

Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

Meeting Agenda

September 09, 2022, at 1000 AM

Location: Arrowheads Community Club

1000	Call to Order	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Moment of Silence	Vice-Chair Nathaniel Smith
	Pledge of Allegiance	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Introduction of Commission Members	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Oath of Office: Mr. Wilhelm TAL, Mr. Eisele CDVA, Mr. Mannella VFW	MG Mark Schindler
	Certificates of Appreciation: Mr. Smith VFW, Mr. Hines DAV, Mr. Slep CDVA,	MG Mark Schindler/Chair Taylor
	Presentation of Awards: Mr. Natali DMVA, Mr. Slep CDVA	MG Mark Schindler/Chair Taylor
	Chairman's Opening Remarks	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	TAG's Opening Remarks and Comments	MG Mark Schindler
	Approval of 03 June 2022 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, PIRO• Programs Report	Requires Vote
	Budget Discussion	Mr. Rick Hamp
	VISN 4	Mr. Timothy Liezert
	Committee Reports	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VSO Grant• RETX• Legislative• Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings• Women Veterans• Veterans' Health• Governance Committee• PAWVC Update	Mr. Bruce Foster Mr. Justin Slep Mr. Charles Jackson Mr. Larry Googins Ms. Lisa Kaye Mr. Mark Baylis Mr. Michael Brooker President, PAWVC
	Unfinished Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update: Transportation Committee	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	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	
	October 07, 2022, at 10 AM	
	Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville	
	Retiring of the Colors	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Adjournment	Chairman Nicholas Taylor

State Veterans' Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2022

10:00 AM to 12:03 PM

Arrowheads Community Center, Fort Indiantown Gap

Call to Order	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
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The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chairman Smith opened the meeting with a moment of silence in honor of all Veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice for a grateful Nation. Chairman Taylor led a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commission Introductions

MG Mark Schindler	The Adjutant General
BG (PA) Maureen Weigl	DAG DMVA-OVA
Mr. Nicholas Taylor	SVC Chairman; Commander, Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Nathaniel Smith	SVC Vice Chairman; Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. Bernard McDonald	Commander, AMVETS
Mr. William Hines	Commander, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Samuel Petrovich	Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. William Albert	Commander, Blinded Veterans of America
Mr. Justin Slep	President, PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Robert Heister	President, Military Officers Association of America
Mr. Rich Hudzinski	Designee, Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. Christopher Fidler	Director, Keystone Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America
Mr. David Brady	Commandant, Marine Corps League
Mr. James Hogan	Adjutant, The American Legion
Ms. Lisa Kaye	Member-at-Large
Mr. Mark Baylis	Member-at-Large
Mr. Charles Jackson	Member-at-Large
Mr. Michael Brooker	Member-at-Large

Absent Members

Mr. Gerald Hawk	Executive Director, AMVETS
Mr. John Gets	Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. Joseph Chiodo	Commander, Italian American War Veterans
Mr. Richard Fine	Commander, Jewish War Veterans
Mr. Ronald Carpenter (Resigned)	Korean War Veterans
Mr. Frank Bokan	President, Military Order of Purple Hearts
Mr. Phillip Arnold	Adjutant, Military Order of Purple Hearts
Mr. Michael Murphy	Commander, The American Legion

Others Present

Mr. Tim Liezert	VISN-4 (on phone)
Mr. Nate Silcox	Office of State Senator Patrick Stefano
Mr. Michael Hillman	Democratic Executive Director, PA House VAEP
Mr. Joel Mutschler	Director DMVA-PIRO

Mr. Brian Natali	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)
Mr. Jeffery King	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)
Mr. Seth Bengé	DMVA-PPL
Ms. Joan Nissley	DMVA-Public Affairs
CSM Jon B. Worley	PANG-Army
Mr. Ryan Miller	PASACDVA-Northumberland County
Mr. Anthony Romania	PASACDVA-Northumberland County
Ms. Jennifer Hagaman	PASACDVA-Clinton County
Mr. Tony DiFrancesco	PASACDVA-Dauphin County
Mr. Thomas Coreau	PASACDVA-Dauphin County
Mr. Leonard M. Johnson	Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Sam D. Robinson	Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Matt Hollenbeck	The American Legion
Mr. Bruce Foster	The American Legion
Ms. Kristi Brawley	Penn State Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

Chairman's Opening Remarks	Chairman Taylor
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I have been receiving weekly updates from DMVA staff. Much of the information is presented to commissioners in the read-ahead. Have been receiving feedback that we are becoming closer on organizational goals. With sadness, this will be the last meeting for some commissioners: Nate Smith, Justin Slep, Mike Murphy, and William Hines. I would like to coin each of you with a Catholic War Veterans coin as my way of thanking you for your service.

I have appointed a Governance Committee charged with writing guidance on how the SVC should conduct business, Mr. Michael Brooker will chair that committee.

I would like this Commission to work more closely with the PA War Veterans Council. In September, I will ask the PA War Veterans Council to submit a report.

I am also trying to get away from the current briefing format to spend more time examining challenges and coming up with solutions for Veterans. I solicit your input. Please give me suggestions, by July, of topics you or your organization would like to have us review.

Questions/Discussion

None.

TAG's Opening Remarks	MG Schindler
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TAG referring to slides, PANG Army and Air deployments remain relatively constant. Army has about 700 soldiers deployed Egypt, Africa, Kuwait, and Guantanamo. A Quartermaster company is mobilizing this weekend, as well as a Finance detachment. The Air Guard has around 100 deployed, going up to around 200 in a couple months. Our strategic alliance with Lithuania continues strong. I visited a couple weeks ago, along with one of our artillery units there. The Air Guard just returned from meeting their counterparts in Lithuania as well.

We had a successful meeting with all commandants of the veterans' homes at FIG to go over their concerns. I attended a Loyalty Day ceremony with employers at FIG where they were given briefings. I was at a Memorial Day ceremony at Boalsburg with Gold Star Families, soldiers, and veterans. I was also able to attend ceremonies at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery and Gettysburg. We recently lost Mr. Harold Billow of Lancaster County. Harry was a 96-year-old WWII veteran and a survivor of the Malmedy Massacre in 1944. He passed away at the end of May.

A few things coming up: BVH Fishing Tournament, June 7. June 12-18, Homes Week. And I will be visiting the AMVETS convention on June 24th.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Approval of the April 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. McDonald, AMVETS, made a motion to approve the minutes.

Second: Mr. Slep, PASACDVA, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Minutes approved.

Reading of Official and Other Communications

Chairman Taylor

We received one communication: An application for induction to Southwest Veterans Center Hall of Fame. We will take care of that under New Business.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Deputy Adjutant General-VA Remarks

BG Weigl

Thanks to William, Nate, and Justin. I appreciate what you have done for the Commission, your organizations, and me and my staff. I hope everyone has a wonderful summer break. Your organizations really make Memorial Day special for all of us. Hopefully in September we will all be back here smiling.

I am honored to say the Governor awarded all our RPOCs as well as Rick Hamp and Barb Raymond.

I sat with Center County folks yesterday about to start a Veterans Court. The RPOCs are out there doing good work in the communities. Please invite them to your events.

Questions/Discussion

None.

DMVA Bureau of PIRO

Mr. Mutschler

We have a little over 12,800 resources and 16,000 connections in PA VETConnect. Our teams have been working with Lancaster County, the Legion, VFW, AMVETS, Army Guard. We are working with Department of Corrections on a statewide veterans' employee symposium, bringing outreach to corrections officers and prisoners.

We are continuing with outreach on pension poaching. A press release went out on that. The veterans virtual townhall in May with Secretary Torres, Department of Aging, is posted on YouTube. We will get the link out.

The next townhall is on July 13, on homeless veterans. Pending any questions, a vote on programs reports in the read-ahead.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Approval of State Veterans' Programs Reports

Motion: Mr. Hines, DAV, made a motion to approve the programs report.

Second: Mr. Hogan, TAL, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Programs reports approved.

DMVA Bureau of Veterans Homes

Mr. Davis

I am looking forward to a day when COVID is not at the top of the list. Positive cases are significantly up. All six counties where our homes are located have about 10% transmission rate. We have increased required testing. Right now, 46 residents and 50 staff members are positive, mostly mild, however we have had three recent deaths. Four homes are in an outbreak. Two homes have peaked and are heading downward, two are increasing. We are following all guidelines. Teams are routinely in the homes doing PPE training, testing, and compliance. Do anticipate an increase in Fall. Families, stakeholders, staff... we keep everyone up to date.

Census is at 943 or 64%. That is a 9% increase, and we hope to see a double-digit increase by end of year. Our marketing campaign is showing some success. Hoping to convert that traffic into employment. The DOH survey in Erie had one minor deficiency. They were in the middle of a lot going on during the survey, so we are very happy about that. Next week, there's an occupancy survey in Delaware Valley. We have converted beds to skilled nursing, and there are people on the waiting list.

Key upcoming events: Fishing Derby. The veterans are thrilled; this is the first derby in two years because of COVID. COVID is not stopping visitation and events. We are getting the veterans out in a safe manner.

Personnel moves: SEVC is bringing on a physician and nurse practitioners, great candidates. Also, new Directors of Nursing at Southeastern and Erie, as well as a new Commandant at Gino Merli. I am happy to answer any questions.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: You mentioned COVID was up. Is it centering somewhere?

Mr. Davis: No, it is up in all our homes, not centralized.

Mr. Brady, MCL: Homes week is the 12-18th. Are there activities our members can get involved with?

Mr. Davis: There are some great events. Our calendar is up. I will make sure we get that out to all of you.

Chairman Taylor: Staffing continues to be an issue. Is there anything to be done without lowering standards to expedite and enhance the hiring process?

Mr. Davis: We have been working together with other departments in Harrisburg to speed the process. We are getting more creative with that. Also talking to high school students around the state.

Mr. Heister, MOAA: Our Pittsburgh chapter has been trying to get into Southwest for bingo since before the pandemic.

Mr. Davis: We can rapid test anyone who would like to come in and call bingo. We cannot require testing unfortunately, but we have good compliance for the most part. We do take precautions about letting people up into the resident areas.

DMVA Policy, Planning, and Legislation

Mr. Bengel

Referring to slides, some changes. Overall, it is budget month in the General Assembly. Their focus is on the budget. Bills will be up for negotiation. HB 995 would codify PA VETConnect as a program of record. That has one more vote in the senate. HB 129 is in Senate now. SB 750, like an Amber alert for veterans, is up for second consideration, on calendar for next week. HB 1972 consolidates different parts of Homes into one subchapter and gives authorization to conduct other programs to care for veterans, like day care.

In federal legislation, Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins (PACT) Act, regarding burn pits and toxic exposure, includes increased VA clinics and staff. Senate voted for cloture. They are looking to pass the bill in early July. President Biden has been an advocate, so it will most likely be signed into law.

Mr. Bengel referring back to slides, bills introduced in April, all passed House and now over in Senate.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Is there an update on the status of the lottery bill?

Mr. Bengel: Moved but it did not get through the House. It has ties to HB 1972 because that is where they are getting the funding.

BG Weigl: Travis forgot to mention the addition of putting green at Southwestern Veterans Home. The residents are all enjoying that.

VHA, VISN-4

Mr. Liezert

In the read-ahead:

Leadership updates: Denise Boehm, Chief Nursing Officer. Don Koenig returned from detail to Central Office where he led a team on integrated veterans care. He is back in Pittsburgh. Ricky Harris is the new Erie Assoc. Director, he left medical administration in Montgomery. And we are continuing to recruit for a Chief of Staff in Butler and Coatesville.

Patient experience update: VISN-4 is at 92.7, the highest trust score in the nation. President's budget for 2023 is good and supportive of issues and needs at VA. Highlight request to support over 435,000 FTE.

Caregiver support: There is a pause on the program but not on legacy reassessments. If we continue annual reassessment and it results in an increase, we adjust that. We will not discharge or decrease support.

Standing by for questions.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Baylis, MAL: Are you looking to close the PTSD facility at Coatesville?

Mr. Liezert: AIR Commission recommendations are just proposed right now. The specific issue in Coatesville is the age of the facility. New facilities may be in a different locality but will continue. We are waiting for 9th member of the Commission to be appointed by Congress. There is a 15-year planning horizon, so nothing is moving in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Baylis, MAL: I work a lot with homeless vets and Coatesville is probably the best resource I have for referrals. It would be a kick in the gut to lose your services in Coatesville.

Mr. Liezert: I get that. Not to say anything against the quality of the programs there. Very few veterans who are served in Coatesville live there. So, it is more about getting those services out to the veterans closer to where they live.

Mr. Baylis, MAL: Is there any accounting for the ones who live closer?

Mr. Liezert: There is a facility in King of Prussia, we are increasing size of the facility in Lebanon, and establishing a new program in Wilmington.

BG Weigl: Rumors are not about long-term impact of Coatesville. Organizations are being told the grant is run out and they need to find a new place to relocate. Homeless shelters for close to 1,000 veterans are trying to decide where they will have to relocate.

Mr. Liezert: Ah, that is not a VA program, it is granted through a different route. Historically they rent some of the spaces and those leases are running out. One major issue is that these programs are harming veterans by re-institutionalizing them at VA facilities. We feel it is much better to have them in the community to learn life skills and individual living. We want to get them more independent.

BG Weigl: Thank you we can follow up later.

Mr. Petrovich, DAV: Philadelphia reached out to DAV about increasing transportation outside Philadelphia to King of Prussia. Do you have a timeline as to when they would need more transportation? Philadelphia has six vans, two are inoperable, the newest is a 2011. We must work a little harder with Lebanon to get those drivers back on the road. We do not want to be caught flat-footed. If you can get back to me on that later, I would appreciate that.

Mr. Liezert: There are recommendations for a new VAMC in King of Prussia, estimated timeline is two years for the Commission to convene and then it goes into the VA capital planning process which is five years. So, we are probably about seven years out for that.

Committee Reports

VSO Grant Committee

Mr. Petrovich

Chairman Taylor: Mr. Foster had another obligation today. You were all invited to attend the 0900 presentation that centered around the increase of VSOs over the next couple years. It came to my attention that some facts and figures were not entirely accurate. Mr. Foster has assured me we will have the most accurate numbers moving ahead

Questions/Discussion

None.

RETX Committee

Mr. Slep

No report. After your appointment of a new chair, I will link up with them.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Petrovich: How many Veterans are receiving this tax relief?

Mr. Mutschler, PIRO: 15,661

Legislative Committee

Mr. Jackson

The committee had not received any input from any other committees. We will be prepared at the next meeting to discuss legislative matters on the agenda.

Questions/Discussions

None.

Pensions/Relief/Grave Marking/State Military Cemetery Committee

Mr. Googins

Mr. Hudzinski is sitting in for Mr. Googins today. Nothing to report.

Questions/Discussions

None.

Women Veterans Committee

Ms. Kaye

The committee met to discuss direction. We researched how other states address Women Veterans' needs. One of the topics is establishment of a Female Veterans Coordinator or office at DMVA to improve awareness and outreach. Not taking over the GAC Women's Committee but connecting women veterans to a specific office in DMVA. We currently have a female veteran's license plate and a female veteran's day, but no specific resource in the state for them to reach out to.

We are looking ahead to the county directors conference in a few weeks and an event at the SCI Muncie female veteran's unit with BG Weigl. If you know of any events for female veterans, let me know and we will get them out in the Digest.

Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor: Regarding needs and specific issues. Feel free to identify and detail the needs and issues and bring them to the Commission if we need to do something to help. We are here to support you and your committee.

Veteran Health Committee

Mr. Baylis

I am still focused on gathering data and feedback. Testing is going slower. Looking for 300, currently have 25.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Hogan, TAL: I invite you to our state convention in Harrisburg to set up a table.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Have you sent out a flier or something so we can easily get this out?

Mr. Baylis: No fliers, I am just out on a grip and grin tour. I will make one though and email it out.

Governance Committee

Mr. Brooker

I am no longer a committee-of-one. I look forward to working with others on the committee, and I will take the Chairman up on his offer to get together and get a common foundation for the road ahead. I hope to have something to report in September.

Questions/Discussions

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Taylor: Regarding the PA War Veterans Council transportation letter. You have a copy in the read-ahead. It talks about the DAV transportation line item going forward. Whoever wrote the letter, it was signed by Woody Hogan. We ask the SVC to aid us in inquiring what DMVA submitted for the DAV transportation budget line. Presently we have mileage well over 100,000. Over \$1.2M to replace these vehicles. Is there a way we can understand how the figure came about and how to update the figure?

Mr. Petrovich, DAV: \$336,000 has been the grant over the last nine years. Car prices have gone up, the line item has not. This also includes salary for schedulers at the hospitals. We are up to 38 vehicles now. The newest van in Philadelphia is 2011, 11 years old. We took the average cost of vans available, times 38. There is a lot of COVID money laying around. If we could use any of that to replace those 38 vans in one swoop and then increase the line item to \$400,000, then we could keep pace for the next 7-10 years. It is a safety issue. We cannot keep putting veterans in unsafe vans. We are asking for the sky to see what we get. We are trying to get our National Office to contribute too.

Chairman Taylor: I surmise there must be a pecking order of which vans you will replace if you cannot replace all 38 at once?

Mr. Petrovich, DAV: Once provided, they are registered to the VA. So, VA determines what vans must come off the road. They send those requests to replace vans to our HQ. We would have to discuss a pecking order with them. The legislature is going to ask DMVA what their advice is, and that is what we are trying to affect with the letter.

Chairman Taylor: Thank you. That is my point in joining this Commission with the War Council.

Mr. Baylis, MAL: I cannot get a van to take my homeless veterans to a hospital.

Ms. Kaye, MAL: The problem is no drivers. People do not want to go through the training and background checks.

Mr. Baylis, MAL: I recruited a new driver from my region, but the schedulers reassigned him to a different area.

Mr. Petrovich, DAV: The key is to get the drivers back.

Mr. Ferraro, DMVA: We have a budget cycle in the Department. If you want an increase in something, vans, VSOs, whatever, you have to understand our budget cycle. Give us what your requests are, we also get guidance from the Governor's Office, then there is a formal process we must go through to explain ourselves. We submitted for five new programs this year and got three. So, you just need to get into our budget cycle. I will make myself available to get together with whoever to hear what it is you want and get you into the cycle.

Chairman Taylor: A briefing on the cycle would benefit me and the other Commissioners. Maybe this is something we can do in September. Granted there is not an unlimited checkbook. We are going to move forward on understanding the budget cycle. Is it too late to change what was submitted at this time?

Mr. Ferraro, DMVA: Most likely yes. Normally during re-budget, we have an opportunity to request certain things or shift some money around. Good point: there is a ton of COVID money laying around. We can at least ask, but we need to know what the requirements are.

Chairman Taylor: I would like to set something up with you to educate us on the budget cycle.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Can you tell us the start date for the re-budgeting process?

Mr. Ferraro, DMVA: Not until a budget gets passed. We start re-budget around July 4 because we must have requests in by August. We will start formulating FY23-24 budget right after re-budget, so around September.

Chairman Taylor: So, on this project we need to supercharge the effort. I would like to set up a meeting and maybe a package, a chart, we can put out to the Commissioners within the next ten business days if your schedule permits. Let me know.

Mr. Baylis, MAL: There are other funding opportunities out there, some not veteran friendly. Is there an opportunity in the budgeting process to open other doors?

Chairman Taylor: Regarding Keystone ChalleNGe Ribbon-Cutting. Is there any interest among Commissioners in attending to show support? Can we ask DMVA if the ribbon-cutting could be held in the afternoon?

TAG: An invite went to the Governor too, so his schedule controls. October is the target month. We will pass that down.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Taylor: As indicated earlier, we do have an application for induction to the Southwest Veterans Center Hall of Fame. I hope you had a chance to look at that application in the read-ahead.

Nomination of SSgt. Dewarski to the SWVC Hall of Fame

Motion: Mr. McDonald, AMVETS, made a motion to approve the nomination.

Second: Mr. Slep, PASACDVA, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Appointment approved.

Good of the Order

Mr. Jackson, MAL: In consideration of budgeting process timeline, I move that the Commission approve submitting a budget for the re-budgeting cycle and submitting a new budget because we will not meet again until September.

Move to Support DAV Letter for Re-budget

Motion: Mr. Jackson, MAL, made a motion to approve submitting van budgets for the re-budget cycle.

Second: Mr. Baylis, MAL, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Appointment approved.

Move to Appoint Ad Hoc Van Committee

Motion: Mr. Jackson, made a motion to appoint an ad hoc van committee.

Second: Mr. Smith, VFW, seconded the motion.

Chairman Taylor: I do not believe it is necessary to appoint a committee. The Commission has made this a priority. Right now, DAV is conveying their needs and thoughts. Do we need a committee for this?

Petrovich, DAV: The van program has been a legislative goal of this Commission for years. The more voices, the better. My commander, chairman of the van committee at DAV, Mr. Hines, is one of the better people to put on the committee.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: We are not sure what we are walking into yet, so a team is advisable.

Chairman Taylor: Is it better to create a “Veterans Transportation Committee” instead of just focusing on these vans?

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: I understand that, but this is currently a budgeting issue for the vans.

The body agreed; motion carried. Appointment of an ad hoc van committee approved.

Good of the Order

Mr. Slep, PASACDVA: I would like to point out Mr. Tony DiFrancesco. He is finally retiring from Dauphin County after ten years. We wish you and your family all the best. His is a household name around the Legion.

Chairman Taylor: All the best to you, Tony!

Mr. Hogan, TAL: A few days ago, the Legion chartered a post at SCI Mercer. Not to leave anyone behind.

Chairman Taylor: There are several agenda items for next meeting. I asked BG Weigl if September would be a good time to have the commandants come in and give us a briefing on the homes.

Chairman Taylor: A shout out to Brian Natali and his group for a wonderful Memorial Day ceremony at IGNC.

