues affecting Veterans in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

4. Period: Effective 20 January 2023 (VOCC) and until officially released or relieved from this appointment.

5. Special Instructions:

a. This committee will meet at the call of the Committee Chairman.

b. The committee's primary purpose is to advise and recommend to the PASVC processes, procedures, and actions to enhance and improve transportation services to Veterans.

c. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, there are a number of challenges in the area including, but not limited to:

- (1). Transportation to and from medical appointments.
- (2). Transportation requirements as they relate to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) service needs.
- (3). Number of vehicles / vans currently in the program and the plan for Maintenance recurring maintenance and life-cycle replacement plans.
- (4). Obtaining Highly Rural Transportation Grants.
- (5). Beneficiary Travel.
- (6). Recruitment, training, and retention of vehicle / van drivers.
- (7). Public Private Partnership (P3) agreements with organizations specifically
 - (a). The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM).
 - (b). Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative.
 - (c). Strengthening Inclusive Coordinated Transportation Partnerships to Promote Community Living (HHS).
 - d. Coordination with all offices of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is encouraged and desired for synchronization of activities and continuity.



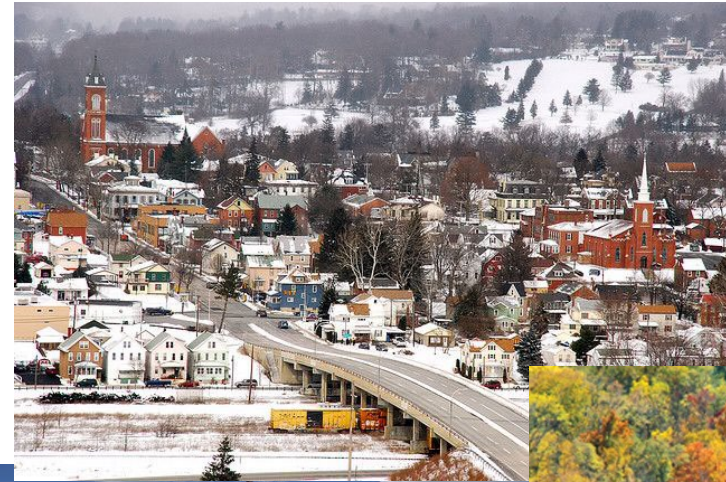
NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

Hollidaysburg Veterans Home Community Living Center



Welcome to Hollidaysburg!

40°25'54"N 78°23'32"W



HVH Overview

- HVH opened with just five residents on June 30, 1977
- HVH currently has 560+ employees
- HVH is the largest Veterans Home in the state of Pennsylvania with 424 beds (PC: 73/94 = 167...SC:166/91 = 257)
- Personal Care and Skilled Care in three resident halls
- Campus sits on 200+ acres of ground with 8 buildings.
- HVH made Newsweek's list of one of the best Nursing Homes in Pennsylvania at #14. In addition, we made U.S. News & World Report's list of Best Nursing Homes.