Next Meeting

Friday, September 9, 2022, 10:00 AM
Forum: Arrowheads Community Center, FIG

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General
Veterans Affairs



**STATE VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 9, 2022**



DMVA MILITARY UPDATE

CURRENT MOBILIZATIONS & TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS



PAARNG Current Deployments						
MDATE	MSAD	UNIT	OPN	PAX	MISSION	Projected Return Date
27 NOV 21	30 NOV 21	1067 TC	OSS	263	T10, 12304B	29 SEP 22
04 DEC 21	07 DEC 21	107 FA	AFRICOM	8	T10, 12302	03 OCT 22
28 FEB 22	03 MAR 22	109 IN	MFO-22-24	193	T10, 12302	08 JAN 23
01 JUN 22	01 JUN 22	1955 CCD	OSS	2	T10, 12302	28 MAR 23
02 JUN 22	04 JUN 22	252 QM	OSS	203	T10, 12304B	31 MAR 23
28 JUN 22	03 JUL 22	192FFT	APO	7	T10, 12304B	08 APR 23
ARNG Soldiers at MOB/DEMOB Sites				0	Various Missions	Various based on tour
Various Individual MOB Soldiers				2	Various Missions	Various based on tour
Total PAARNG Deployed: 678						

PAANG Current Deployments		
Unit	Opn	Pax
193 SOW	OFS-OIR-OSS, Other	36/7
111 ATKW	IPR (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS	36/4
171 ARW	Alert Status (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS	37/8
Total PAANG Deployed		128

Total PANG Deployed 806

State Legislation of Interest.

- SB 849 (Stefano) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veterans' preference, further providing for definitions; and, in voluntary veterans' preference in private employment, further providing for definitions. **Final Passage 6/30/2022. Signed by Governor 7/7/2022 (Act 44), Earliest Effective Date 9/5/2022.**
- HB 1868 (Mako) Amends Title 63 (Professions and Occupations ((State Licensed)) repealing and replacing existing language and establishing new chapter relating to military and veterans licensure. Provides requirements for the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs relating to licensing for military applicants, examining relevant military experience, approving renewals of licenses for deployed servicemembers, gathering license fees and submitting information reports to various state officials. **Final Passage 6/30/2022, Signed by Governor 7/7/2022 (Act 35), Earliest Effective Date 11/4/2022.**
- HB 1421 (Thomas) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, providing that the department may request the Pennsylvania National Guard for assistance in burials and provides that if a contract is executed the department shall pay an amount not exceeding \$250. Final Passage in House; 201-1; 6/9/21. **Final Passage in Senate 49-0; 6/20/22. Final Passage 7/8/2022. Signed by the Governor 7/11/2022 (Act 54), Earliest Effective Date 9/9/2022.**
- HB 995 (Kaufer) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, establishing the Veterans' Outreach and Support Network Program. Provides for a program that will improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and the families of veterans through community engagement and consistent network communication and organize participants to cooperate with network partners to provide for proactive solutions to address the problems faced by veterans. **Awaiting 3rd Consideration. Set on Tabled Senate calendar 4/13/2022**
- SB 1140 (Bartolotta), HB1887 (DelRosso), HB2682 (Roae), HB1070 (Wheatly), HB1712 (Struzzi), and SB900 (Hughes). Amends Titles 51 (Military Affairs) & 62 (Procurement), in veteran-owned small businesses, for regulations, for participation goal, Dept. of General Services to provide duties for small businesses. **SB1140 Passed over in Senate State Government Committee. HB1712 Awaiting 2nd Consideration**
- HB 2361 (Pennycuick) Amends Title 38 (Holidays and Observances), in veteran recognition, providing for Women Veterans Day. **Passed House 5/25/22, Received by the SVAEP 6/1/22**

State Legislation of Interest.

- HB 491 (Boback) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs) establishing Chapter 99 regarding Veterans' Benefit Payment Exclusion. One hundred percent of a veterans' benefit payment may not be included as income for any commonwealth program. **Awaiting 3rd Consideration. 1/22/2022 Rereferred to Senate Approps.**
- HR 129 (Pennycuick) Concurrent Resolution establishing the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. **Passed House 203-0; 5/24/22. Received in Senate VAEP 5/24/22.**
- HB 1055 (Webster) Amends "An act to authorize the recorder of deeds in the several counties of this Commonwealth to record the discharges of all honorably discharged officers and soldiers," providing that a veteran's records of discharge shall be inaccessible to anyone other than the veteran or an immediate family member or authorized agent for 85 years. **Final Passage House 11/10/2021. Received by Senate VAEP 11/12/2021.**
- HB 1108 (Neilson) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, further providing for exemptions from license requirements for therapeutic recreational programs. H Game and Fish 4/6/21. Voted favorably and reported as committed H Game and Fish. 4/21/21. Discussed during public hearing H Game & Fish + H Tourism & Rec, 10/6/21. **Final Passage House 12/15/2021. Received by Senate Game & Fisheries 12/29/21.**
- SB 241 (Brewster) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, exempting individuals participating in therapeutic recreation programs. Effective in 60 days. **Final Passage Senate 6/24/21. Awaiting 2nd consideration. On House tabled calendar 9/12/2022.**
- HB 1972 (Boback) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, providing the definition of "commission" is clearly explicated to mean The State Veterans' Commission within the context of this bill. Provides for "Community-Based Palliative Care." Subchapter E. Introduced H VAEP 10/13/21. **Final Passage House 198-0; 5/25/22. Received in the Senate, referred to VAEP, 6/1/22. Awaiting 1st consideration.**

State Legislation of Interest.

- HB 164 (Staats) Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs), providing that a licensed funeral director, funeral entity or cemetery company shall, within 96 hours of receipt of the remains of a deceased serviceperson, notify the county director of veterans affairs of a deceased serviceperson having legal residence in the county at the time of death and provide the family of the deceased serviceperson with the contact information for the county director of veterans affairs. **Final Passage House 6/09/2021. Received by Senate VAEP 6/11/2021.**
- SB 272 (Mastriano) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, providing free resident fishing licenses for first responders who have a disability incurred in the line of duty that prevents substantial employment and meets certain qualifications. **Final Passage Senate 1/19/2022. Received in the House and referred to House Game and Fisheries 1/21/2022.**
- SB 455 (Bartolotta) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veteran-owned small businesses, The legislation provides for eligibility, issuance and administration of the logotypes and the system for verification. Money may be utilized from the Veterans' Trust Fund to establish the logotypes and a system for verification. Violation of this act is a misdemeanor of the third degree if the individual fraudulently holds the logotype. Further provides the full amount of each fine collected for a violation shall be deposited into the Veterans' Trust Fund. **Awaiting 3rd consideration. Rereferred to Senate Approps 6/21/2021.**
- SB 150 (Ward) *Comp: HB 477 (Pisciottano)*
 - Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veterans' pensions and benefits, further providing for blind veteran's pension and for amputee and paralyzed veteran's pension by increasing the compensation from \$150 to \$180. **Awaiting 2nd consideration. Rereferred to S Approp 5/10/2021.**
- SB 578 (Bartolotta) Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in taxation and finance, further providing for exemptions and special provisions. **Awaiting 2nd Consideration. Laid on the table 6/26/2021.**
- SB 750 (Fontana) Amends the Pennsylvania Amber Alert System Law, establishing the Pennsylvania Green Alert System; and further providing for immunity. **Awaiting Second Consideration. Set on Senate Tabled Calendar 6/8/2022.**
- HB 1691 (Boback) An Act amending the act of August 26, 1971 (P.L.351, No.91), known as the State Lottery Law, in State lottery, further providing for statement of purpose, for powers and duties of secretary and for disposition of funds and providing for instant lottery game to

State Legislation of Interest.

- HB 1963 (Ryan) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, repealing provisions related to advisory councils for veterans' homes; and, in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, establishing the Veterans' Home Advisory Board within the department and providing for its composition and powers and duties. **Introduced H VAEP 10/7/21. Discussed during public hearing H VAEP 10/19/21. Awaiting 1st Consideration.**
- HB 1978 (Pennycuik) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, permitting any veteran organization or individual veterans to apply for membership. This legislation also outlines the powers and duties of the State Veterans' Commission. **Introduced H VAEP 10/18/21. Discussed during public hearing 10/19/21 H VAEP. Awaiting 1st Consideration.**
- HB 386 (Pisciottano) Amends the State Lottery Law, in State lottery, further providing for statement of purpose, for powers and duties of secretary and for disposition of funds and providing for instant lottery game to benefit veterans. **Introduced H VAEP, 2/3/21.**
- SB 974 (Brooks) Act providing for Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Nurses and Nurse Faculty; and imposing duties on PHEAA. **Introduced Senate Education, 12/17/21.**
- HB 1976 (Harkins) Act providing for workplace health & safety standards for public employees; providing for powers & duties of the Sec. Of L&I, establishing the PA Occupational Safety & Health Review Board; providing for workplace inspections. **Introduced in House Labor and Industry 10/18/21. Awaiting First Consideration.**
- HCO 2548 (Polinchock) Exempts direct care employees at veterans' homes from the Civil Service Act. **House Co-Sponsorship Memo Filed, 12/3/21.**
- SCO 1635 (Baker) Provides a monetary bonus to veterans of the global war on terror, specifically Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). **Senate Co-Sponsorship Memo Filed, 6/1/22.**

Federal Legislation of Interest.

- **H.R.3967 - Honoring our PACT Act of 2021** To improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.
Rep. Takano, Mark [D-CA-41] , Last Action: [Signed into law August 10.](#)
- Expand VA health care eligibility to Post-9/11 combat veterans, which includes more than 3.5 million toxic-exposed veterans;
- Create a framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure;
- Add 23 burn pit and toxic exposure-related conditions to VA's list of service presumptions, including hypertension;
- Expand presumptions related to Agent Orange exposure by including Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa, and Johnston Atoll as locations for Agent Orange exposure;
- Strengthen federal research on toxic exposure;
- Improve VA's resources and training for toxic-exposed veterans;
- Set VA and veterans up for success by investing in VA claims processing, VA's workforce, and VA health care facilities.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the Honoring Our PACT Act will cost \$278.5 billion over a decade.

2022 Dates of Interest

Guard and Veteran Day at the Capitol – September 20, 2022

General Election – November 8, 2022

General Assembly

2022 House Session Schedule

September 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21

October 24, 25, 26

November 14, 15, 16

2022 Senate Session Schedule

September 19, 20, 21

October 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26

November 15

PVH Current Licensure Status



Regulatory Agency	DVVH	GMVC	HVH	PSSH	SEVC	SWVC
Dates of Last Inspection						
PA Department of Health	04/2022 Full Standard Licensure Status	12/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	09/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	05/2022 Full Standard Licensure Status	07/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	07/2022 POC accepted Date certain 8/31/2022
PA Department of Human Services	N/A	N/A	08/2022 Awaiting results	09/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	06/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	N/A
US Department of Veterans Affairs	06/2022 CAP development Recog Revisit 11/2022	02/2022 Provisional certification status	06/2022 CAP development	02/2022 CAP accepted	02/2022 Provisional certification status	07/2022 Awaiting results

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: 8-17-2022

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	8/17/2022	0	0	0	0	6333	56-S	125	103	22
GMVC	8/17/2022	0	0	0	0	12391	95-C	121	98	23
HVH	8/17/2022	0	2	0	0	16804	89-C	253	218	32
PSSH	8/17/2022	0	0	0	0	10602	153-C	177	137	22
SEVC	8/17/2022	4	4	1	0	15109	123-C	183	115	45
SWVC	8/17/2022	0	0	0	0	13796	55-C	90	86	4
Total:		4	6	1	0	75035		949	757	148

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
DVVH	8/17/2022	5	5	0	11675	197	265
GMVC	8/17/2022	1	1	0	22201	171	165
HVH	8/17/2022	13	12	1	53172	574	2068
PSSH	8/17/2022	3	3	0	23018	265	543
SEVC	8/17/2022	4	4	15	23386	338	578
SWVC	8/17/2022	4	4	0	27702	255	503
Total:		30	29	16	161154	1800	4122

As of 17 Aug 2022

> [community](#) > [commonwealth](#)

> [country](#)

BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES



COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Vaccinations (All Homes)

ResidentsBy Home	Vaccinations - Residents					
		Census	Fully Vaccinated	% Fully Vaccinated	Partially Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated
DVVH	Residents	125	125	100%	0	0
GMVC	Residents	137	137	100%	0	0
HVH	Residents	237	221	93%	0	16
PSSH	Residents	131	130	99%	0	1
SEVC	Residents	192	189	98%	0	3
SWVC	Residents	139	136	98%	1	2
Total		961	938	98%	1	22

As of 17 Aug 2022

> community > commonwealth

> country

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>



- **VBA benefits** – The collective efforts of DMVA, the counties, TAL, VFW, VVA, DAV, and AMVETs using the new reporting model for the federal portfolio there were 111,515 claimants in the month of June that received a payment from the federal VA, the value of June is \$186,717,466. The compounding numbers are 1,324,206 payments valued at \$2,148,482,594 over the 2021-22 SFY.
- **Veterans Trust Fund** - The VTF is funded by generous Pennsylvanians who voluntarily donate when applying for or renewing their driver's license, photo ID. Additionally, the VTF receives proceeds that come from the sale of the Honoring Our Veterans and Honoring our Women Veterans license plates or private donations (donate.dmva.pa.gov). Since the grant program began in 2013, a total of \$5,332,860 has been awarded to organizations that serve Pennsylvania veterans to include \$1.4 million this year.
- **Title 43 Regulatory Update Project** – We are conducting a regulatory review of the application and adjudication procedures for our state veterans' benefits programs codified in 43 Pa. Code. The review follows a detailed process governed by the Regulatory Review Act and overseen by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission. Members from the SVC have been included on the associated working groups. The review is in the final stages with the department staffing process.
- **Stakeholder Engagement** - We realize that there is no way we can successfully serve veterans without the cooperation of our government partners and community partners, especially those who are on the ground level and work every day to improve the lives of veterans. We are taking a positive and collaborative approach in all we do. We continue to work with our federal and state government partners as well to expand our ability to connect with servicemember, veterans, and their families. For example:
 - PennDOT Welcome Centers (Digital Monitors) – 4 million visitors per year across 13 facilities has messaging related to PA VETConnect and the PA Veterans Registry.
 - Through collaboration with the Veterans Health Administration and the Departments of Aging and Transportation mailings are being sent to over 530,000 veterans across the Commonwealth to inform them of federal VA, DMVA, and PDA benefits.



- **Suicide Prevention**
 - Pennsylvania is participating in the Governor’s Challenge to prevent suicide among service members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF). Special focus on three priority areas: Identify SMVF and screen for risk; Improve access to mental health and behavioral health services; and Increase lethal means safety and safety planning
 - Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program: A partnership with the University of Pittsburgh’s Program Evaluation and Research Unit for suicide prevention implementation within a 15-county region using a \$3.7M Center for Disease Control grant over a five-year performance period.
 - Together with Veterans (TWV): Northeastern Pennsylvania faces some of the highest rates for Veteran Suicide within the Commonwealth. In collaboration with Carbon County, DMVA has adopted the TWV model—a community-based suicide prevention program that partners rural Veterans with community agencies. DMVA has expanded this TWV model to Greene County and Cambria County as well.
- **Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Services** – met on August 10, 2022. More information to include past meeting minutes and presentations may be found at veterans.pa.gov and then click on Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Services. The next meeting will be November 2, 2022.
- **PA Veterans Registry** - Veterans, family members and veterans’ advocates can also learn more about programs and services by signing up for the free Veterans Registry. Signing up is quick and easy and can be done online by going to www.register.dmva.pa.gov. This will also allow you to sign up for the DMVA Digest our weekly electronic newsletter.

PA VETConnect 2021-22 Success



- PA VETConnect was awarded a 2022 Pillars of Excellence award by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The “Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence” Award was established in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs to evaluate state programs and establish best practices for other state agencies to allow for greater success and efficiency.
- 10 Regional Outreach Staff were recognized through the “Governor's Awards for Excellence,” which honors exemplary accomplishments of commonwealth employees who have demonstrated initiative, leadership, and commitment to service.
- Through PA VET Connect DMVA partnered with the Department of Aging (PDA) on successful webinars geared toward educating veteran advocates on how to identify and properly report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of older veterans.
- In February 2021, DMVA and DCED recently executed the necessary MOU for RPOCs to begin participating in By-Name List meetings for the Eastern and Western PA Continuums of Care. Of note, during fiscal year 2021-2022, we have responded to over 60 requests for resources to address housing insecurity or homelessness, accounting for approximately 1 in every 5 resource requests we receive. We know of over 230 resources across the Commonwealth that address transitional housing.
- Conduct 5 monthly regional collaboration calls with County Veterans Affairs, and 3 quarterly regional Advisory Board calls with federal, state, county and non-governmental organizations. Resulted in over 60 calls with the County VA Offices and other federal, state and local veteran advocate.
- Outreach to our incarcerated Veterans at the State Veteran Service Units (VSUs) and assisting the Service Unit managers.
- The Regional staff completed the following during SFY 2021- 22:
 - Develop and maintain relationships with federal, state, and county government partners; on average of 200+ connections a month.
 - Continue to facilitate collaborative engagements with non-profit organizations and community leaders on an average of 57 connections a month.
 - Through collaboration with veterans’ advocates, PA VETConnect reached over 10,000 veterans and their family members. We build relationships that amplify service to the veteran community.
 - Our current focus is serving veterans advocates who are directly engaging with veterans to meet the immediate need. Through these efforts we have served 800 of veterans and/or families by providing direct services and following up with advocates as required.

> 1,850
Resources



16,000 Connections

As of 16 Aug 2022

> community > commonwealth > country

CLAIMS AND COMPENSATION MONTHLY SUMMARY



FY 21 - 22 Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary	
Monthly Content Count	Monthly Content Gross Amount Value
111,515	\$186,717,467.00
Year to Date Content Count	Year to Date Content Gross Amount Value
1,324,206	\$2,148,482,595.00

FY 21 - 22 POA 010 Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary	
Monthly Content Count	Monthly Content Gross Amount Value
38,359	\$62,036,653.00
Year to Date Content Count	Year to Date Content Gross Amount Value
447,492	\$701,105,986.00

FY 21 - 22 Veteran Service Officer Grant Program Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary	
Monthly Content Count	Monthly Content Gross Amount Value
73,156	\$124,680,813.00
Year to Date Content Count	Year to Date Content Gross Amount Value
876,714	\$1,447,376,609.00

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	13				
Mobile Outreach Van Events	4				
Veteran Interactions	245				
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	107				
Claim referrals to other state, county and local organizations assisting Veterans	81				
Health Care Enrollment Referrals	30				
Number of Veterans Registry Cards distributed	15				
County Directors Office Attended	6				
Representatives or Senators Attended	3				

As of 31 July 2022

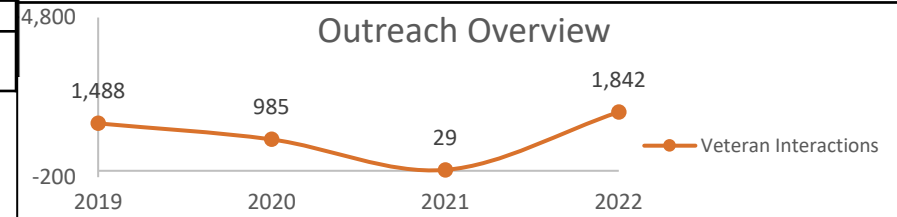
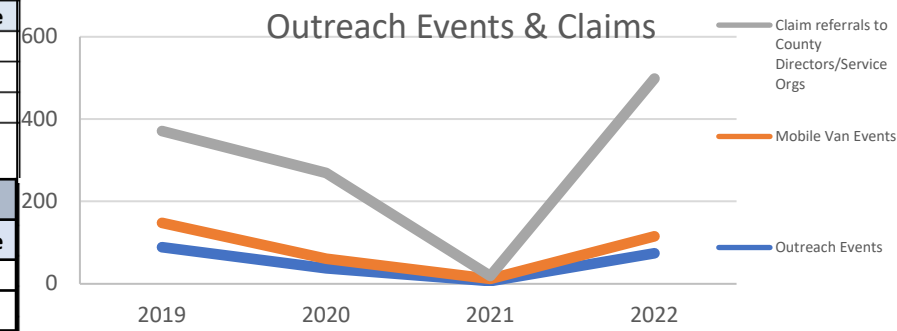
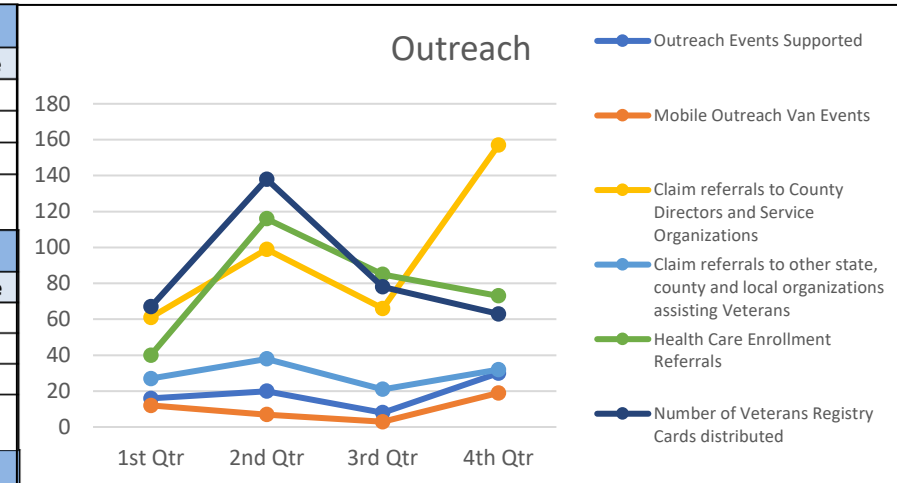
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DMVA OUTREACH COMPARISON 2019-2022



Outreach Statistics FY2018-2019					
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	32	30	10	17	89
Mobile Outreach Van Events	29	16	4	10	59
Veteran Interactions	434	313	610	131	1,488
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	107	54	42	20	223
Outreach Statistics FY2019-2020					
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	8	16	13	0	37
Mobile Outreach Van Events	5	9	10	0	24
Veteran Interactions	65	307	613	0	985
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	15	58	135	0	208
Outreach Statistics FY2020-2021					
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	0	0	1	1	2
Mobile Outreach Van Events	0	0	0	1	1
Veteran Interactions	0	0	10	0	10
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	0	0	2	0	2
Outreach Statistics FY 2021-2022					
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	16	20	8	30	74
Mobile Outreach Van Events	12	7	3	19	41
Veteran Interactions	384	449	402	607	1,842
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	61	99	66	157	383

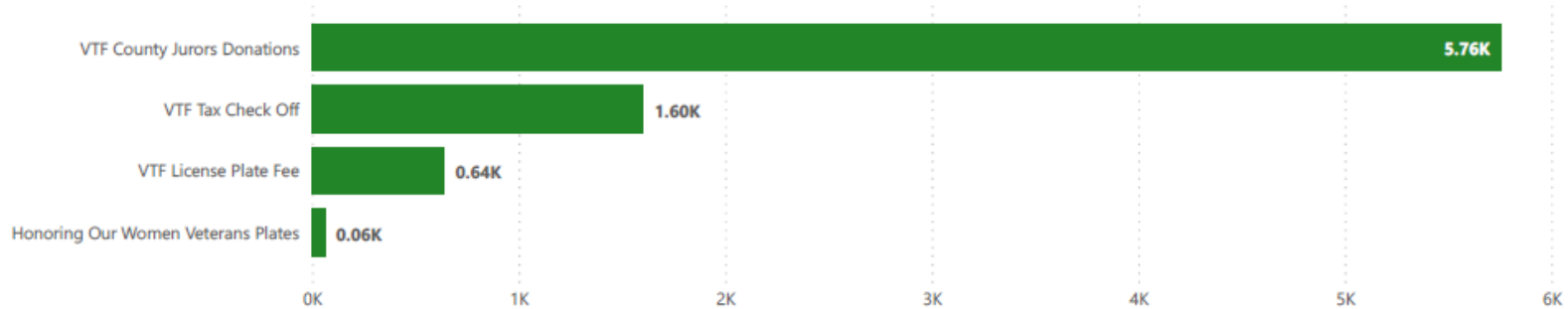
BLUF: Outreach metrics have exceeded pre-Covid numbers



VETERANS' TRUST FUND



Revenue (Other Than License Plate and Registration Contribution)



License Plate and Registration Contributions ("Check Off")

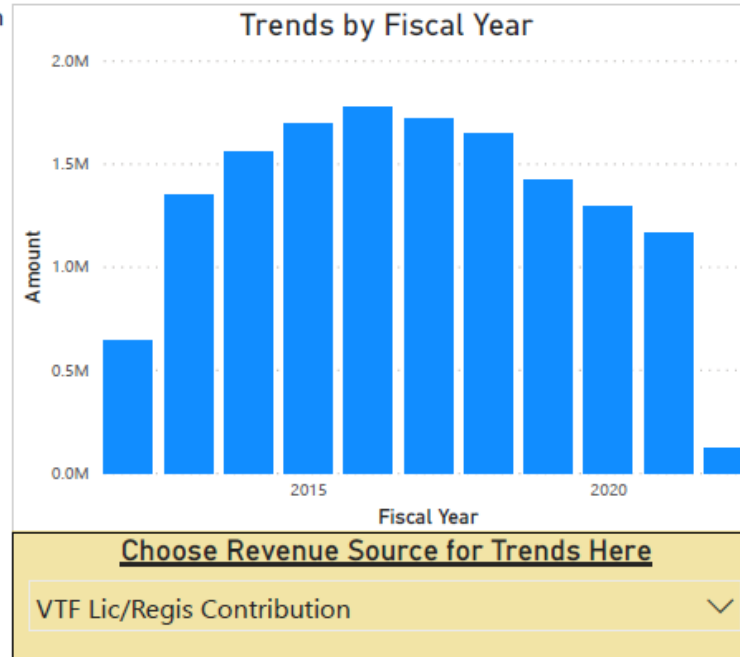
116.75K

All Other Revenue

8056

TOTAL REVENUE

124.81K



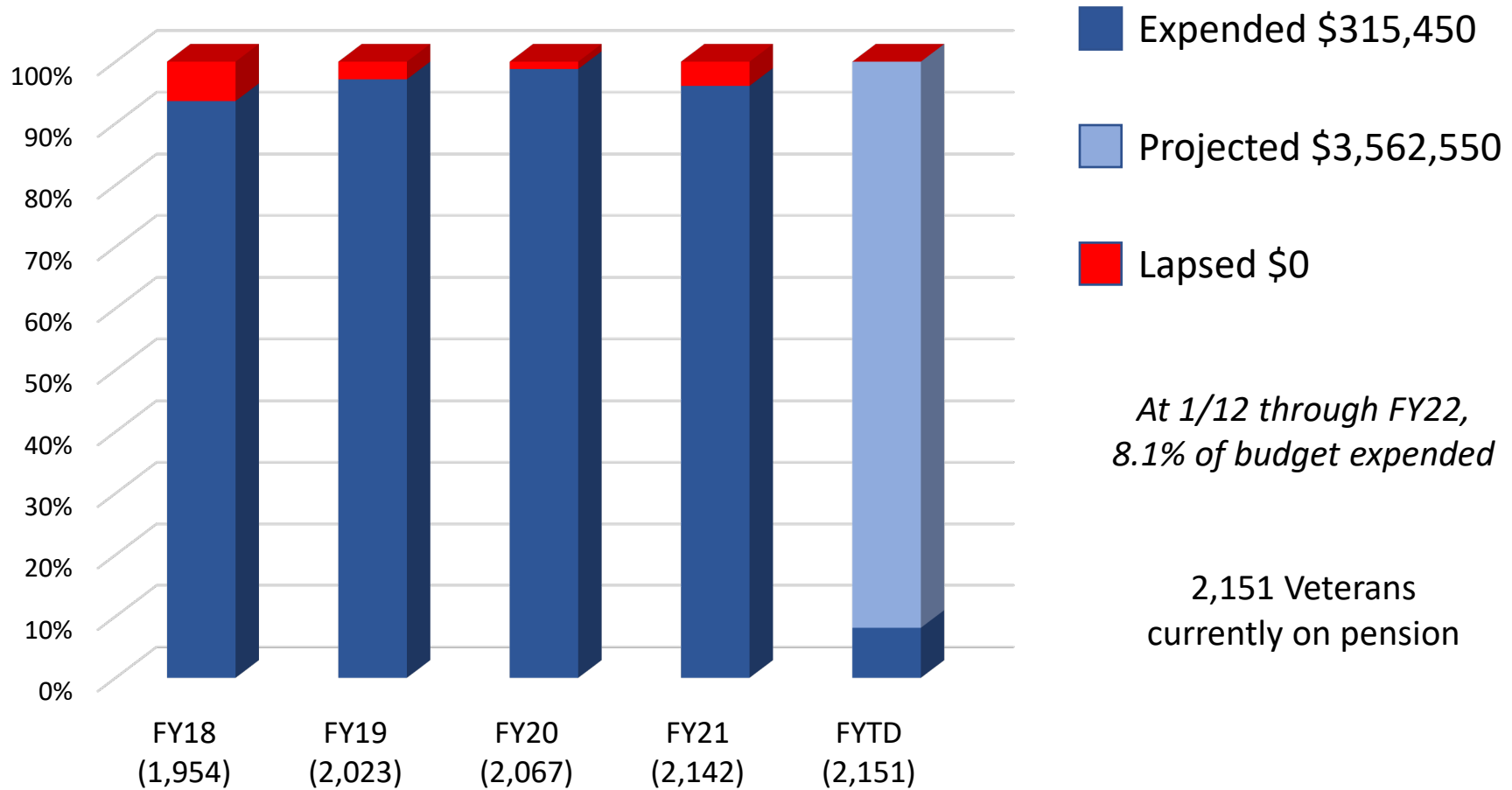
--- License Plates Sold ---



AMPUTEE & PARALYZED VETERANS' PENSION



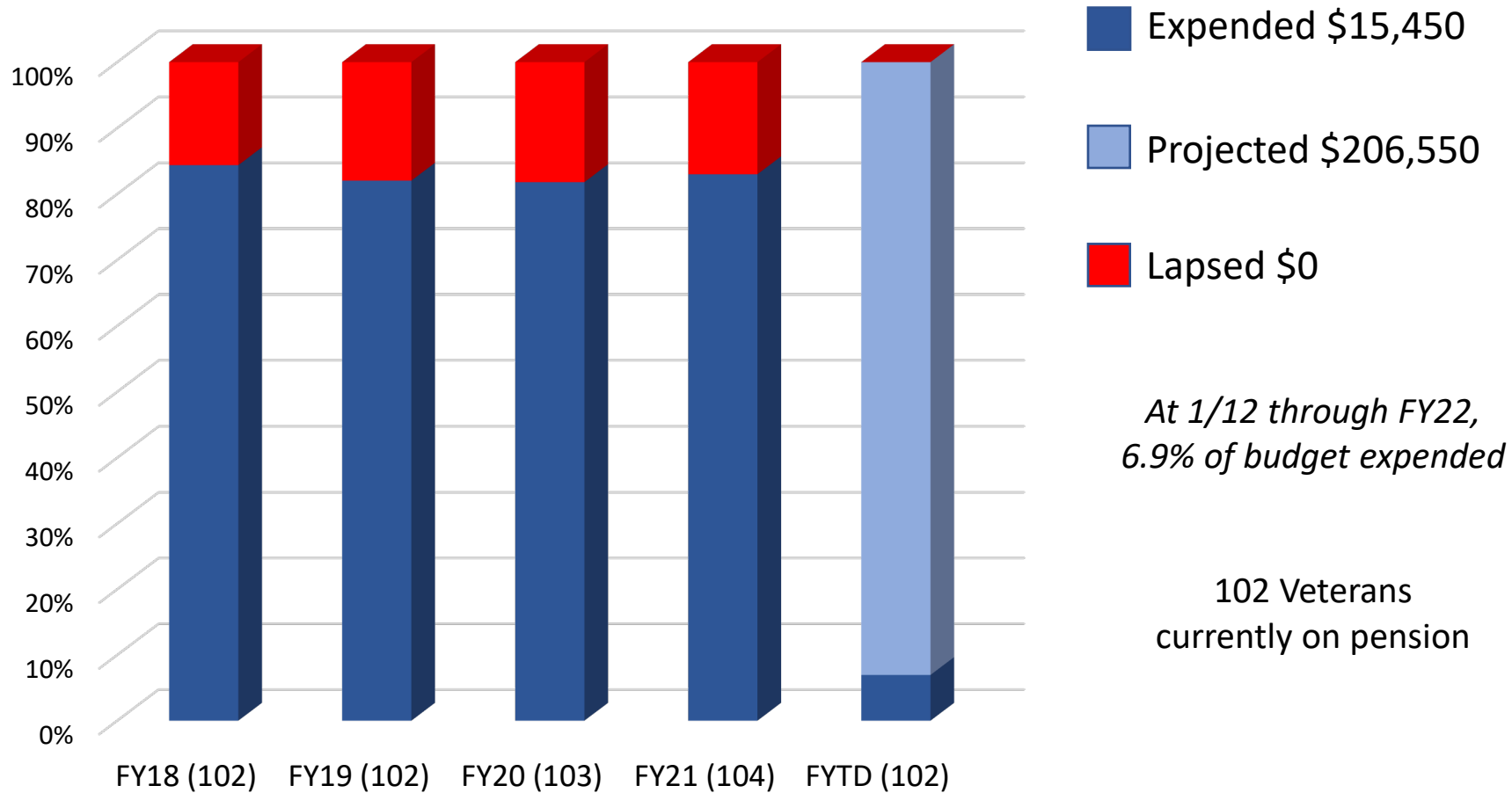
\$3,878,000



BLIND VETERANS' PENSION



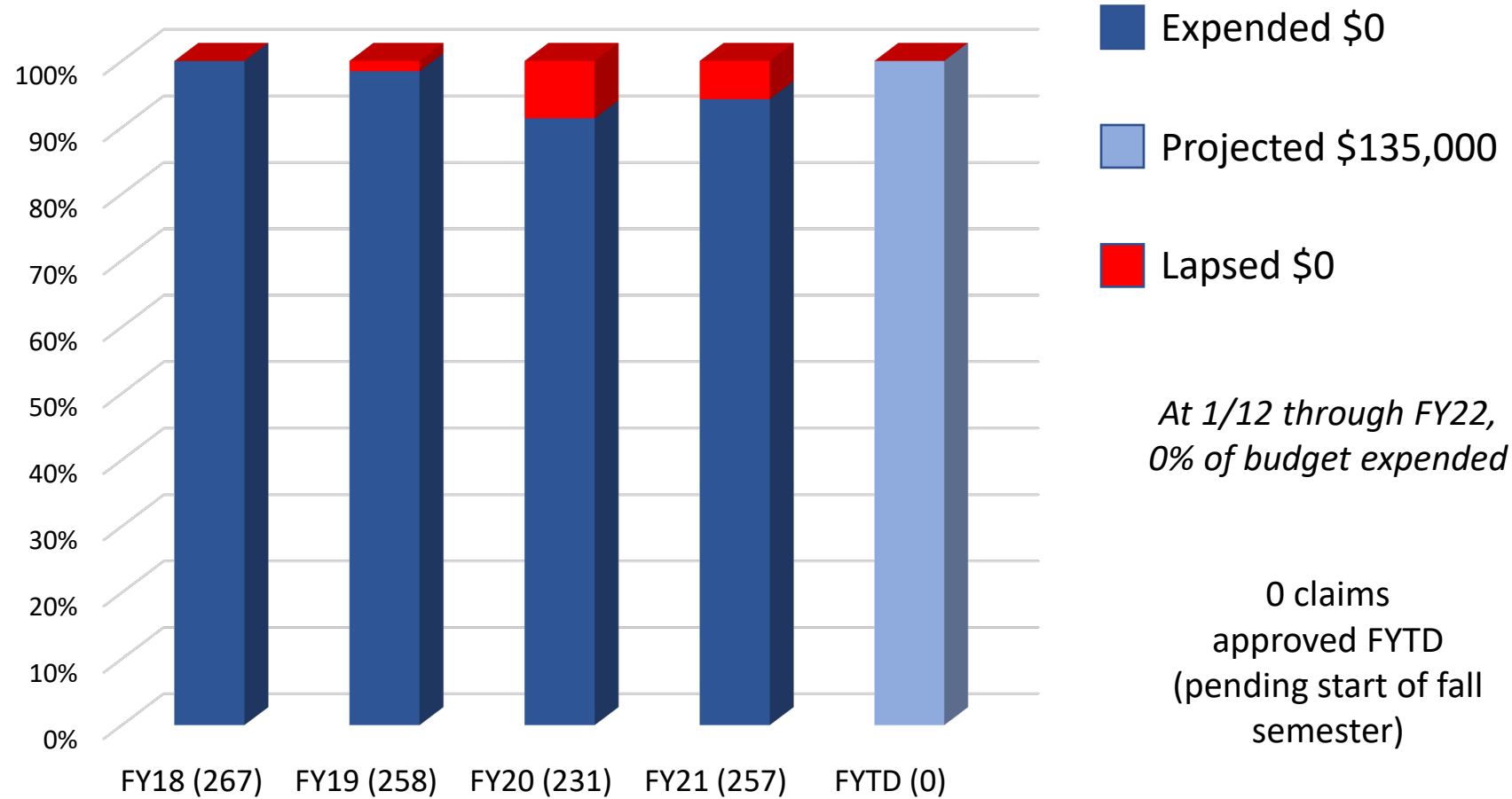
\$222,000



EDUCATIONAL GRATUITY



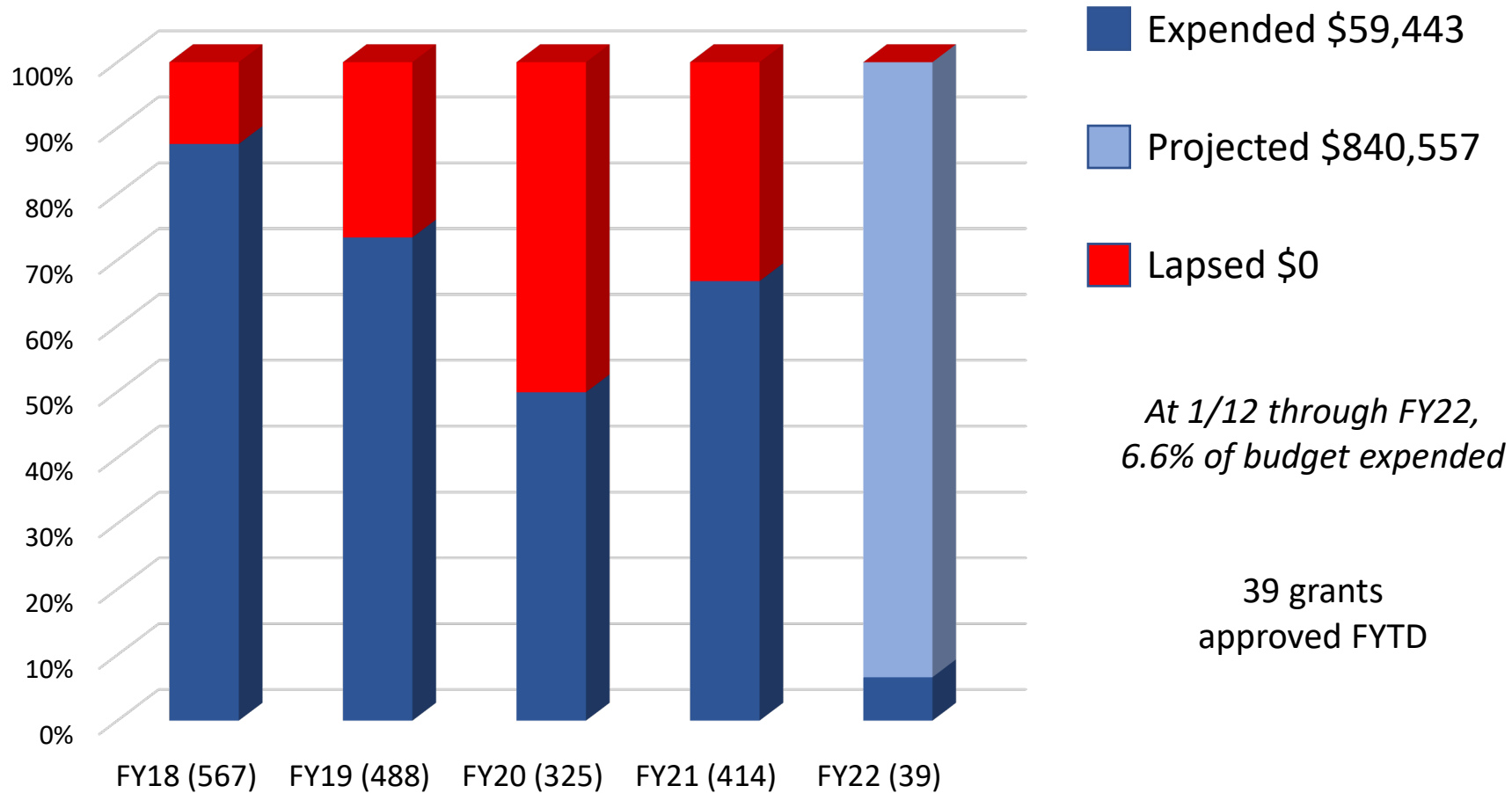
\$135,000



VETERANS TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE



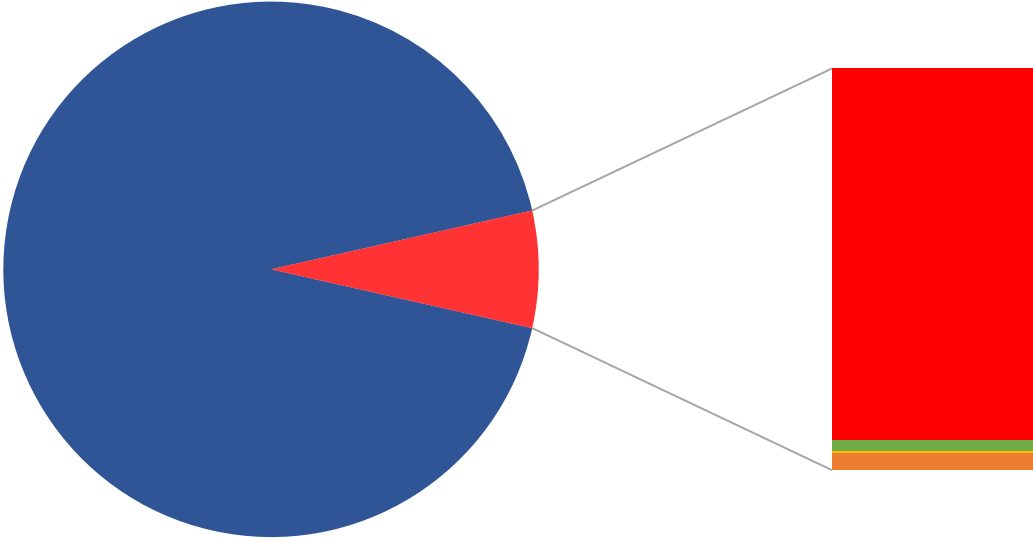
\$900,000



MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Total All Contributions FY2005-22 \$ 2,012,931.77



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

Total Grants FYTD 2022

(\$ 3,500.00)

Total Grants FY 2005-22

(\$ 925,421.86)