Blair County Home



The Blair County Hospital and Almshouse





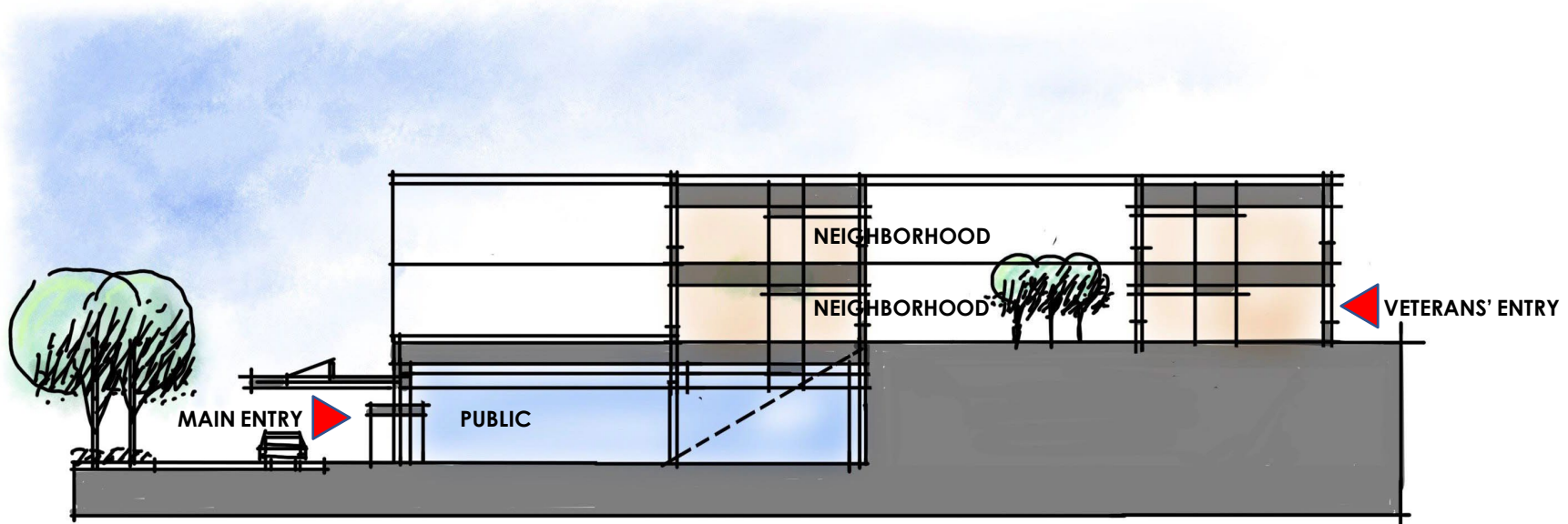
New CLC



New CLC Front



CONCEPTUAL SECTION



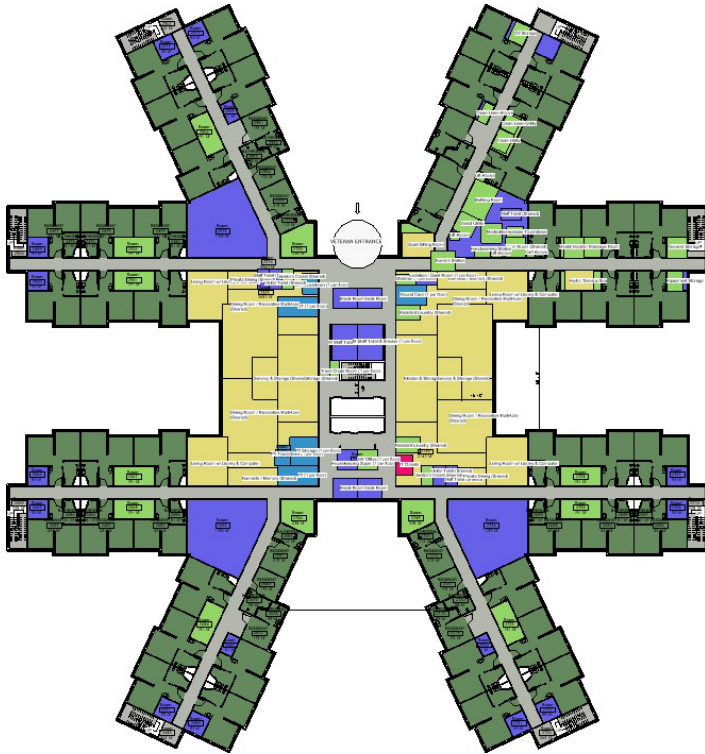
Veterans Entrance



Pavilion & Front Terrace



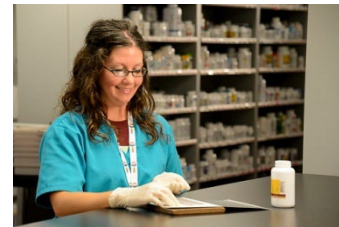
PLANS – TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD



New building Name: Lightner Hall

-
- The Advisory Council for the Hollidaysburg Veterans Home unanimously voted on a motion to name the CLC after Sergeant First Class Daniel R. Lightner.
 - SFC Lightner served as a Pennsylvania State Policeman graduating from the Academy as a member of its 115th class in April 2004.
 - SFC Lightner was a member of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania Army National Guard. SFC Lightner was killed in Iraq by an improvised explosive device (IED) on October 27, 2005, supporting Operation “Iraqi Freedom.” He was 28 years old.
 - SFC Lightner is a native son of Hollidaysburg and “Hometown hero” whose career epitomized selfless service to our Commonwealth and our Country.





HVVH Wants You!!



Hollidaysburg Veterans Home Questions?