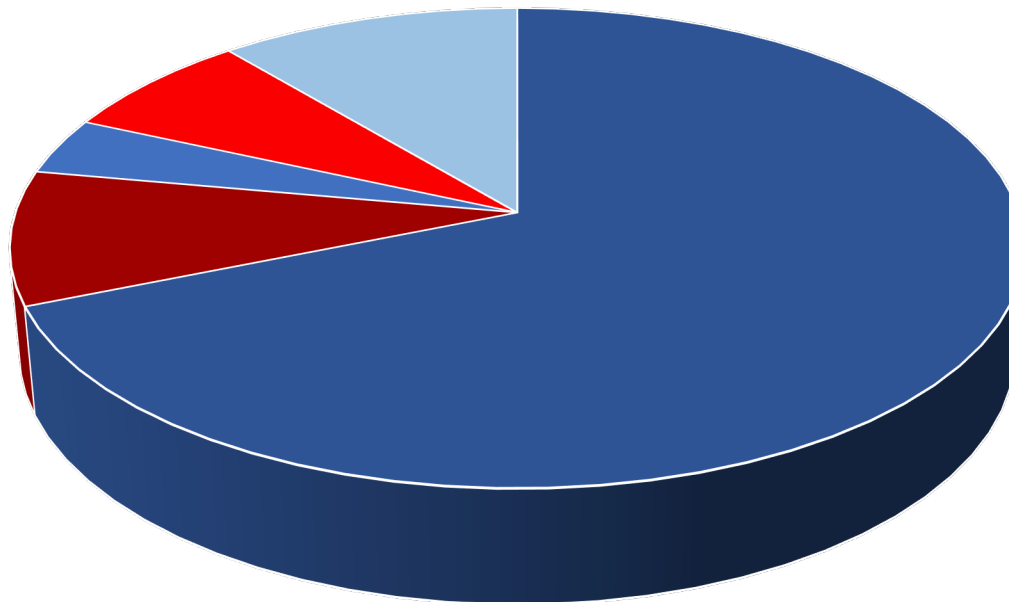
MFRAP Account Balance

\$ 1,087,509.91

DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



1,328 Total Adjudications between
21 May and 16 August 2022



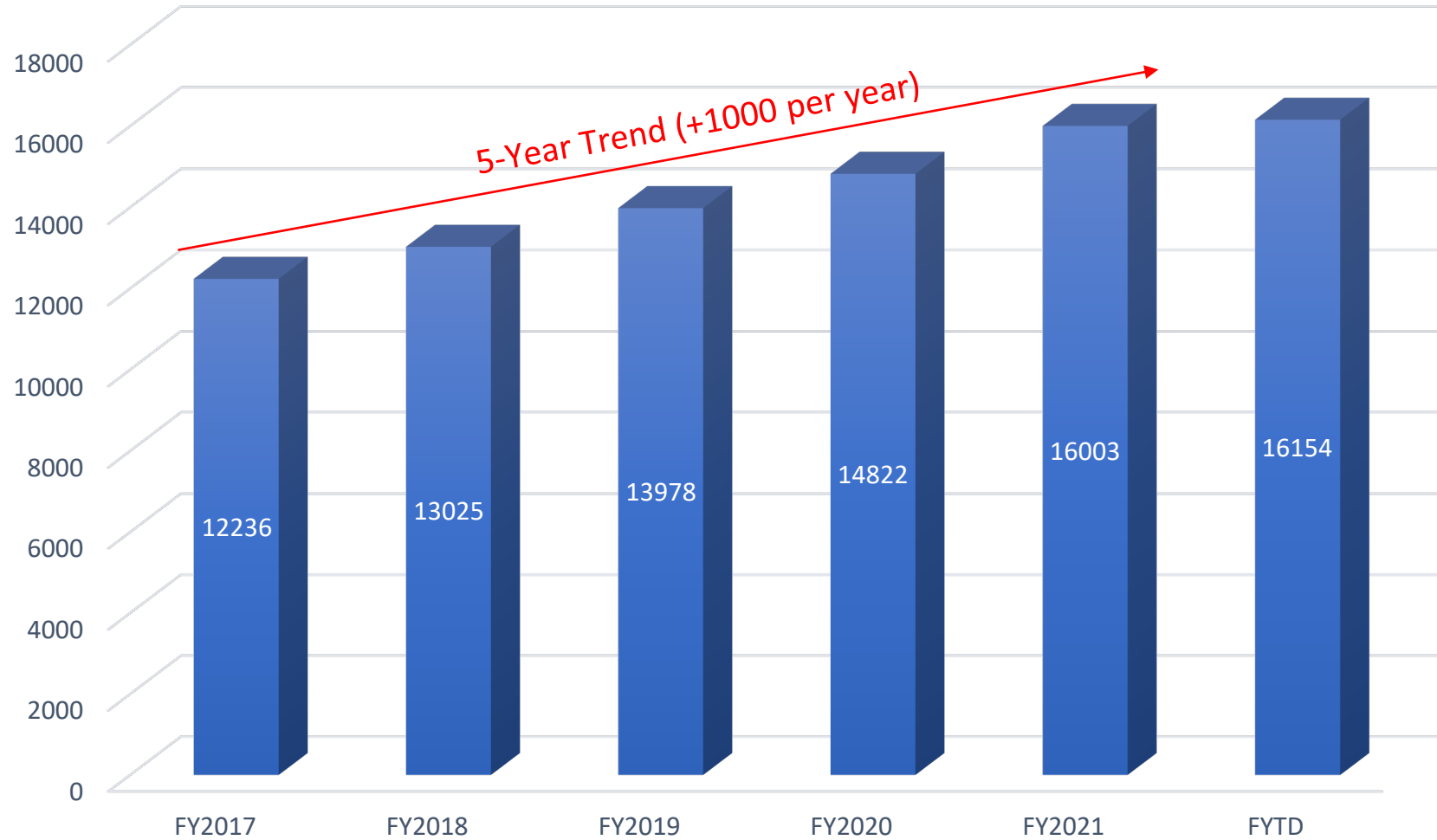
- 914 Approved (69%)
- 120 Denied: Financial Need
- 51 Denied: Ineligible*
- 96 Removed: No Response
- 147 Removed: Eligibility Change

*** 51 Applications Ineligible by Reason:**

- 6 – Veteran did not have total or permanent 100% disability during lifetime
- 12 – Property not owned solely by Veteran or as an estate by the entirety with spouse
- 15 – Veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict
- 1 – Property not owned as principal dwelling
- 1 – Death as casualty while on active duty
- 16 – Veteran did not have a 100% permanent disability due to a future exam.

RETX program grew to over 16,000 exemptions across the Commonwealth in FY2021.

DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



As of 16 Aug 2022

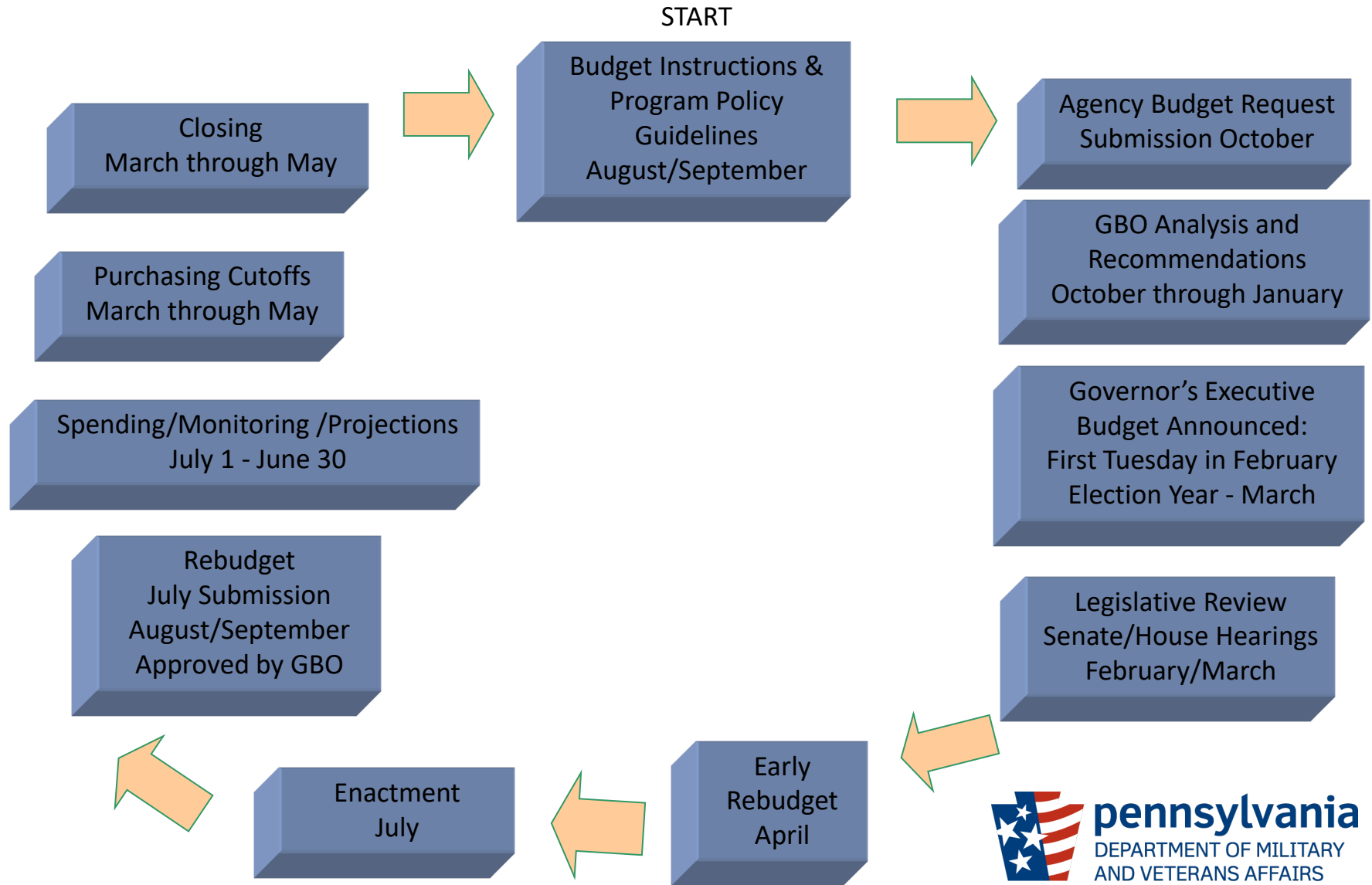
> community > commonwealth > country



OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION BUREAU OF BUDGET AND FINANCE

State Veterans Commission
Commonwealth Budget Process
Updated June 2022

THE BUDGET PROCESS



STATE VETERANS COMMISSION SUBMISSION

August

- Budget instructions are issued.
- Program Policy Guidelines (PPGs) are issued by the governor, the program policy guidelines identify those problems confronting the commonwealth that are of major concern. The guidelines initiate the budget process in that they ask for a preliminary assessment of alternative program changes that respond to the governor's concerns.
- SVC reviews PPGs and completes template to include justification for requests.
- Submit Template no later than 31 August to: Office of Veterans Affairs
Edward Martin Hall., Bldg. 0-47
Fort Indiantown GAP
Annville, PA
Attn: DAG-VA, Room #211

September

- SVC Template is reviewed by staff and provided to DAG-VA and TAG for approval.
- SVC recommendations approved by TAG presented at annual meeting with Governor's Budget Office (GBO) for consideration for Budget Request.

October

- Submit Budget Request.

Between October and February

- Agency submits additional justification as requested.
- Agency answers questions regarding projections.
- Agency submits historical expenditure and revenue data.
- Agency updates Program Measures for significant changes.

STATE VETERANS COMMISSION TEMPLATE

State Veterans Commission
 OA - Bureau of Budget and Finance
 1-Aug-22

Please complete the information in yellow.

	Updated FY 2020-21 Actual	FY 2021-22 Actual	FY 2022-23 Available	FY 2023-24 Budget Request	Increase/ Decrease over 22/23	% of Chg	Justification
<u>Appropriation</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	

EXAMPLE

State Veterans Commission - EXAMPLE
 OA - Bureau of Budget and Finance
 1-Aug-22

Please complete the information in yellow.

	Updated			FY 2023-24	Increase/		
	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	Budget	Decrease	% of	Justification
<u>Appropriation</u>	Actual	Actual	Available	Request	over 22/23	Chg	
Veterans Outreach Services	\$3,139,000	\$3,279,000	\$3,756,000	\$3,831,120	\$75,120	2%	Increases the appropriation by 2% for a cost of living allowance (COLA) to maintain VSOs in support of Act 66. This funding will cover personnel and benefits for these organizations with the goal of retaining current employees. Providing an annual COLA for VSOs makes more sense than level funding the appropriation and, subsequently, having to ask for a larger increase in the out years.

Note: FY 2022-23 Governor’s Executive Budget includes an initiative of \$284,000 to increase the Veteran Service Officer Grant Program complement by six VSOs per year; over a 3-year period. This is pending General Assembly’s approval of the Enacted Budget for FY 2022-23.

VISN 4 Access – Fiscal Year 2022 Wait Times



Clinics FY22 thru May 10	Number of Appointments	Wait <30 Days	% Wait <30 Days	Average Wait
Mental Health	267,916	255,835	95.8%	4.7
Primary Care	451,672	432,726	95.8%	5.2
Specialty Care	761,585	683,575	90.4%	10.3
Other	569,082	535,380	94.1%	6.1
ALL	2,050,255	1,907,516	93.3%	7.3

Data updated 08/15/2022 with appointment info as of 08/13/2022.

VISN 4 Access – Current Average Wait Times



VISN 4 Facility	Primary Care	
	New Patients	Returning Patients
James E. Van Zandt VAMC	16	1
Abie Abraham HCC	14	1
Coatesville VAMC	18	5
Erie VAMC	15	3
Lebanon VAMC	16	5
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC	37	8
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (University Drive)	27	13
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (H.J. Heinz)	15	16
Wilkes-Barre VAMC	17	2
Wilmington VAMC	10	9

Data updated 08/15/2022 with wait times as of 08/14/2022 for the last 30 days.

www.accesstocare.va.gov

September 2022 Update

> [community](#) > [commonwealth](#) > [country](#)

Improvements to the Access to Care website – as of July 19, 2022

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.

Data updated 08/15/2022 with wait times as of 08/14/2022 for the last 30 days.

www.accesstocare.va.gov

VISN 4 Care in the Community



	Care in the Community Consults (Scheduled and Completed)	Non-VA Unique Patients*
FY 18	87,706	62,427
FY 19	101,068	70,376
FY 20	153,506	87,041
FY 21	155,827	85,472
FY 22 (as of 08/15/22)	145,072	85,392

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

Data updated 08/15/2022 with consult info as of 08/15/2022.

H.R. 3967: Honoring our PACT Act of 2022

September Meeting Notes

This bill passed the House on March 3 and the Senate on June 16. However, the Senate's changes contained a minor provision that violated the origination clause provision of the Constitution. As a result, the bill's provisions were given a second chance by being moved into [S. 3373](#) for further consideration

Data updated 08/29/2022 with consult info as of 12/09/21.

- SFY 22-23 Budget Update for the VSO Grant Committee
 - After two months of meeting with House & Senate Veteran Affairs Committees, various Legislators and meeting with Appropriations Staffers in an attempt to get ready for the changes we knew were upon us – the Committee was unsuccessful at increasing the Line Item for the VSO Grant Program any further than was announced by the Governor back in February.
 - As we briefed the SVC Commission at the last meeting, between the Pact Act and the new Caregiver program – this is going to be a tough year to be a Service Officer – The Act 66 organizations will do our best to meet these challenges with little new resources

A Little Known Portion of the original H.R. 3967

The original H.R. 3967 passed by the House contained a Provision known as Section 712

- Section 712 authorized States who already had an established Veteran Outreach Program, Federal funding to expand and improves an already existing program and be better prepared For the impact of this huge entitlement.
- The Minority Veteran Affairs Senate Committee amended the Senate version to take this portion of the Law out.
- Our Committee has worked hard to get it put back in. We have a Commitment from both Senator Toomey (Personally) and Senator Casey (With Staffer) for them to work together to place this Section back in either the NDAA or EOY Ombudsman Bill. So we have two bites of the apple yet this year.

Senator Casey has said if they can not make this happen, he will introduce a new bill to address this provision.

We have taken the following actions that you should be aware of

- We have corresponded with all members of the Minority Veteran Affairs Committee and documented the urgent need Pennsylvania veterans have for a robust Outreach Program.
- We have shared our concerns for their own states who may have an underfunded Outreach Program.
- We have asked OVA to allow us to write a Combined Outreach Plan as part of this years Grant Application.
- If we were successful at getting this back into law – This would be the first requirement we would have to meet. It only makes sense to already have it available.
- Our Plan should overlay with the Country Director & DMVA's Plan – This would be the best of all worlds.
- Questions?

NEXT MEETING



**Friday October 7, 2022
at 10:00AM**

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

VISIT PA STATE VETERANS COMMISSION-PA DMVA FOR SVC INFO



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare—VISN 4

VISN 4 Update

September 9, 2022

Leadership Update

Sigrid Andrew, the Director of the Altoona VA retired at the end of July. Ken Mortimer, Associate Director at the Hershel “Woody” William VA Medical Center in Huntington, West Virginia has been detailed to the Altoona Director position.

Lovetta Ford has departed the VA Pittsburgh for the Deputy Director position in Atlanta. Recruitment is underway for her position. Robert Kling, the CFO at the VA Pittsburgh is acting Associate Director during the recruitment process.

Dr. Bruce Eagleson was appointed Chief of Staff of the Coatesville VA Medical Center on June 19, 2022.

Certified in Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine (EM) and Occupational Environmental Health, Dr. Eagleson began his VA career in 2007 at the Lebanon VA Medical Center (VAMC). There he served first as a staff EM physician and a short time later he was named the EM service chief. In 2011, he assumed the post of Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Clinical Support, and he was appointed the ACOS for Lebanon VAMC’s Community Clinics in 2018.

PACT Act Update

President Biden signed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, commonly known as the PACT Act, into law on August 10, 2022.

Here is a brief overview of what this legislation means for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and—more importantly—for the Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors we serve.

This legislation will empower VA to provide much-needed benefits and care to millions of Veterans who were exposed to toxic substances and other military environmental hazards while fighting for our country. Specifically, the PACT Act will:

- Empower VA to deliver benefits to Veterans living with more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions and to their survivors
- Make generations of Veterans eligible for VA health care, while increasing care for many more
- Ensure that every enrolled Veteran receives an initial toxic exposure screening at VA and follow-up screening at least every 5 years
- Increase VA research on toxic exposure
- Give VA tools to hire and retain employees and modernize over 30 facilities
- Solidify our new, expedited process for establishing presumptions of service connection for toxic exposure-related conditions

Together, these changes will help us accomplish our top priority: getting Veterans timely access to the world-class care and benefits they have earned and deserve.

In the coming weeks and months, VA will constantly be communicating about the impact of this law on VA and those we serve. For Veterans, VA has already launched www.va.gov/PACT—a one-stop shop for key PACT Act information and services.

The bottom line is that the PACT Act is a great step forward for Veterans and VA. Our mission is to serve Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors as well as they have served us—and this legislation will help us do exactly that.

New Crisis Line Number

Signed into law in 2020, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act authorized 988 as the new three-digit number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. VA administers the Veterans Crisis Line through the Lifeline’s national network. Because of VA’s partnership with the Lifeline, and the Veterans Crisis Line is affected by this transition to a new number.

As of July 16th, the Veterans Crisis Line transitioned to Dial 988 then Press 1. Veterans can now use this new option to contact the Veterans Crisis Line. Veterans may still reach the Veterans Crisis Line with the current phone number 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, by text (838255), and through chat.

With the launch of this new three-digit number, I hope Veterans in crisis can easily connect with care and support during their time of need. Please help us spread the word about Dial 988 then Press 1 to reach caring, qualified responders 24/7.

Updated Access to Care Website Launch

VHA launched an updated Access to Care website www.accesstocare.va.gov on July 19, 2022. This improved site is a resource for Veterans and their caregivers, providing them with an improved user experience, additional access and satisfaction information, and improved wait times that better align with their experience when scheduling appointments.

While there is no perfect way to measure wait times in aggregate, VA is making changes that represent a meaningful improvement in how this information is presented to Veterans on this website. In addition to updating the wait time calculations, website updates will also provide Veterans more relevant information, including:

- Veteran experience data,
- Increased granularity within certain subspecialties; and
- Ability to view relevant medical center information more easily.

New Mobile Check-in

VISN 4 now offers an opportunity for Veterans to check-in for clinic appointments using smartphones. Beginning August 8, the new mobile check-in process replaced the existing kiosks and can save time with just a few simple steps.

Veterans are not required to use mobile check-in. If Veterans don't have a smartphone or have network or WIFI connection problems, there will always be the option to check-in at the clinic in-person with a staff member. Check-in is the same whether you complete the process on your smartphone or with a staff member.

Step-by-step details on the new mobile check process was included in your read ahead material. <https://www.va.gov/resources/how-to-check-in-with-your-smartphone-for-some-va-appointments/>

Patient Experience Update

Nationally, VA's trust score over the last 90 days was 89.9. In VISN 4, our trust score over the last 90 days was 93, which is the second highest VISN in the nation. The top compliment themes over the last 90 days were interactions with staff, quality of care, cleanliness of facility, satisfaction with specialty care and courtesy of healthcare providers.

Caregiver Support Update

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregiver (PCAFC)

VA is reviewing and examining the current Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), including a thorough review of the eligibility criteria and improving the overall Veteran and caregiver experience.

VA has suspended annual reassessments during a review of current eligibility criteria for all those enrolled in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). VA will continue to initiate reassessments for Veterans and family caregivers who request to be considered for an increase in stipend level or if there is evidence of an increased need for personal care services. During this time, VA will not remove anyone from the program or decrease any support based on the annual reassessments.

Staff continue to complete Wellness Contacts every 120 days with current program participants, and this process has been redesigned to better capture the Veteran and caregiver's overall needs.

New applications continue to be received. These are processed in a timely manner.

As part of the VA MISSION Act, Phase II of program expansion will occur in October 2022, expanding the program to include family caregivers of eligible Veterans from *all eras* who were seriously injured in the line of duty.

In addition to the VHA Clinical Review Process, there are additional appeal options for Veterans and caregivers. The Caregiver Support Line (CSL) (1-855-260-3274) can assist Veterans and caregivers with navigating these additional options and with providing information about filing a review or appeal.

Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)

Facilities are continuing to develop, implement, and enhance services and education for caregivers.

Caregiver Support Program staff, VA providers and professionals have received training in the Campaign for Inclusive Care, which engages caregivers as part of the Veteran's care team.

Family caregivers of Veterans who aren't eligible for PCAFC can still receive support and resources through PGCSS.

Connected Care Update

Burn Pit Registry Telehealth Service Agreements: Exposure to burn pits was common among Servicemembers overseas and may have health effects. The use of burn pits was a common waste disposal practice at military sites outside the United States, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Smoke from these pits contained substances that may have short- and long-term health effects, especially for those who were exposed for long periods or those more prone to illness such as individuals with pre-existing asthma or other lung or heart conditions.

In June 2014, the VA began offering an optional (voluntary) registry examination to Veterans, Servicemembers and Guard/Reserve personnel eligible to enroll in the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR), after completion of the AHOBPR questionnaire.

This exam is not for care or treatment and is not a requirement for disability compensation benefits. Initially, Veterans were instructed to contact the Environmental Health Coordinator at their local VA facility to arrange an appointment. However, best practice has shown that appointments are more likely to be made when outreach by the VA facility is done by contacting the Veteran. This outreach was temporarily paused during the COVID pandemic to maintain safety of the Veterans and staff. As COVID numbers decrease, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has stated it is now safe to resume these examinations.

VISN 4 has developed a plan to address the backlog of these examinations. A Telehealth Service Agreement has been developed which allows Veterans from all over the network, and possibly outside the network if the need arises, to receive their examination via telehealth services by a VISN 4 provider.

Closing

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your continued support of VISN 4. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home

Advisory Council Meeting

Erie, Pennsylvania

March 10, 2022

9:00a.m.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Gary, Fry, President, AMVETS

Mr. Eric Cepek, Director, Veterans Office

Mr. Raymond J. Chambers, Vice President, Marine Corps League

Mr. Richard DiGiacomo, Secretary, Military Officers Assoc. of America

Mr. Anthony DiGiacomo, County Director of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Harry E. Stewart, American Legion

Mr. Richard Supak, Catholic War Veterans

Mr. Joe Benacci, Director of Veterans Affairs

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. David Price, Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mr. Walter Simpson, Disabled American Veterans

The Honorable Curt Sonney, PA House of Representatives

Mr. Robert C. Eiler, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Mr. Gregory Smith, PSSH Resident Council President

The Honorable Daniel Laughlin, PA Senator

OTHERS PRESENT

Ms. Maureen Weigl, BG (PA Retired), Deputy Adjutant General – VA

Mr. Travis J. Davis, MHA NHA, HSE, Executive Director, Long-Term Care

Mrs. Barbara Raymond, RN, NHA, Director of Veterans' Homes

Mrs. Elizabeth Seibert, PSSH Interim Commandant

Mrs. Pamela Jenkins, PSSH Admissions Coordinator

Mr. Ken Vybiral, PSSH Volunteer Coordinator

Ms. Alyssa Cooley, Commandant's Assistant

Ms. Regina Smith for Honorable Daniel Laughlin, PA Senator

Ms. Beth Werner

Mr. Donte Brooks

Mr. Josh Spigner

Ms. Mia Woods

Mr. Sean Senguin

Mr. Ed Kissel

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gary Fry called the meeting to order at 9:07a.m.

MOMENT OF SILENT AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Gary Fry led a moment of silence, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Alyssa Cooley took roll call for all present.

SWEARING IN OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

No Council Members were sworn in.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The minutes were approved from the prior meeting.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR UPDATE

Mrs. Seibert provided update on behalf of Dr. Eric Milie:

We are all green on all of our units. We have zero cases of residents or staff with Covid. The Erie County transmission rate has dropped down to 4.56% reported on 3/9, which is down 39.62% reported on 1/19. The vaccination status of residents – we have all but one resident on PCU that is vaccinated. All but four residents that are up to date with their booster vaccines. We will continue to educate and promote vaccinations. The vaccination status of the staff – we have 77% of the staff vaccinated. 100% either vaccinated or with approved exemptions. With holding this meeting live, we have moved into a good status of the pandemic.

ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE

Mrs. Pamela Jenkins provided update:

As of March 10th, we continue to proceed with admissions, but they are coming in at a slower pace. Currently on our waitlist, as of today, we have 25 veterans - 17 skilled nursing, 5 on Memory Care and 3 on Personal Care unit. There are also 15 non-veterans – 7 of those will be skilled nursing, 4 on Memory Care and 3 on Personal Care.

We continue to do applications on referrals, those have increased over the past couple of weeks. I believe last week alone we sent out 16 applications. Most of them being sent to our rural addresses in the counties that we cover here at PSSH.

On the marketing side of things, with our county positivity rate being under 5%, we will be going out now into the nursing homes, hospitals, personal care homes and senior centers for outreach. We are also anticipating the upcoming fair season, as we do a lot of outreach with that. We are currently working with a couple different veteran support groups to attend their support meetings. We continue to field calls and email inquires if they come in.

Any questions? There were no questions.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL

Ms. Maureen Weigl provided update:

There are some leadership changes coming up there. We are thrilled the way Erie is going with all the construction projects. I can not wait to get out there to see everything completed. I apologize that I can't stay on very long. I'm getting ready to go to another meeting, but I will circle back with Travis and Barb and see if there is anything that I can do to address any questions or concerns that you all have. I'm just excited to be able to get the veterans out and about and they're all excited to get back to the post Covid lifestyle again. So, fingers crossed that we can move forward and have a pleasant spring and summer. Thank you all very much.

Any questions? There were no questions.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Travis Davis provided update:

I would like to start off by thanking everyone on the Advisory Council for their time and dedication to our Veterans and staff up in Erie.

We are doing very well across all 6 Homes right now. The vaccine rate is at 85% for all of our staff and close to 100% with all of our residents. On another note, we had 2 positive residents across all 6 Homes and 7 positive staff members. Those numbers are very good. In January we had about 150 staff members out at one time, which was really challenging. It caused a lot of overtime. A lot of our staff were working a lot of hours to make sure that our Veterans needs were met. Right now, we have 918 Veterans across all 6 Homes. So, right now, we're working on our Admissions, which are going in the right direction.

Right now, we are really focused on recruiting. We are looking at CNA's, LPN's, and RN's. Trying to get more nurses into our buildings. Our current staffing levels are very good across all of our Home's right now. We're over 4.0 PPD, pretty much across all 6 Homes, which is a number that we shoot for. The challenge is that we can't fill our beds right now with those numbers. They are adequate for where we are today, but we want to be at a much higher rate. So, recruitment is our top 3 priority.

Another positive is our county transmission rate keeps plummeting which is great. Its great for us because we can expand volunteers, getting people into the Homes and getting our Veterans out.

Any questions? There were no questions.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' HOMES

Mrs. Barbara Raymond provided update:

Travis covered quite a bit of the update for the Homes. He went through our numbers, which are really great. We couldn't be more pleased with the level of Covid numbers that we have compared to the last 2 years. It's really been quite a challenge for us.

Resident wise we have 19 unvaccinated residents in our entire 6 Veterans' Homes. So, out of that 918 current census numbers, 19 are unvaccinated, the majority of them are at our Altoona facility, but there is 1 or 2 at each of our Homes. 39 of our residents are currently not up to date. The up to date language means that they haven't received the booster.

Staff wise, with the regulation regarding mandatory vaccinations, we have everybody either vaccinated or they do have some type of religious or medical accommodation. We are encouraging people to be up to date. Any of our staff that is not up to date, we encourage them to get tested twice a week in accordance with the latest guidance from the PA Department of Health.

We have no influenza cases at any of our Homes. Influenza has really been quite low at the 6 Homes throughout the entire flu season. So, we're very happy with that.

Construction wise throughout the 6 Homes, here at our Erie campus we have a lot of construction going on. I'll have Beth touch more on what's going on with that. We have our roof project still ongoing at our Scranton facility. That was on pause through the winter months, but it's still ongoing for the projects they can continue with. Our Hollidaysburg facility we are still looking within the next couple of years to break ground on a new facility there. So, we are really excited about that.

All 6 of our Homes are fully licensed. We have nobody on any kind of provisional license. Our Erie facility most recently had a deficiency free survey, very proud of them for that here. Our Gino J. Merli facility up in Scranton had a deficiency free clinical survey from the Federal VA so, very excited there. Southeast Veteran Center also had their recent VA survey with very minor clinical concerns out of their paperwork type compliance, not any type of concern at all. That facility has really come a long way in the last couple of years. We're really proud of them as well.

Cost of care- there may be some inquiries coming your way. Our cost of care did go up by about 25%. What that was directly attributed too is because of our census. We stopped taking admissions back at the beginning of the pandemic. So therefore, the census went down, revenue of course went down, and the cost all went up. We are very hopeful for next year for the cost to come down. However, I wanted to let you guys know in case you hear anything from any of your constituents or any Veterans out in the field. Certainly send them back our way and we can explain things to them, where we are exactly with that.

Last thing on my list, we did make a selection for our Commandant here at PSSH. The selection is currently down at the Governors Office. Hopefully I can get you guys the information within the next few days.

Any questions?

What is the reason for the 19 unvaccinated residents?

Mrs. Raymond: Choice.

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT

Mrs. Elizabeth Seibert provided update:

As Barb mentioned, we did have our annual VA survey recently in the month of February for both the Nursing Home and the Personal Care side. We did have it virtually and hopefully next year it will go to a

live survey. As Barb mentioned we had zero citations from the clinical side. We remain deemed in full compliance with the Department of Health as well as DHS which is the government body for the Personal Care side.

The Covid update was presented earlier.

As far as renovations go – you will see on campus a lot of action going on in regard to renovations. On NCU it includes the NCU dining room, kitchen , therapy gym, beauty shop and the employee breakroom. Recently they put the roof up just in time for the storm. If you drive around the campus you will see the windows are going in. It actually offers an additional 40ft to that whole side of the campus. We are very much looking forward to being able to offer are programming and support for the residents once that is done. We will certainly inform you guys once we have the claim for that area again. Looking forward to that.

Also, on NCU you will see orange fencing. That area is where the new patio is going to go. We have actually extended the patio in front of NCU. They are going to be forming cement sidewalks. The whole goal is to be able to have more ambulation space for residents that might be wheelchair bound and want to enjoy the outside area. It will be a safe sidewalk and will have some gates just to make sure there is some boundaries and a safety spot for the residents to enjoy the outdoor space. You won't see work on that until the spring when the ground softens a little bit.

Over on the PCU side, all of the bathrooms are being renovated. It's a 5-phase construction plan. We are in phase-1 right now and it's coming along really well. All the bathrooms throughout all of PCU, again, close to a 140 year old building, they are going from the basement all the way up. Its not just the level where the bathroom is, they are going way down to the basement as well. It is a very thorough plumbing project.

What has been approved is we have an estimated start date for the summer for the Alzheimer unit. There is a flooring project for both unit E and unit D. Basically they are going to redo all of the floors down there. That will be a real nice improvement to that area. We will do some bed management. We are already preparing for what we need to do to make sure the residents are not interrupted during that renovation.

Not really a PSSH project, but a project through PennDOT. You will see when you come close to the campus that PennDOT has resumed its work on the bridge in the back. It shouldn't interrupt anything on campus as far as traffic flow. It's on the bayfront side that they will be working but certainly as you drive around you will see that.

Each year we have to update our facility assessment plan. Basically, what we do is, we assess and determine all the needs of the residents throughout our care, the PCU side and the NCU side. When we do the assessment and determine what type of needs are residents have, then we incorporate the support for emergency disaster preparedness. So, I just wanted to mention, it is a report that is certainly available to the Advisory Council if anybody wants to see it, you're more than welcome to review it. The front part, again, assess the individual number of care. One of the most important parts is the naturally occurring event, this is where the safety committee, in addition to the clinical team, looks at information from Erie County Disaster Management crew and incorporates into our emergency preparedness planning. Noted last year and again this year, the Covid pandemic, it triggered an increase in awareness

and our planning and basically regardless of pandemics or what might be going on, a fire disaster, wind, flooding after a rainstorm, in our emergency disaster plan, we look to accommodate the residents and their needs. A lot of it is just making sure we plan for the unexpected.

Any questions?

Mr. Chambers: What brought on PennDOT putting in a bridge back over the tracks?

Mrs. Raymond: it came from the proposed change to the Bayfront Parkway and the talks about the roundabout in that area. Keep in mind this all started when the Coke plant was still open. So, what they have to do to be able to make the adjustments down near State Street, those railroad tracks all have to get pulled back. Which means we will have 4 railroad tracks down here. The CSX would not permit us to cross the 4 train tracks. So, the bridge had to be put in before any of the construction could occur down on State Street.

Mrs. Raymond added:

The cost of care information, just so you know, that it affects very few of our veterans, about 2-3% of our population. Just so you know, it did affect very few people.

Also, I just wanted to publicly thank Beth Seibert for the past 2 years as the Interim Commandant. She has done a wonderful job!

COMPLIANCE REPORT

Ms. Mia Woods and Mr. Josh Spigner provided update:

Ms. Woods: My name is Mia Woods and I'd like to first refresh your memories about our department and what we do because it has been a while. About 3 years ago the BVH made a commitment to implement a compliance program with a compliance plan and I was the person appointed to do so. When the pandemic hit, focused changed, but we are back. We have all our team members here. So just to let you know we will be reporting out, you will get information about the BVH's general compliance issues and then anything concerning the Soldiers' and Sailors' we will report out and let you know what we are doing.

Mr. Spigner: I have 3 issues to talk about today. The first issue is monthly exclusion checks. We've found that those are being done inconsistently throughout the BVH and so we are trying to link with OA downtown so that we can be on a contract with a vendor that will do this automatically for us, thus eliminating the risk of human error and also taking some of the workload off of the Homes themselves.

The second issue for us is PBJ (Payroll Based Journaling). We are in the midst of having different vendors who are going to be able to help us stay in compliance with PBJ and also eliminate the risk of human error so none of our numbers are at risk to PBJ reporting issues.

The final issue I want to talk about is there was a purchasing issue during the pandemic. We've done an investigation and inventory count and that has been put into the hands of the DAG and we are waiting on the resolution of that. Those are the 3 issues that we have at this time to discuss from a compliance perspective.

Any questions? There were no questions.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT

Mrs. Elizabeth Seibert provided update:

We here have a very active crew with our HR team and some individuals that are continuing to try and bring joy into the facility. There's a potato bar, you guys are welcome to attend on the 16th. We're keeping the Irish stuff moving along through the month.

But, more importantly, we do have some training programs. One is for nursing assistants. We have a wonderful training program here on campus. We have an agreement with HVA (Healthcare Ventures Alliance) in Erie. We've had a lot of success with hiring individuals that want to pursue the nursing career through that training. They start here, they get training, then they come back. We've had some wonderful folks work through and remain in the nursing department through that program.

We also are looking towards an RN training internship that will be kicked off here in the next couple of months. Again, all aligned with trying to give exposure to individuals who are looking at a nursing career.

We also have ad campaigns. You will see a lot of information related to recruitment in the job fair that is coming up. As Travis mentioned, we have been very fortunate our staffing goals have remained at 4.5 or above. We've been able to have services that helped support any staffing issues. The residents are in good hands. Thank you

Any questions? There were no questions.

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Anthony DiGiacomo provided update:

We do annual Veteran Outreach Fair down in Crawford County. Soldiers' and Sailors' Home is always involved in that. If anyone else wants to be involved in it, just let us know. I can give you my card.

Mr. Richard Supak provided update:

Congratulations to the way you've treated Covid, to the Veterans'. We haven't been here in a long time. I know we lost 1 member from Erie, which you hate to say, but I'm glad the number is low.

The other thing that I would compliment is the security. When I came in, there was 2 security guards at the gate. They are the ones who brought to my attention that I had to put a button on to get in. I do appreciate that because I know we've had incidents here before with that one guy driving through. Thank you very much for that.

Joe Benacci provided update:

It's a pleasure to be on this Council. I look forward to working with everybody. You be hearing more from me in the future. I've got some new ideas that I want to bring and shake it up a little. Looking forward to working with everybody. Thank you.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Seibert made a request to change the next Advisory Council Meeting date from June 9th to June 14th, to incorporate Flag Day and the Hall of Fame Ceremony. Mr. Chambers made a motion to accept the proposal. Mr. DiGiacomo second the motion. All voting members were in favor of changing the date from June 9th to June 14th. The time of the meeting will remain at 9:00a.m.

GOOD OF THE COUNCIL

Mr. Ken Vybiral provided update:

We completed another successful event of Wreaths Across America. We were able to place wreaths on all 1,336 gravesites. The cemetery continues to be a testament to the Erie community that continues to come out and support that event. There is certainly no shortage of support. Hundreds of volunteers throughout the morning came to commemorate that day. So, it's kind of a tradition that we've established here at the Home and we're looking forward to continuing it for many years to come.

As we move forward here in 2022, I just wanted to make note that planning is on course for our State Veterans' Home Week. We are looking forward to celebrating that again in its true form.

We also have the Women's Military History program coming up at the end of the month. We're looking forward to the return of Retired Major General Mari K. Eder. Her publication is "The Girls Who Stepped Out of Line". She interviewed 15 women who were instrumental to the intelligence operation in WWII. So, we are looking forward to that presentation at the end of the month.

Also, if you are interested in hearing the history of the Chapel or the Home, I'm certainly willing to stick around after the meeting here and discuss some of those items with you. Thank you

Mr. Joe Benacci provided update:

On March 30th we will be doing the Vietnam Veteran Era. That will be at the courthouse in Courtroom H at 10:00a.m.

Another event going on will be the Patriots Tour on June 21st. That's a non-profit organization, it's a national organization. They take the flag, Erie being the starting point and they hit all 50 states, and then return back to the start point.

The other thing is the Vietnam Traveling Wall in Erie. That will be on the 25th. It will be a huge motorcycle escort. Escorting the Wall from Conneaut Ohio to the ZemZem Shrine Club. On Friday around noon will be the opening ceremony. If you have any questions, feel free to give me a call. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 9:54a.m.

The next Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 14, 2022, at 0900.

**GINO J. MERLI VETERANS' CENTER
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
May 19, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was held vis telephone conference.

Kathleen Ambrose, Commandant (Interim), called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Secretary Bernie McDonald recorded roll call and attendance was as follows:

MEMBERS

Lisa Solarczyk, President - Marine Corps League (Excused)

William Smith, Vice President - The American Legion (Excused)

Bernard "Bernie" McDonald, Secretary - AMVETS

Robert Cudworth - Military Officers Association of America (Excused)

Robert Smith - Military Order of the Purple Heart (Excused)

Russell Canevari - Veterans of Foreign Wars (Excused)

Richard Green - Blinded Veterans Association (Excused)

Joe Sylvester - Disabled American Veterans

Chris Rosey for Lisa Baker - PA State Senate

Karen Boback - PA House of Representatives

Tim Cleveland – PSACDVA (Excused)

Lisa Kaye – PSACDVA

Wilson Miller - GJMVC Resident Representative (Excused)

DMVA

Major General Mark J. Schindler - Adjutant General, Pennsylvania (Excused)

Maureen Weigl, BG - Deputy Adjutant General, VA (Excused)

Travis Davis – Executive Director, Long-Term Care

Barbara Raymond – Director, Bureau of Veterans' Homes

Kathleen Ambrose - GJMVC Commandant (Interim)

Margo Coleman - GJMVC Deputy Commandant (Interim)

OTHERS PRESENT / INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Daniel Kazmierski, Medical Director

Sara Butler, Admissions

Carol Sweeney, Representative Karen Boback's office

Jan McAllister, Volunteers

MOMENT OF SILENCE

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

- Previous minutes accepted as written.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LONG-TERM CARE

- Travis Davis thanked everyone for the time they give to the advisory board. He shared well wishes and gratitude on behalf of General Weigl.

- As of the beginning of this week we had 940 residents across the 6 homes with just over 60% occupancy. The waiting lists at all the homes are starting to decline. The waiting times and lists vary depending on the home and location. At this time there are approximately 300 veterans and spouses on our waiting list for placement.
- Staffing challenges are our biggest issue across all 6 homes. We have about 600 vacancies (all positions). These numbers include what we would need to meet the proposed department of health 4.1 PPD regulations. We did get the approval from the governor's office to add the required positions, but it is proving a challenge to fill those. Long-term care and healthcare industry is in a staffing crisis. Pennsylvania is down over 20 thousand skilled healthcare jobs. We do have hiring efforts going on at all 6 homes. We have an advertisement campaign as well as job fairs. We are offering a double overtime incentive because right now we are heavily dependent upon our current staff working a lot of overtime.
- Last week was nurse's week. It was a week to honor our nurses and there were a lot of great activities, prizes and meals served by our facilities. Most was sponsored by donations or from the pockets of our facility leadership.
- We have a Phillies game coming up as well as a fishing tournament with TAG and we have our homes week that begins June 12th.
- Gino Merli currently has a 3-star rating along with Southeastern Veterans' Center, Hollidaysburg and Southwestern. We have 2 five-star facilities which are Erie and Delaware Valley.
- Gino Merli roof project is coming to completion. There's an extension project going on at Erie which will be done in the fall. This will increase the size of their dining area. We will also be doing some renovations to resident rooms and bathrooms.
- The adult day center which is almost complete at Southeastern Veterans' Center. We will not be opening that site right away; we are still working on a bill to be passed that will allow us the language to provide the services as well as we are working on the occupancy levels in the personal care and skilled nursing at the home.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

- Daniel Kazmierski stated that we are seeing another surge of COVID in our area. Luckily, people are not getting severely ill and that is most likely from being vaccinated. The latest variant is spreading quite easily. We currently have no positive residents. We have 4 positive staff members. We are following them and they will be tested in 10 days of the positive. They need to have a negative test and several days without symptoms before they can return.
- We have 100% vaccination for the residents and 99% for our staff. All but 4 are vaccinated.
- We are being diligent and continue PPE with residents (N-95, eye shields etc.).
- We are doubling our efforts to gain the 5 star rating. We are trying to reduce catheters, antibiotic use, reducing psychotropic medications and completing all required paperwork

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES

- Barbara Raymond reported that there are 2 minor outbreaks at Pittsburgh and Erie. All residents are stable. There was one hospitalized, but that individual has since returned to the facility. There are a total of 17 residents positive currently.

- We currently have 36 staff members out across the 6 facilities. All 6 homes require a negative test before returning.
- Staffing remains a challenge so there are instances where we will be bringing positive staff back to the facility to work with positive residents.
- We are tracking the booster shots. There are some residents who have chosen not to receive the booster. Several are just waiting until the fall time frame where we are expecting a surge of COVID.
- We currently have no FLU cases at any of our facilities. We are attributing the slow FLU season to our mask policy.
- We have 940 residents and we have done 160 admissions since the start of the year.
- All 6 homes are fully licensed with no provisional. Delaware Valley just completed their DOH survey with minor deficient practices. Our Erie facility is currently in the process of survey.
- We have a candidate selected for the commandant, but we are currently waiting for the final approvals. Barbara thanked Kathleen for all her hard work over the past few months.

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT

- Kathleen Ambrose, interim Commandant reported that the Fraternal Order of Police is sponsoring a golf tournament at Mount Airy Lodge on June 6, 2022, to benefit our resident welfare fund.
- Our roof project continues. The north side is done, and the south side is ongoing. We are awaiting a date that we can open the courtyard. We had a new fence installed along the southside.
- We currently have 4 positive staff and no positive residents. We haven't had a positive resident since February of this year.
- We are taking admissions and hoping to soon reach our full census.
- We have started outdoor trips again. Residents are going for country rides and ice cream and looking forward to summer events.
- Sam Greenberg's family has donated fresh fruit and t-shirts for our staff for veterans' home week.
- Next week is our facility performance assessment which means a team from Fort Indiantown Gap will be coming here for a mock survey to prepare us for our annual survey with the VA and the Department of Health.
- We are awaiting our final response from our VA survey. We had our survey in February with 3 deficiencies. We submitted our plan of correction, and we are just awaiting their response.

REPORT OF THE ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR

- Sarah reported that we have had 25 admissions since our last meeting. We have had 5 residents discharged and we have had 12 deaths.
- We have an admission scheduled for today which will bring the census to 136. We have 2 potential residents scheduled for next week.
- The waiting list here is dwindling as we are filling the beds.
- If anyone on the council is aware of veterans in the community or any private nursing homes, they would definitely benefit from the care here, and please provide my contact information.

- We continue to accept new applications and our admissions committee continues to meet and review all the new applications that we have.

THE GOOD OF THE COUNCIL

- Bernie McDonald reported that the AM Vets are going to be having their Memorial Day parade. They have just completed replacing broken and missing markers and flags on the cemeteries.
- Karen Boback reported that on the 28th, the Dallas American Legion is going to have a Ride for Honor and chicken BBQ. All proceeds will benefit local veterans' groups.
- Kathleen thanked everyone for their attendance and stated that the next meeting is planned for in-house.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting was announced: May 19, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

**Southwestern Veterans' Center
Advisory Council Meeting
July 15, 2022**

Advisory Council Members Present:

Thomas Tallon, Military Officers Assoc. of America
William Roland, Vice President, VFW
Tim Sager, Secretary, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans
William Aronson, Military Order of the Purple Hearts
Michael Chuey, Catholic War Veterans (via Phone)
Kenneth Stubbs, Resident Representative

Advisory Council Members Excused

Rommel Dacanay, Blind Veterans Assoc. of PA
Albert Schraepfer, The American Legion
James Lamison, AMVETS
David White, Marine Corps League
Kim Ward, Senator
Natalie Mihalek, Representative
Edward Hanke, Disabled American Veterans
Ronald F. Conley, American Legion

Advisory Council Members Absent

NONE

Others Present

Barbara Raymond, Director of State Homes
Richard Adams, Commandant
Cheri McAfee Assistant to the Commandant
Dr. Blinn, Medical Director

Others Excused

Julia Myers, Admissions Coordinator
Erin Rakow, Deputy Commandant
Andrew Ruscavage, TWOC Director of Nursing

Maureen Weigl, Adjutant General
Travis Davis, Executor Director Long Term Care

Visitors

None

Minutes taken by Cheri McAfee

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Tallon at 10:00 AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was said and held a Moment of Silence.

ROLL CALL:

Roll call was taken.

- *Went over member status*
- *Barb went over the process to streamline for updates with each members status to keep them current*
- *Corrections given to be made*

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

- *Minutes approved (Sager/Aronson) – no objections*

REMARKS FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR:

- *Regarding Covid – currently we have 1 positive staff and 1 resident positive coming off unit tomorrow – there will be zero across all 6 homes*
- *Because of high transmission – still testing staff for positivity*

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER STATUS

- *Went over member status*
- *Barb went over the process to streamline for updates with each members status in an attempt to keep things up to date*
- *Corrections given to be made*

ADMISSIONS & MARKETING UPDATE:

- *Ramping up admissions at the current time*
- *Weekly communication with the VA regarding beds and availability*
- *VA is on lockdown due to COVID*

REMARKS FROM THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL:

- *Out of state at the current time and unavailable*

REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF STATE HOMES:

- *None*

REMARKS OF THE DIRECTOR OF STATE HOMES:

- *COVID numbers – currently there is 1 positive resident across 6 homes which will end in the early hours of tomorrow morning– tentatively there will be 0 positive residents pending any outstanding testing*
- *We Continue to test those not up to date with vaccinations across the homes*
- *There are 9 positive staff members across all the homes*
- *We are 100% Vaccine compliant with all 6 homes*
- *Preparing for Phase 3 roll out of the regulation changes that occurred pre pandemic which have been implemented and not surveyed on as of yet*
- *5 star rating – four of our facilities currently have a 3 star rating - issues with minor deficiencies was explained*
- *2 of the facilities are currently at a 5 star rating*
- *VA survey - recently visited 2 facilities and currently awaiting the results – some minor infractions*
- *Head Quarter teams go to facilities for survey preparation*
- *Leadership teams are solid across the facilities*
- *Staffing numbers – went over stats according to Harrisburg regulations and the amount of nursing hours we wish to achieve according to the budget*
- *Construction update given on the 6 homes*
- *Currently attempting to bump up starting salaries for new employees while we also deal with the current staff feeling upset about the pay discrepancies between incoming and current staff*
- *Mr. Sager inquired about survey and how they show up – Rich responded they are unannounced and just show up – our license expired in May and they are only now coming in*

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT:

Commandant's report reviewed.

- *All members provided with a copy*
- *Carnival was a success – everyone enjoyed themselves – very well attended*
- *DOH came on campus Monday morning – things going well so far – nothing but complimentary statements - exit will be today at approximately 1430*
- *VA survey is overdue, they will probably be here soon - they are unannounced also*

- *Will be attending NSAVH next month - great networking conference*
- *Golf outing is September 10th – will be getting in touch with different organization to see how they can help us*
- *Positivity rate increasing – remain diligent with testing of employees*
- *Mr. Aronson inquired about home testing – Rich mentioned 99.9% testing done here*

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT:

None – not present

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF NURSING:

None – not present

COMPLIANCE OFFICE

- *None – not present*

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- *William Aronson, Purple hearts – commented that their group continues to have meetings and are still able to appropriate funds to the veterans hospitals – there is hope of a fundraising event in September*
- *Michael Chuey, CWV – Commented that a check was sent to Chris, Activities Director, for recreational activities for the residents*
- *William Roland, VFW –commented that there have been a lot of questions of what things are appropriate to donate and which are not – inquired as to whether the home is opening up to allow events – the Commandant state “yes”*
- *Tim Sager, KPV - commented that not much is going on – there is a meeting next month – there was an outing at Kennywood – activities seem to be less than normal at the current time*
- *Ken Stubbs, Resident Representative – commented that the carnival went well – everyone enjoyed – so far so good everything going well*
- *Tom Tallon, MOAA – would like to see Chris V nail down any details for events*

OLD BUSINESS:

NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

None

GOOD OF THE COUNCIL:

- *William Roland, VFW – if you haven't seen a member of the council in a long time is there a way to change the member – Tom Tallon, MAOO – commented that's what we are currently trying to correct with streamlining for accuracy – but currently unless your replaced you are on the list*

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn – sager/chuey -

Meeting called to close at 10:35 AM

**Next meeting will be held October 21, 2022 at
10:00 AM**



**DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS HOME
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - May 11, 2022**

Advisory Council Members

In person

Allan Abramson, President Advisory Council (JWV)
James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans
Daniel Murray, Marine Corps League
Richard Fine, AMVETS

Conference Call

Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association
Douglas Craig, Military Officers Association of America

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Delaware Valley Veterans Home

Travis Davis, Executive Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
Beth Werner, Regional Compliance Officer
Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
Aurelio Ojeda, Commandant
Deborah Olivieri, Director of Nursing
Rita Yeung, Business Manager
Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director
Yahvae Jones, Admissions Coordinator
Veronica Royster, Acting Clerical Assistant III

Conference Call

Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General

Absent

John P. O'Donnell, American Legion
Bruce Boice, Disabled American Veterans
Daniel McCollum, American Legion
Kerry Judge, Senator Robert Tomlinson
Martina White, PA House of Representatives
Benjamin Mastridge, Vietnam Veterans
Charles Petronis, Catholic War Veterans
Kerry Judge, Senator Robert Tomlinson
Mia Woods, Compliance Officer

Residents

Mr. Knapp, President Resident Council

Visitors

Dr. Wally Quinlan, Councilmember Brian O'neill Office

- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Introduction of Attendees
- Approval of Minutes from February 09, 2022

Report from Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director

- There was a COVID-19 outbreak within the past three months.
 - There will be an on and off outbreak, every single resident must wash their hands with soap and water, not just use hand sanitizer.
 - We allowed the residents to leave and go to a fishing trip, I believe that is where the outbreak came from.
 - We had 14 resident wounds, now we are down to four resident wounds.
 - We do not have many nursing and cleaning staff.
 - We have staff that take residents out of bed at 6a.m., they feed them and assist them in the restroom, by the time it is lunch time the staff is tired from doing so much.
 - Salaries should be raised maybe 20% to keep staff here or offer incentives, like paying for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA's) to go to school.
 - Gas prices are high.
 - We do our best here at DVVH, it is strongly good otherwise.
- Larry Holman asked Dr. B is there a developed training for staff to progress in their careers, to become a Registered Nurse? Peter response, we had that program in here a longtime ago.
 Barbara responded Travis and I are looking into this to get staff additional training. We are not a Nursing School, we cannot make them a Licensed Practical Nurse or a Registered Nurse.

Report from Yahvae Jones, Admissions/Marketing

- We have tons of Marketing Events virtual and in person, at least (2x) per week.
- Total Admissions planned for this week is (3).
- Census – Secured Unit -113 out of 130 fill up the Secured Unit, working to fill four.
- Wait list – Skilled Nursing (60), Secured (30), Out of State (2 Veterans) and (21 Non-Veterans)
- We can do immediate placement in other sister facilities.
- Committees- Veterans Advisory Council, Veteran community Partnerships and Caregiver Support Program.
- Daniel Murray question to Yahvae- Can I have brochures about the facility to distribute? Yahvae responded yes.

Report from Travis Davis, Executive Director, Bureau of Veterans

- The wait list is declining.
- The homes are sixty three percent full capacity, we have 936 Veterans and spouses in house.
- We have Billboard advertising and job fairs schedule to interview potential employees.
- We have overtime and double overtime incentives for some employees.
- We have staff that will be rewarded until June 30th, 2022.
- There are nice things going on for Nurses week, funded through the Commandants and the Directors of Nursing.
- We are taking the best practices from Delaware Valley Veterans Home.
- DVVH and Erie are Five Star facilities, the remaining homes are Three Stars.
- Construction – SEVC- Adult Day Healthcare, GMVC – Receiving a roof replacement, PSSH(Erie)- Expansion in the dining area, it should be completed by the end of 2022.
- Barbara Raymond will be getting a Governor's Award from Governor Tom Wolf.

Report from Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General

- Thank you for coming.
- It is Nurses Week- CNA's, RN's, LPN's say thank you to all of them.
- Six Veterans are going to the Phillies game for Armed Forces Day, May 21,2022 at 6:05 p.m.
- Get a calendar for Veterans Home Week
- We are launching high media campaign advertisements to hire staff and working with the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC).

Report from Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes

- Welcome to everyone.
- Today is Travis Birthday.
- It is Nurses week.
 The Commandants and Directors of Nursing give approximately \$1,000.00 from their own pockets to appreciate the nursing staff.
- We had nice celebrations for the moms for Mother's Day.
- Covid – We have 20 cases across the Homes. Erie has (1) positive resident.
 Friday (12) residents will be moved from the red zone.
- Worldwide, over 200,000.00 healthcare workers died.
- Vaccinations - 52 out of 938 did not receive the third Covid-19 dose and 313 did not receive the fourth dose.
- All six Homes are licensed.
- Surveys – Life Safety just left DVVH yesterday.
- Influenza- There are 5 influenza cases over all the homes.
- We have a GI outbreak at DVVH, everybody is under control.
- Vaccinations - We encourage visitors to be tested upon entering the building.
- Construction – Erie- PENNDOT put a bridge at Erie facility.
- Gino Merli has an acting Commandant.

Report from Peter Ojeda, Commandant

- Over the past 3 months we had 27 admissions and 9 discharges.
 Monetary Donations for the past 3 months totaled \$4,755.00.
 We will start bringing in residents. We have enough Nurses, but not to open another unit.
 We are stretching staff here at DVVH, we do not want to lose them.
- **ACTIVITIES**
 For the months of February, March, and April we had many events including the Superbowl game, bingo, movies on the big screen, live entertainment, activities on the units and monthly birthday bash for residents. We also had tabletop horse racing sponsored by the VFW 6495.
- **April 8th** – Phillies Game
- **April 11th**- Jewish Seder
 Easter egg hunt for the residents and staff.
- **April 15th** – Re-Creation dance group who performed for our residents in front of the building.
- **April 30th**- Doylestown Fishing Trip
- **Upcoming Events**
- **May 15th**- Mother's Day Luncheon
- **May 25th** – DVVH Job Fair
- **June 13th -18th** – State Veterans Home Week
- **June 19th** – Father's Day Picnic
- COVID – Presently, Covid is under control, but things can change daily.
- Construction – General maintenance continues on the grounds and building.
- Overtime – Staff who works overtime will be paid double time. This is an incentive for staff to volunteer to work when needed.



Debbie Olivieri, Director of Nursing

- We are striving to keep our residents happy and healthy.

Mr. Knapp, Resident

- Barbara Raymond and Travis Davis are doing a good job.
- Southeastern Veterans' Center need work done at that facility.

Old Business:

New Business:

Daniel Murray – Stated it is a big help for people who are not in the know about the facility to receive brochures.

Good of the Counsel:

Larry Holman – I think it would be great to discuss closing facilities and reopening new ones. Allan Abramson wants to know who to contact regarding a request like this.

Adjourned: 11:00 AM

Next Meeting: August 10, 2022



**DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS HOME
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
August 10, 2022**

Present:

Advisory Council Members

In person

Allan Abramson, President Advisory Council (JWV)
Benjamin Mastridge, Vietnam Veterans
James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans
Daniel Murray, Marine Corps League
Douglas Craig, Military Officers Association of America
John P. O'Donnell, American Legion

Conference Call

Richard Fine, AMVETS
Martina White, PA House of Representatives

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Delaware Valley Veterans Home

Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care
Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director
Aurelio Ojeda, Commandant
Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant
Deborah Olivieri, Director of Nursing
Yahvae Jones, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator
William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator
Veronica Royster, Clerical Assistant 3

Absent

Bruce Boice, Disabled American Veterans
Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association
Daniel McCollum, American Legion
Kerry Judge, Senator Robert Tomlinson
Charles Petronis, Catholic War Veterans
Mia Woods, Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer
Beth Werner, Regional Compliance Officer
Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General

Residents

Mr. Knapp, President Resident Council

Visitors

Dr. Wally Quinlan, Councilmember Brian O'neill Office

- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Introduction of Attendees
- Approval of Minutes from May 11, 2022

Report from Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director

- We are still in the Covid-19 era.
- There was an outbreak in the DVVH location & I believe there is another one in SEVC, it did not surprise me at all. It will be with us for a long time. The good news is it is less fatalities. Now a pill (paxlovid) is being used, less people are dying from Covid.
- There are 3 pills to be taken 2 times per day, only used outside of the hospital and patients are benefitting from them. Hospitalization decreases.
- You must be 18 years and older to use this medication, the outcome is tremendous, it is effective only 5 days.
- When a resident test positive they are isolated and put in a separate location.
- Everybody has my blessings.
- We in the window of getting influenza vaccinations in a month.

Report from Yahvae Jones, Admissions/Marketing

- There are 83 Veterans on the waiting list.
- 2 Veterans are out of the State.
- 23 non-Veterans on the list.
- I did 5 events in May, 3 in June and 6 in person events in July.
- I went to meet with Social Workers, to network and possibly get residents for our home or for one of the other Veterans homes.
- I can only take in five more.

Report from Compliance Officer

- Beth Werner & Mia Woods was not available to attend the meeting. Beth sent an email. The email was read by Barbara Raymond.
- Compliance and other team members have completed four Facilities Performance Assessments and five more are scheduled for the rest of this year.
- For 2022, there have been 34 inquiries that were reviewed and 33 are closed with one still in progress as of 08/1/22. The Compliance department continues to keep this updated.

Report from Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care

- General Weigl is in a meeting, she will try to get on before the meeting is over.
- Governor Wolf signed a budget last month, over \$500 million invested for Long-term Care and Nursing facilities.
- 190 million towards recruitment and retention efforts.
- This is the first time in over a decade Medicaid got a significant increase.
- The Department of Health wanted to increase staffing from 2.7 to 4.1. That proposal was thrown out the door just a little bit. They have come to the table and set new goals, for where the staffing is going to be. In year one they will bump it up from 2.7 and it will be increased to 2.9, then 3.2 moving forward after that. Here at the Veterans Homes, we are already well exceeding those numbers averaging over 3.8, which is a strong number, and we are committed to making sure we are staffed, especially when we are looking at taking in new admissions. Things are moving in the right direction.
- Census- we surpassed 950 across the six homes, we are doing a great job getting admission and getting staff in the door. These are promising numbers.
- We were going through a little bit of a back log. It was not necessarily the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, it was more centralized in Harrisburg with getting postings out for jobs. It was a painful two months to go through at our homes. We were all affected by this throughout the Commonwealth. I am happy to report it is better than two months ago, it is still taking time. We need to get

people in as quickly as possible. People are not waiting anymore 30 to 45 days. People will move on to the next employer, so we need to keep our foot on the pedal there.

- SEVC & Gino J. Merli are 4 Stars and DVVH & Erie are 5 Star facilities. We are trying to move in the right direction and pleased with the work from the team.
- Construction - There is a signed bill by President Biden it is called Build America, Buy America, a plan started less than 30 days ago. What they want is anyone who is receiving federal grants to buy products in America. I think we all would say we love that idea and we want to keep it that way. The challenge that we are faced with right now are price increases. We have a building that is going to be constructed in Hollidaysburg, we did a study to see what that would cost us if it was all American, it would cost 30% more. We believe we are going to meet an exemption on that building to keep it on track.
- SEVC have a big project coming up in the next five years, where the State matches part of that project.
- Three on going projects right now- SEVC we are putting in new flooring, it is now a carpeted building. Many of you can imagine that is not the best thing to have in a healthcare setting.
 Erie- we have a lot of things going on at Erie right now, the biggest is the dining room, we are about 78% through construction.

Hollidaysburg – the big project is coming, and it will be one of the biggest in the State. The replacement of their existing skilled nursing facility to a new 200 bed facility.

Report from Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes

- The various Long-Term Care Advocacy groups, as well as the American Health Association is advocating to the government to continue on with the public health emergency until the October deadline. As of now October 13th the public health emergency is set to be over, which will affect some waivers that are in effect at the Nursing Homes. We are hoping it continue on particularly at that time frame as we gear up for Flu season and additional covid cases we are expected to have.
- Covid – Currently at the homes we have 22 positive residents between SEVC and DVVH homes, those residents are stable. Within the last week we had 2 additional deaths that had covid listed on the death certificate. Covid was not listed as the primary cause, the individuals had other respiratory and cardiac concerns. That brings our total deaths for this year to 14 deaths throughout the six homes.
- We have 29 Staff members that are positive across the six homes currently.
- The residents are well above 95 percent vaccinated, they are very much continuing to take the booster to make sure they are up to date. We are only about 60 percent for that 4th dose, mostly because of timing. We did have a few residents that refused the 4th dose.
- The staff is in 100% compliant with the federal mandate for vaccination. The staff is either vaccinated or have a religious or ADA accommodation. We are continuing to offer our staff the vaccination.
- We have 1 resident case of bacterial infection, it has nothing to do with seasonal type influenza. It is still spread by droplets, so that individual is in isolation, it showed up in his blood from a hospital visit.
- Our facilities are ready for our CMS phase 3 requirements. It went into effect pre-covid, so we have not been surveyed on them. We will start to get surveyed on them in October. The Phase 3 requirements are various things such as, quality programs, Infection control programs and the trauma – informed care have to be very specific.
- Survey- we just recently had our Hollidaysburg and DVVH survey through the VA. There were no major concerns, minor outtakes. We recently had our survey for the VA and DOH at our Pittsburgh facility, we are waiting the final report from the VA, we did receive our final result from DOH and both of those surveys they did a very good job, minor things.
- We do have all 6 of our Commandants in place.
- We have a new Director of Nursing in our SEVC facility, she started a few months ago.
- Our SWVC facility we will have a vacant Director of Nursing position within the next few weeks, that individual is moving to a different position.

Report from Peter Ojeda, Commandant

- Over the past 3 months we had 17 admissions and 4 discharges.
- Monetary Donations for the past 3 months totaled \$1425.00.
- **ACTIVITIES**
 For the months of May, June, and July we had many events including seashell painting, painting with a twist, bingo, Wii bowling, ice cream social, DVVH glee club, virtual mass, devotions service, catholic hymns, our daily bread, outdoor exercise and the monthly birthday bash for the residents.
 We celebrated Certified Nursing Assistant Week and the CNA's received gift cards, refreshments and appreciation signs were posted throughout the building.
- **May 8th** – Mother's Day Luncheon and musician JT Trinacria
- **June 18th**- Picnic hosted by Catholic Daughters of America
- **June 19th** – Father's Day sitcom and Lambertville Brass Band
- **July 3rd** – Holiday Entertainment: Air National Guard Band
- **Upcoming Events**
- **August 4th**- Coast Guard Birthday Party hosted by American Legion 810
- **August 10th** – Tabletop horse racing- hosted by VFW 6495
- **August 19th** – Musical Entertainer Rosie Hay
- Inspection- We are fighting two issues. We were in compliance and have to give an explanation. If the explanation is not accepted we will have to go through it again in November.
- Dr Wally Quinlan to Peter- How long is the isolation for a positive covid now? Peter responded 5 days in isolation, then another test. If the test is negative they can come back by day 7.

Mr. Knapp, Resident

- Peter, Debbie, Jack and Dr. B are 110% on top of things.
 Question from Mr. Knapp to Travis, is there any word on an increase for disability payments to veterans? It's been a while since we received an increase. Travis responded that is a good question for General Weigl when she gets on, she is more in tuned to that then I am. If for some reason she is unable to join us I will find out today.

James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars

- The Commandant report, under activities, the minutes have the tabletop horse racing was sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans. The guys who did it are Vietnam Veterans and they belong to VFW. It was sponsored by VFW.

Daniel Murray, Marine Corps League

- We have some Advisory Council people that have not been here for years.
- Reach out to the organization that is sponsoring the Advisory Council Members that are not showing up.

William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator

- I have Bruce Boice contact information, physically he can not come in.

Martina White, PA State Representative

- 143 million has been allocated for State Veteran Homes and there was an increase of 14.5 percent of the 500,000.00 for the Veterans Outreach Services.
- In my office every month we serve our local veterans onsite and try to help them get resources and what they are entitled to and even for the family members. We increased the honor guard detail funding.

- You have been through a lot throughout the pandemic and I want to give credit to the Commandant and the General. I think that it has been a very challenging time for the State.
- I am glad Delaware Valley Veterans Home is in our district, having a five star rating is a proud thing we should continue to tell.
- I just want to say thank you and I know it has been a little while, I am here for you however I can be of service.
- Allan Abramson to State Representative Martina White; when you get a moment would you please reach out to me I have questions to ask you and some of my people have questions. State Rep took Allan Abramson telephone number to contact him. Allan thanked her for calling in.
- I do serve on the leadership team as the house majority. Sometimes I know in the past there has been time constraints on my end. I do care deeply about what you all do there at the Veterans Home here in the Northeast.
- I am here for you, sometimes I will send Kelly Kolodi from my office or a representative to make sure you have what you need. Call anytime and I will definitely follow up Allan. Thank you and have a nice day.
- Jeffrey Knapp to State Representative Martina white, when can you show up here I would like to speak to you personally? I was not sure what your policy was, I was going to have my staff call over to see what we needed to do to make sure we would be able to get in. I am happy to come over whenever the next meeting is. That is no problem. Mr. Knapp said thank you.
- Bill McGoldrick said to State Representative Martina White, he will set up an appointment with you to come back to the building again, I will come to your office.

Douglas Craig, Military Officers Assoc. of America

- This will be my last Advisory Council Meeting I will be attending. I am being replaced by Claudette Campbell.

Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans

- My membership expires in Nov.

Allan Abramson (President), Jewish War Veterans

- We hear in the news polio, monkey pox, infectious diseases are on the rise, what plans are being made?
- Barbara answered I am glad you brought that up, monkey pox in general, we are at very low risk. From a vaccine standpoint we would not be able to get it because it is very limited and we would not be eligible at this time. The staff watch for unusual rashes. Travis response, the facilities added an Infection Preventionist of a corporate level who work with all six facilities. She goes to all six homes and help with audits, education and make sure we are all adhering to the same protocol.
- Barbara asked Allan did Ashley Dinges reach out to you yet? He said no, Barbara said he will reach out to you. He works out of headquarters with Travis and I. He is tasked with this variation.

Old Business:

New Business:

Good of the Counsel:

Adjourned: 11:00 AM

Next Meeting: November 09, 2022





SOUTHEASTERN VETERANS' CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 14, 2022

The Southeastern Veterans' Center Advisory Council met April 14, 2022 at 10:00AM in the Coates Hall All-Purpose Room at the Southeastern Veterans' Center.

Advisory Council Members Participating:

Barry Amole, Vietnam Veterans of America, President
Mary Archey, Marine Corps League
Thomas Applebach, Lehigh County Office of Veterans' Affairs
Robert Richardson, Resident Representative
Kenneth Schweitzer, American Legion
John Getz, Veterans of Foreign Wars
The Hon. Tim Hennessey, PA House of Representatives
Robert Stone, American Legion

Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs/Southeastern Veterans' Center:

Maureen Weigl, BG (PA) – DMVA
Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care - DMVA
Barbara Raymond, BVH Director – DMVA
Mildred Butler-Coleman, Deputy Commandant – SEVC
Jill Alwine, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator – SEVC

Visitors:

Nikki Whitlock, Constituency Relations, Senator Katie Muth's Office
The Hon. Katie Muth, PA State Senate

Excused Absence:

Anthony Arnao, Jr. Catholic War Veterans
Thomas Brown, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Richard Doherty, Military Officers Assoc. of America
Jeffrey Elliot, PA AMVETS
Doug Forsythe, Disabled American Veterans
The Hon. Bob Mensch, PA State Senate
MG Mark J. Schindler, Adjutant General - DMVA
Brian Gula, Commandant – SEVC
Lauren Stenson, Acting DON - SEVC

Call to Order:

The Advisory Council Meeting was called to order by Barry Amole at 10:00 AM. There was a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review and Approval of January 13, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by John Getz and seconded by Thomas Applebach to approve the minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting held on January 13, 2022. Motion carried, and minutes were approved as written.

Report of the Medical Director:

Director of Veterans' Homes Barb Raymond reported on behalf of Medical Director Dr. Michele Shrikanthan. Currently the facility has 1 Covid positive resident who is in stable condition, no positive staff. From skilled nursing, there are 144 residents who are vaccinated; 138 of them have also received the booster. Two residents have refused the vaccine altogether. From personal care, there are 34 residents who are vaccinated with 32 having also received the booster. For staff, there are 42 employees who are unvaccinated, 39 of which have exemptions and 2 of which have pending exemptions.

Report of the Admissions and Marketing Coordinator:

Admissions Coordinator Jill Alwine reported that as of the end of the 1st quarter the facility has 178 residents and 114 vacancies. Overall occupancy rate is 61%. There is currently 149 people on the waitlist, 106 are veterans. The current goal is to admit 10 new residents a week. The approximate waiting list times for skilled nursing and personal care is 3-4 months and 9-12 months for memory care, due to it being our smallest area. As we start going into Spring, there are plans to start attending more events.

John Getz asked if everything was going better with admissions since things had been put on hold for a while. Jill responded that there had been 14 admissions in the last quarter. We had been taking things slow for a while, but plan to start ramping up admission efforts while continuing with safety protocols. New residents are required to complete a Covid test prior to being admitted or quarantine for a short period of time until receiving negative test results.

Report of the Deputy Adjutant General – General Maureen Weigl – DMVA:

Gen. Weigl started by stating that she was glad that we were back meeting in person and that she will continue to support the in-person meetings. Some of the things celebrated in March included St. Patrick's Day, Women's History Month, and Vietnam Veterans were honored on March 29th. We also have Easter and volunteer week coming up. We are starting to make a push to get more activities going for the veterans. On May 21st, SEVC and Delaware Valley are going to a Phillies game where WWII veterans are being honored.

Gen. Weigl also stated that there is going to be a big campaign launch over the next three months for staffing. There is going to be a big push to hire staff, with a slight focus on reaching out to high schools and Vo-Tech programs. In order to fill beds, we must fill the staff.

Report of the Executive Director, Long Term Care – Travis Davis – DMVA:

Travis Davis mentioned how nice it was to finally be able to meet in person for the first time, as it is hard to start developing relationships virtually. Across the 6 homes, we are at about 63% filled in terms of occupancy with a waitlist of over 300 veterans and spouses. The biggest challenge that we are facing in trying to fill beds is staffing. We are heavily relying on overtime and using some agency staffing to meet the needs of caring for residents. The total number of staff vacancies is about 600 over all 6 homes. This healthcare crisis is a nationwide problem. One disadvantage for the Commonwealth is trying to compete with the private sector, who are offering sign-on bonuses and flexible scheduling. Another issue is because

we had to close our doors to the public, potential candidates do not get to experience the rewarding personal side of the job.

Currently the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid 5-star rankings for all six homes are as followed: SEVC, Gino J Merli, and Hollidaysburg are at 3-stars and Southwestern, Delaware Valley, and Erie are at 5-stars. We are looking at the facilities that are 5-stars and analyzing what they are doing well. From there we will determine how to replicate that throughout the other homes.

Reporting on the Adult Day Health Care: the construction is essentially complete. However, the project is on hold due to the lack of information in Chapter 7, which is our law that details how to provide this service. We need the legislation to pass before moving forward. This will probably put us back about a year or two. Another main concern is keeping the center going once it is finally open. Over the past few years, programs like these have struggled to stay open. With that being said, we are closely examining the business model so that when we start this program, we can sustain it long-term.

Other construction projects throughout the homes include a roofing renovation project going on at Gino Merli which is scheduled to end in June, an expansion up in Erie which should be concluded in August, Delaware Valley converted about 41 personal care beds into skilled nursing beds, and Hollidaysburg will be breaking ground on a new 200 bed skilled nursing facility this year to replace old infrastructure.

Other fun activities coming up include a fishing derby with TAG on June 7th that some veterans from SEVC will be able to participate in, Veterans' Home week is starting on June 12th, there will be lots of celebrations and activities for Father's Day, and May 21st the Phillies are doing their World War II veterans recognition.

Tim Hennessey asked in what areas is SEVC falling behind compared to the other 5-star facilities. Travis responded that out of the 3 categories the rankings are based on, our lowest category is our health inspections. Some of these issues came about with the Covid pandemic and the health inspections can affect your rating for 3 years. Travis also stated that the different field offices throughout the state can vary in the ways that they approach their surveys but seem to be getting more uniform as a whole.

Tim Hennessey also asked at what level do we need legislation. Barb asked for clarification if he was referring to the Center of Medicare/Medicaid or Adult Day Health Care. The response was that CMS is Federal- level and that the Adult Day Health Care was state-level. Travis noted that legislation was already in the works for the Adult Day Health Care.

Thomas Applebach asked what the total number of beds for skilled nursing will be with the addition of the 200-bed facility in Hollidaysburg. Barb replied that Hollidaysburg will lose about 100 beds, because they are also destroying old infrastructure.

Mary Archey asked with the potential issues with the Adult Day Health Care if they are looking into using the space for residential services. Travis stated that the primary focus is still on adult day care, but while waiting on the legislation to get passed they are looking into what other ways the space can be used. One thing that may be considered if they must go a different route is using it as a child day care for staff. It is being reported that three major benefits that employees are looking for from their jobs are flexible scheduling, help with childcare, and help with transportation. This could also help attract potential employees to the facility.

Report of the Director of Veterans' Homes – Barbara Raymond – DMVA:

Barb started by stating that it was nice to see everyone and thanked everyone for their support over the past few years. Reporting on the COVID status at all six homes: Currently, we have 19 positive residents throughout our homes, a majority are at the Hollidaysburg facility and there is a small outbreak at Delaware Valley. Everyone is stable and in isolation to prevent spreading. The staff are following all proper protocols and the Medical Directors and Directors of Nursing are keeping a close watch on everything. Most of the positive residents are vaccinated. There is some concern with Easter coming up since families will be getting together, so we will be keeping an eye on other potential outbreaks.

We have 20 staff currently positive with Covid, again most at Hollidaysburg. All are reported stable. Our staff member that was very ill has since recovered but is not back to work yet.

We are moving forward with the 4th dose of the Covid vaccine for staff or residents that are over the age of 50 or immunocompromised. Over all 6 homes we only have 49 residents who are not considered up to date, having received the 3rd dose.

Robert Richardson asked if the 4th dose of the vaccine was the #23. Barb clarified that the #23 was the pneumococcal vaccine. Robert followed up by asking if that was being offered yet. Barb said there was some changes recently regarding it and was unsure if we had it at this facility but would ask Ed the pharmacist.

Regarding staffing across the homes: our major positions open include the Commandant position at Gino Merli, a decision should be made within a couple of days, the Director of Nursing position at SEVC, and Quality Assurance positions at 3 of the homes. The medical director position at SEVC is currently held by a contracted vendor, but we are looking to move toward a Commonwealth employee for that position. Interviews for that have taken place along with interviews to hire 3 Nurse Practitioners.

Reporting on the surveys at the homes, we recently had VA surveys done at Gino Merli, SEVC, and the Erie facility. Both Erie and Gino Merli had zero clinical deficiencies found. SEVC had one clinical deficiency found regarding the placement of the activity calendars in resident rooms. Delaware Valley is currently waiting to go through their recognition survey for occupancy approval for the 41 personal care beds that were transferring to skilled nursing.

There is 1 staff member who currently has the flu, located at the Erie facility. Overall, we only have had about 4 cases reported throughout the 6 homes all year.

Tim Hennessey asked if we are seeing evidence of the new variants in the reported Covid cases across the homes. Barb stated that Omicron is responsible for 50% of the new cases of Covid being reported in the country. One way that testing is different with this new variant is that the PCR tests can be used to determine if the person has the Omicron variant.

Report of the Commandant – Brian Gula– SEVC:

Brian was unable to attend the meeting, so Barb Raymond gave the Commandant's report on his behalf. Currently, the Director of Nursing position is open again at SEVC. Lauren Stenson is acting as our Director of Nursing for the time being. Lauren was previously a Registered Nurse Instructor at SEVC and was an Assistant Director of Nursing when she stepped in to be the acting Director of Nursing. Interviews for the Director of Nursing position are being held shortly.

Report of the Deputy Commandant – Mildred Butler-Coleman – SEVC:

Both Steve Lightcap and Bryan Millard, the two head people of our maintenance department retired recently after over 30 years of service. Our new Labor Foreman is Kirt Kronmuller, who was working in the maintenance department prior. Our Facility Maintenance Manager position is still open. Currently, Greg Lehman who is a supervisor at Fort Indiantown Gap has been helping to fill in on the position.

With the changing seasons we are working on getting our HVAC system switched over from heating to cooling so the building will be comfortable for the residents as it gets warmer out.

One major project we have going on is updating our elopement risk systems. Currently, each building has a different elopement risk system, Wanderguard and Accutech. We are working towards having one overall elopement risk system, Wanderguard, and upgrade it so staff can swipe their badges to gain access through doors rather than entering in codes.

Our nurse call bell system is also being upgraded since we can no longer get parts to fix it if it breaks. Both call bell systems will be computerized and will allow us to run reports to check call bell response times. This gives us the ability to do investigations into quality of service and quality of care for the residents.

All the carpet in the resident's rooms and the lobby in the CLC building are going to be replaced with vinyl flooring for infection control purposes. The carpet does not hold up well against cleaners and disinfectants and the vinyl flooring will be easier to clean and maintain. All the residents will have to be moved to Coates Hall one floor at a time while the work is being done. This will be a big project and require all departments to work together to ensure that it runs smoothly but will be worth it.

Coates Hall is getting new furniture in the resident lounge areas to provide a nicer environment for residents and visitors to get together.

Vaccinated volunteers are back in the building. Both the library and canteens are open again for the residents to enjoy. We have about 30 volunteers that come in regularly. This is a slower process because we must reorient everyone to the new infection control processes to keep the residents safe. We do have high school students that come in and do things outside such as weeding and mulching the flower beds. We have a volunteer appreciation luncheon planned for next week in celebration of Volunteer's Week.

Tim Hennessey asked about the process for getting rid of the furniture and if the furniture can be given to other organizations if it is still in good condition. Barb explained that we have a surplus program that we are mandated to follow. Anything over a certain dollar amount needs to go through this system.

Thomas Applebach asked how far into the construction process was the Adult Day Health Care. Travis responded that the construction was completed. Thomas followed up by asking if it would be able to be transformed into a childcare center. Travis stated that they are pulling life safety regulations to try and determine if it would comply with the regulations. We are not looking to get into the childcare service but are leaving options open to have the space be utilized. Robert Richardson asked for clarification about where the kids would be coming from. Travis said the goal of it would be for staff's children.

BVH Compliance Update – Mia Woods –DMVA

Mia Woods could not attend the meeting. Josh Spigner introduced himself as a Regional Compliance Officer at Fort Indiantown Gap and that he had 2 issues that are BVH wide to discuss with the group. The first being an inclusionary background check for direct care workers. These are a series of checks that need to be run monthly. There is a plan in place to get a vendor to run the checks and take the weight off the employees and reduce the risk of human error.

The second item Josh discussed was payroll-based journalism. It was found that during one of their audits that they were over-reporting their hours. The vendor was contacted to find out what processes could be automated to reduce the amount of work on employees and reduce the risk of human error.

Comments from the Council:

Kenneth Schweitzer said 'Welcome back everyone'.

John Getz stated that it was good to be back again.

Robert Stone apologized for his phone ringing due to personal matters.

Mildred Butler-Coleman introduced Sarah Klufas as the new Assistant to the Commandant who took over for Kathy Knaub.

Elena Tedesco introduced herself as social service worker who is working on her Nursing Home Administrator's license and thanked everyone for allowing her to sit in on the meeting.

Robert Stone also asked if there was anything planned for Memorial Day or the 4th of July. Mildred stated that there was going to be a Memorial Day service on the 29th, but things were going to be scaled down due to the inability to screen people coming in. As far as other holidays go we are trying to get back to normal. However, it is hard to plan things well in advanced because we will not know what our restrictions will be at that time.

Old Business:

Nothing to Report.

New Business:

Nothing to Report.

Good of the Council:

Mildred stated that since the Café was closed due to a scheduled program for the veterans, that food and refreshments were provided for all the council members who wanted to stay and enjoy lunch.

Time and Date for the next Meeting:

With no further business to discuss, the next regular meeting of the Advisory Council will be held on July 14, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

Approved:

Barry Amole, President

Minutes submitted by: Sarah Klufas

HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TELEPHONIC MEETING
THURSDAY, April 21, 2022
10:00 A.M.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Duffy Hines (Council Present), Marine Corps League Department of PA
Raymond Lenz, American Legion Department of PA
Henry Gaunt, AMVETS
Joe Rodkey, Blinded Veterans Association
Goose Marin, Catholic War Vets
Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA
David Wagner, DAV
Ron Dawson, MacArthur Hall, Resident Representative
Thomas Williams, VFW Department of PA
Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Vacant
Jewish War Veterans, Vacant

VIPs PRESENT:

State Senator Judy Ward
Katie Buchanan for State Representative Louis Schmitt Jr.

DMVA PRESENT

The Deputy Adjutant General of Veteran Affairs, Brigadier General (Ret.) Maureen Weigel
Travis Davis, Director of Long-Term Care
Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
Beth Werner, Compliance Officer

HVH PRESENT

Sam Dunkle, Commandant
Chrissy Dambeck, Deputy Commandant
John Reinhardt, Medical Director
Kelly Smith, Director of Nursing
Kim Vandevander, Admissions & Marketing Director
Shelley Ponist, RN
Matt Smearman, Facility Maintenance Manager 3 (FMM3)
Victor Costlow, Dietary Director
Joe Patterson, Assistant to the Commandant, *Recorder*

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Robert "Hank" Sembower, Military Officers Association of America
Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association

OTHERs:

Anna Marie Rodkey, spouse of Joe Rodkey

Called to Order

Duffy Hines called the meeting to order at 1000hrs. Duffy asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and to provide their title and or Service Organization.

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Duffy asked everyone to stand (if they were able) and to take a moment of silence to remember all of our fallen, both at the HVH and in their own personal life. Duffy then asked everyone to remain standing and for resident Ron Dawson to lead everyone in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

REVIEW OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Duffy Hines, asked every member if they had any question, comments or concerns regarding the Minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday, January 20, 2022 ~ no comments were received. Duffy asked, "All those in favor to accept the Minutes, say, I" ["I" could be heard] and "All those opposed, say Nay" [none of the Advisory Council Members responded – "Nay". Duff said the Minutes for January are accepted as posted.

Swearing-In New Members

None

Employee Recognition

Deputy Commandant Chrissy Dambeck and Kelly Smith read their citations while General Weigel presented the following staff a Challenge Coin of Excellence:

RN Instructor Shelly Ponist, was recognized for her dedication to the nursing profession, her years of service and unwavering commitment to the HVH since 1993.

FMM3 Matt Smearman, was recognized for his working knowledge of the maintenance, housekeeping and grounds keeping department. [in the third (3rd) year of the COVID-19 pandemic] Matt was recognized for his untiring support to the HVH nursing staff during the entire pandemic; creating isolation zones, zip walls for Donning & Doffing areas and supervising UV sanitation procedures in our COVID-19 testing rooms – all of which proved to be extremely beneficial.

Dietary Director Victor Costlow, was recognized for transitioning from the Dietary Manager and taking on the role as the new Dietay Director. [in the 3rd year of the COVID-19 pandemic] Victor was recognized for his steadfast efforts and keeping track of every residents' dietary need while they are assigned to a isolation area; as well as meal service to their rooms.

Clerical Assistant 3, Joe Patterson, was recognized for his support and work ethic to Nursing Managers, Department Leaders as well as the HVH Senior Leadership Team.

Dr. John Reinhardt, Medical Director

Dr. Reinhardt echoed the accomplishments of RNI Shelley Ponish and said the HVH is truly blessed to have her. Dr. Reinhardt said, during the pandemic, his staff, the HVH Management and Nursing Staff had an overwhelming task of keeping the residents safe during the pre-vaccine period – and they performed "miraculously". He said, [now] during the post- vaccination period, the staff are able to keep the residents even more safe; and they continue to educate the residents and staff about the vaccination and COVID-19.

Questions, Comments or Concerns (QCC) for Dr. John Reinhardt

Ray Lenz commended Dr. Reinhart, the HVH Management and Nursing Staff for their of protecting the residents.

Final QCC for Dr. John Reinhardt

None received.

The Deputy Adjutant General of Veteran Affairs, Brigadier General (Ret.) Maureen Weigl

General Weigl greeted everyone and said, it is wonderful to finally meet everyone in-person. The General said, during her first visit to the HVH [she noted], the morale was very low among the residents and staff; and everyone should know by now there has been a Leadership change. She said, Commandant Sam Dunkle is doing very well and she is receiving a lot of positive feedback regarding the current morale at the home.

General Weigl explained, the BVHs will soon be celebrating Volunteer and State Veterans' Home Week. She explained the homes are very excited to celebrate these events and these [events] are very important for the morale of our residents, staff, and volunteers.

Media Campaign

General Weigl [pleased to announce], everyone will start seeing media announcements on the local television and radio stations specifically targeting/ recruiting RNs, LPNs and CNAs for the HVH. She asked all the Advisory Council Members to share this information.

QCC for General Weigl:

None received.

Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes

Barb echoed the Generals comments, that she is happy to meet everyone in-person again [since the pandemic].

BVHs COVID-19 and Vaccination Report

Barb said, currently and across the six (6) homes there are three (3) POSITIVE residents and fourteen (14) POSITIVE staff. Barb explained, all of the BVH staff have either received the vaccination or have applied for an accommodation e.g. religious or medical. She said all the homes are offering COVID-19 boosters to residents and staff.

Influenza

Barb explained, the BVHs is currently monitoring all the positive case and offering the vaccination.

Admissions

Barb said, the homes are doing very well, and across the six (6) homes there has been approximately one hundred and fifty-one (151) the past quarter; and the total census for the BVH is at nine hundred and thirty-nine (939).

Staffing

Barb echoed the General's comments of the BVH efforts to attract new nursing staff with media announcements. She mentioned, unfortunately the BVHs is not able to offer recruitment/ retention perks (sign-on bonuses) like other nursing facilities – but the DMVA/ BVH leadership is looking at other incentives to attract and retain staff.

Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes (Cont.)

BHVs Construction Projects

Barb said, there are thirty-two (32) construction projects that have been approved across the six (6) homes with no major setbacks. Barb said the Pittsburgh facility (SWVC) had infrastructure updates to Boilers and Chillers and the SEVC Adult Day Care project is on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Barb said the Erie facility (PA Soldiers' & Sailors' Home) dining, therapy and breakroom project and the New Community Living Center (CLC) at HVH is in good standing.

QCC for Director Barb Raymond

None received.

Beth Werner, BVH Compliance Officer from FTIG

Beth introduced herself and discussed her role as the Compliance Officer assigned to the HVH. She mentioned, as did Barb Raymond, all the homes are licensed thru the Department of Health (DOH) and her office's main goal is to ensure all the homes are in compliance with licensing requirements etc. thru the DOH.

Facility Performance Assessment (FPA)

Beth mentioned that her office recently completed a FTA at the Southeastern Veterans Center (SEVC) in Spring City and will be going to the Southwestern Veterans' Center (SWVC) in Pittsburgh next week, and then will be visiting the HVH in the near future. She mentioned the Compliance Office/ FTA team looks-at everything the DOH should/ would be looking at within a home to essentially provide a second set of eyes to ensure resident care and compliance with the DOH.

QCC for Director Beth Werner, BVH Compliance Officer from FTIG

None received.

Kim Vandevander, Admissions & Marketing Director

Admissions

Kim welcomed everyone and mentioned she has been employed at the HVH for twenty-one (21) years. Kim reported that since the last meeting on January 20, 2022, there has been:

36-New Admissions
7-Discharges
21-Deaths

Marketing

Kim said, she will be taking pictures of the HVHs nursing staff in their Remember Everyone Deployed (R.E.D) T-shirts to celebrate National Nurses' Week and the pictures will be uploaded to the DMVAs Facebook Page.

QCC for Kim Vandevander:

Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA, asked if the HVH has a waiting list and that he is constantly being asked [by veterans and their family members] if there is a expected time an applicate can receive an approval/ disapproval of their application. Kim explained, in most cases, the main drawback is not receiving all the necessary documents from the veteran. She continued, and said, as soon as she receives all the required documents the sooner she can submit the documents to the DMVA/ BVHs for eligibility – so, an exact timeline for

QCC for Kim Vandevander (Cont.):

a new admissions depends on the veteran/ family member. Kim noted, the HVH has admitted new veterans straight from the hospital based on their eligibility, documents received and the nursing needs of the veteran.

David Wagner praised the efforts of Chrissy Dambeck for attending a Veterans Information Meeting in October 2021 and providing valuable information about the HVH.

Final QCC for Kim Vandevander:

None received

Sam Dunkle, Commandant

Staffing

Referencing the "The Commandant's Report"

The Commandant discussed the resident Census Report, both Skilled Nursing and Personal Care, and the total vacancies at the home. The Commandant highlighted the new employees hired the past quarter, and echoed Director Raymond's comments, that it's challenging for the home to recruit new Nursing Staff with no financial incentives, especially during the pandemic.

Donations

The Commandant went over the donation report and emphasized the HVH receives a lot of support from Service Organization and the local community.

Commandant's Items of Interest

- COVID-19
 - Outbreak Weekly Testing Continues – Currently 3 Residents and 5 Staff are Positive.
- Vaccinations
 - 80% for Staff, 96% for Skilled Residents and 92% for Personal Care.
- Visitations
 - HVH opened slowly and is now open to visitations without restrictions after being closed for over one (1) year.
- Admissions
 - Admissions Committee meets every Wednesday Morning to review packets. The Commandant noted if there is a veteran/ applicant that needs immediate admissions attention and he/she meets the eligibility criteria...the Committee will not wait for the Wednesday.
- The Commandant discussed the plan to name the New Community Living Center (CLC) Daniel R. Lightner Hall – is moving forward
 - The paperwork was submitted thru Director Raymond to General Weigl.
 - The Commandant gave-out slides/ presented several photos of what the new CLC will look like and discussed the building in detail.
- Congressman John Joyce visited HVH in January 2022 – the visit went very well.
- The Commandant discussed the Land Sale of nearly 330 acres on campus – The Commandant said, to clarify the HVH facility is NOT for sale and the sale is not being conducted by the HVH leadership, but instead being conducted by DGS.
- The Commandant discussed the Eisenhower Hall, Front Entrance Tunnel and Pavilion Repair.

Sam Introduced Chissy Dambeck, Deputy Commandant

Chrissy introduced herself and said she began working for the DMVA as a Nursing Administrator (assigned to several homes) back in December 2020. She said, in November 2021 she applied to the Deputy Commandant's position and was awarded this opportunity. Chrissy said, it's a great pleasure being assigned to this position.

Chissy Dambeck, Deputy Commandant

Chrissy said, one (1) of her main initiatives [as Barb Raymond mentioned] is improving resident and staff morale. She said, three (3) months ago the DMVA/HVH started a voluntary Morale Employee Committee – an open forum that accepts suggestions and options. Chrissy mentioned, other simple initiatives such as the Employee Work Week Appriation (at HVH) e.g. Employee Birthday "Cup Caps".

QCC for Chissy Dambeck, Deputy Commandant

None received

Old Business:

None Comments received.

New Business

Goose Marin, Catholic War Vets, mentioned the new CLC at HVH is being named in memory of Daniel R. Lightner and he would like to see John Goridy, Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), and local hero to be recognized at HVH.

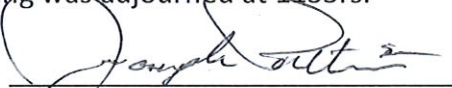
Announcements/ Good or the Council:

None Comments received.

Adjournment

Duffy reminded everyone the next Advisory Council Meeting will be on Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 1000hrs. Duffy asked if there is a motion for meeting adjournment ~ Ron Dawson, MacArthur Hall, Resident Representative gave the 1st move/ motion and Dave Wagner (DAV) seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 1135rs.



Joseph Patterson, Recorder

On July 21, 2022 approximately 10:10hrs, Duffy Hines asked every member if they had any question, comments or concerns regarding the Minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday, April 21, 2022. Duffy received no response from the members and he then stated, "the Minutes will be accepted as published".

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Peter Ojeda - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	141	100	84	16	41	84%	0	2	3	46	9
Memory Care	30	30	29	1	0	97%	5	0	2	19	9
Total	171	130	113	17	41	87%	5	2	5	65	18
Non-Veteran Census Percent						5%					
Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Kathleen Ambrose - Acting Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	156	156	106	50	0	68%	6	1	4	19	22
Memory Care	40	40	30	10	0	75%	2	1	1	4	4
Total	196	196	136	60	0	69%	8	2	5	23	26
Non-Veteran Census Percent						10%					
Holidaysburg Veterans' Home, Holidaysburg PA - Sam Dunkle - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	231	231	137	94	0	59%	6	1	6	4	1
Memory Care	26	26	15	11	0	58%	0	0	0	0	0
Personal Care	167	167	75	92	0	45%	1	0	0	1	1
Total	424	424	227	197	0	54%	7	1	6	5	2
Non-Veteran Census Percent						19%					
Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	75	75	59	16	0	79%	0	0	2	14	7
Memory Care	32	32	19	14	0	59%	0	0	0	6	3
Personal Care	100	100	50	51	0	50%	1	0	0	4	3
Total	207	207	128	81	0	62%	1	0	2	24	13
Non-Veteran Census Percent						11%					
Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	208	208	128	80	0	62%	9	1	4	16	14
Memory Care	30	30	30	0	0	100%	0	0	0	26	4
Personal Care	54	54	37	17	0	69%	3	0	0	4	1
Total	292	292	195	97	0	67%	12	1	4	46	19
Non-Veteran Census Percent						6%					
Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA - Richard Adams - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	196	196	111	85	0	57%	1	0	4	19	10
Memory Care	40	40	30	10	0	75%	0	0	1	1	4
Total	236	236	141	95	0	60%	1	0	5	20	14
Non-Veteran Census Percent						16%					
Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes											
Veteran Census/Events	Auth Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	1007	966	625	341	41	65%	22	5	23	118	63
Memory Care	198	198	153	46	0	77%	7	1	4	56	24
Personal Care	321	321	162	160	0	51%	5	0	0	9	5
Totals	1,526	1,485	940	547	41	63%	34	6	27	183	92
Veteran Status: Non-Veteran/Veteran	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)
Totals	110	7	12%	830	88%	787	794	103	43	146	940

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Peter Ojeda - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	141	100	89	11	41	89%	4	0	0	42	9
Memory Care	30	30	29	1	0	97%	2	1	0	18	9
Total	171	130	118	12	41	91%	6	1	0	60	18
Non-Veteran Census Percent						5%					
Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Vito Ruggiero - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	156	156	104	52	0	67%	8	2	8	8	21
Memory Care	40	40	28	12	0	70%	0	0	2	6	2
Total	196	196	132	64	0	67%	8	2	10	14	23
Non-Veteran Census Percent						11%					
Holidaysburg Veterans' Home, Holidaysburg PA - Sam Dunkle - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	231	231	135	96	0	59%	3	1	6	5	2
Memory Care	26	26	15	11	0	58%	0	0	0	3	1
Personal Care	167	167	75	92	0	45%	2	0	0	2	1
Total	424	424	225	199	0	53%	5	1	6	10	4
Non-Veteran Census Percent						18%					
Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	75	75	65	10	0	87%	0	0	1	17	9
Memory Care	32	32	13	19	0	41%	0	0	1	7	3
Personal Care	100	100	50	50	0	50%	2	0	0	5	3
Total	207	207	128	79	0	62%	2	0	2	29	15
Non-Veteran Census Percent						11%					
Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	208	208	131	77	0	63%	10	3	4	14	13
Memory Care	30	30	28	2	0	93%	0	0	2	27	5
Personal Care	54	54	35	19	0	65%	4	6	0	7	3
Total	292	292	194	98	0	67%	14	9	6	48	21
Non-Veteran Census Percent						7%					
Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA - Richard Adams - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	196	196	115	81	0	59%	5	1	1	14	11
Memory Care	40	40	29	11	0	73%	0	0	0	2	4
Total	236	236	144	92	0	61%	5	1	1	16	15
Non-Veteran Census Percent						15%					
Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes											
Veteran Census/Events	Auth Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	1007	966	639	327	41	66%	30	7	20	100	65
Memory Care	198	198	142	56	0	72%	2	1	5	63	24
Personal Care	321	321	160	161	0	50%	8	6	0	14	7
Totals	1,526	1,485	941	544	41	63%	40	14	25	177	96
Veteran Status: Non-Veteran/Veteran	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)
DVVH	6	0	5%	112	95%	111	111	6	1	7	118
GJMVC	15	2	11%	117	89%	113	115	13	4	17	132
HVH	41	2	18%	184	82%	172	174	39	12	51	225
PSSH	14	1	11%	114	89%	106	107	13	8	21	128
SEVC	14	1	7%	180	93%	169	170	13	11	24	194
SWVC	22	2	15%	122	85%	118	120	20	4	24	144
Totals	112	8	12%	829	88%	789	797	104	40	144	941

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Peter Ojeda - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	141	100	92	8	41	92%	6	1	2	49	10
Memory Care	30	30	29	1	0	97%	0	0	0	18	9
Total	171	130	121	9	41	93%	6	1	2	67	19
Non-Veteran Census Percent						5%					
Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Vito Ruggiero - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	156	156	103	53	0	66%	4	1	1	12	19
Memory Care	40	40	32	8	0	80%	3	0	2	2	2
Total	196	196	135	61	0	69%	7	1	3	14	21
Non-Veteran Census Percent						11%					
Holidaysburg Veterans' Home, Holidaysburg PA - Sam Dunkle - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	231	231	141	90	0	61%	9	0	2	8	2
Memory Care	26	26	18	8	0	69%	2	0	0	2	0
Personal Care	167	167	76	91	0	46%	1	0	0	0	1
Total	424	424	235	189	0	56%	12	0	2	10	3
Non-Veteran Census Percent						19%					
Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	75	75	65	10	0	87%	2	1	1	19	9
Memory Care	32	32	14	18	0	44%	0	0	0	7	3
Personal Care	100	100	51	49	0	51%	2	0	0	4	2
Total	207	207	130	77	0	63%	4	1	1	30	14
Non-Veteran Census Percent						12%					
Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	208	208	135	73	0	65%	3	1	4	14	12
Memory Care	30	30	20	10	0	67%	0	0	2	32	5
Personal Care	54	54	35	19	0	65%	1	1	0	10	4
Total	292	292	190	102	0	65%	4	2	6	56	21
Non-Veteran Census Percent						7%					
Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA - Richard Adams - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	196	196	110	86	0	56%	3	3	5	11	11
Memory Care	40	40	30	10	0	75%	1	0	0	2	4
Total	236	236	140	96	0	59%	4	3	5	13	15
Non-Veteran Census Percent						16%					
Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes											
Veteran Census/Events	Auth Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	1007	966	646	320	41	67%	27	7	15	113	63
Memory Care	198	198	143	55	0	72%	6	0	4	63	23
Personal Care	321	321	162	159	0	51%	4	1	0	14	7
Totals	1,526	1,485	951	534	41	64%	37	8	19	190	93
Veteran Status: Non-Veteran/Veteran	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)
DVVH	6	0	5%	115	95%	114	114	6	1	7	121
GJMVC	15	2	11%	120	89%	115	117	13	5	18	135
HVH	45	2	19%	190	81%	177	179	43	13	56	235
PSSH	15	1	12%	115	88%	107	108	14	8	22	130
SEVC	14	1	7%	176	93%	166	167	13	10	23	190
SWVC	22	2	16%	118	84%	114	116	20	4	24	140
Totals	117	8	12%	834	88%	793	801	109	41	150	951

Summary of Current Applications (Exempt)

Count	No Activity	Review Process Started	Review App Received	New Apps Pending
16154	15717	395	42	184

Summary of Activity from 05/21/2022 to 08/16/2022

Apps Created: 972	
New	597
Review:	375
Apps Approved: 914	
New	552
Review	362
Apps Denied (Financial Need)	120
Apps Denied (Ineligible)	51
Apps Removed from Exempt List (No Response)	96
Apps Removed from Exempt List (Eligibility Changed)	147

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.	6
The property for which you claim exemption is not owned solely by you, or as an estate by the entirety with your spouse.	12
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict.	15
You do not occupy the property for which you have claimed exemption as your principal dwelling.	1
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported the service member's death as a casualty while on active duty.	1
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.	16

Summary of Activity from 5/21/2022 to 8/16/2022

APPS APPROVED	914
NEW	552
REVIEW	362

APPS DENIED	414
Financial Need	120
Ineligible	51
No Response	96
Change of Eligibility	147

HH Over Income	111
NEW	54
REVIEW	57

12%
10%
16%

APPS CREATED	972
TOTAL ADJUDICATED	1328



Lehigh Valley Military Affairs Council

P.O. Box 22522, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-2522

Phone (484) 788-0196 Email info@lvmac.org Web www.lvmac.org

June 20, 2022

Mr. Nicholas Taylor, Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Building S-O-47, Ft. Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003

Via email: grholler@pa.gov

RE: State Veterans' Grave Registration Record System

Dear Mr. Taylor:

While addressing another issue, I ran across a question which I think needs resolving: does the state's Veterans' Grave Registration Record collection system managed by DMVA and the counties continue to serve a useful purpose? If it does, more management must be imposed to ensure proper compliance. Otherwise, the statute requirements should be amended to end the program as matter of good government. No reason for the requirement in statute law is obvious. Accordingly, we ask for the commission's involvement to bring the necessary attention to the matter, as minor as it might first appear.¹

An information paper is attached to provide background and details leading to this request.

The DMVA functions of collecting and specifying burial information currently affect no known state veterans benefits; and the department seems to no longer have the need of knowing "where the bodies lie" as perhaps it once did when building a state military cemetery was an issue in the early 1920's. County burial benefits are not affected by this requirement. And if the program had a continuing, necessary purpose, it would be more strictly managed. Since time and resources are normally at a premium, bureaucracies often have a practical streak in that attention is given to what is important, and the unimportant slides. Nevertheless, it is also an agency's duty to comply with the law or seek formal relief.

Therefore, we ask for a review of the state's burial (war) records requirement. While our original concern involved the protection of privacy, one must seriously question the current, operational value of this program. Again, what purpose does it now serve; and should it be done away with in law?

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard J. Hudzinski'.

Richard J. Hudzinski
Chair of Programs Committee, LVMAC

Attachment:
as stated

cc:

Mr. Gerald Still, President, Lehigh Valley Military Affairs Council
BG(PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, DMVA
Mr. Larry Googins, Chairman, Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings Committee, SVC

¹ [51 Pa.C.S. 1704 \(2\) and \(3\)](#)



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Information Paper

20 June 2022

1. **Issue:** What is the situation on the compilation of burial/war records at state and county level?

2. **Facts:**

a. **Background:** The information below defines the most essential elements of the system in law, as best we can determine:

- 1) The Deputy Adjutant General of Veterans Affairs, under statute law², is required to "... compile from the records transmitted from the various counties of this Commonwealth a record of the burial places in this Commonwealth of deceased veterans, including such information as the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs or his designee deems necessary and appropriate."
- 2) County Commissioners, under Section 1923-A ("Compilation of war records") of the County Code of 1955³:

... are authorized and directed, at the expense of the county, to compile a record of the interment sites within the county of deceased servicepersons and all other veterans. Records, so far as practicable, shall indicate the name of each deceased serviceperson, the service in which the person was engaged, the number of the regiment, company or command, the rank and period of service, the name and location of the cemetery or other place in which the person's body is interred, the location of the grave in a cemetery or other place and the character of headstone or other marker, if any, at the grave. The record shall be known as the Veterans' Grave Registration Record of County, and shall be a public record, open to inspection during business hours ..."
- 3) Furthermore, the county commissioners are required to ensure that "... record blanks are prepared, according to forms prescribed by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs ..."⁴
- 4) The same section stipulates that county directors of veterans affairs are required to "... [c]ompile and maintain war records and records of interment sites of deceased servicepersons in accordance with the provisions of this subdivision." Note that it does not mention veterans, only servicepersons.⁵

b. **Observation #1:** The current system has some management issues, among them:

- 1) Additional sensitive information, not specified by statute, is sometimes added to county burial cards – which are public records as cited above.

² [51 Pa.C.S. 1712 \(12\)](#)

³ [Article XIX-A, County Code of 1955, as amended, Sec 1923-A\(a\)](#)

⁴ [Article XIX-A, County Code of 1955, as amended, Sec 1923-A\(b\)](#)

⁵ [Article XIX-A, County Code of 1955, as amended, Sec 1923-A\(b\)\(2\) and \(3\)](#)

- 2) The DMVA has added a requirement to include the social security number in its latest reporting form (MA-VA 95), creating a privacy issue because county cards are to be formatted from DMVA guidance.
 - 3) Some county directors collect the information, while others do not. Paradoxically, all collect the essential elements of the burial card when applications are made for county burial benefits, a separate subject with separate requirements under the same code (some continue to cite a nonexistent General County Code of 1929 as their authority).
 - 4) The repeated introduction of HB 164 suggests there is a problem with compliance, although the concern is related to obtaining burial benefits and not the obtaining of burial records.⁶
 - 5) The following provision of the county code is unlikely enforced: "... A person, firm, association or corporation, except municipal corporations, that refuses or neglects to fill out and transmit to the county commissioners the blanks or forms within six months after receipt of the blanks or forms is guilty of a summary offense and, upon conviction, shall be sentenced to pay a fine of \$100."⁷
 - 6) Not all counties submit the required information to DMVA (and it has been rumored that DMVA does nothing with the submissions which has led some counties to cease submitting).
 - 7) No Pennsylvania Code instructions for the administration of the program exist, unlike with other longstanding programs.⁸ (Possibly, a policy letter does exist.)
 - 8) The specific requirement is not addressed at DMVA in its annual county director trainings.
- c. Observation #2:** Obtaining a veteran status and recording his/her death and interment location are not the problems they once were. Incomplete as any of these recordkeeping systems are, they are mostly automated for data filtering and could provide the elements of essential information better if a system were organized:
- 1) The Department of Defense now forwards electronically a copy of the DD Form 214 of every separating servicemember to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (at the servicemember's election) and the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Labor. DMVA's own electronic records go back as far as 1992 – without further effort.
 - 2) Separating servicemembers have been encouraged for years to file a copy of their DD Form 214 with the county clerk.
 - 3) The VA records all interments (in private cemeteries, when plaques or markers are requested of it) and publishes public record information on its National Gravesite Locator⁹. It can also access to the "Social Security Death Index"¹⁰.
 - 4) The Pennsylvania Office of Vital Records, Department of Health, probably has the most complete death records, although proof of tangible need is required to obtain them for a number of years. Within government and for research purposes, the criterion differs. Nevertheless, a record exists of a veteran's death.

3. Key Point: Ironically, does any of this matter if the requirement no longer serves a purpose?

⁶ [HB 164, proposed](#)

⁷ [Article XIX-A, County Code of 1955, as amended, Sec 1923-A\(d\)](#)

⁸ [Title 43, PA Code](#)

⁹ <https://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/ngl/index.jsp>

¹⁰ https://www.ssa.gov/dataexchange/request_dmf.html



TO Lehigh Valley Military Affairs Council, ATTN: Richard J. Hudzinski,
Chairman of Programs Committee, P.O. Box 22522, Lehigh Valley,
PA 18002-2500

FROM Nicholas M. Taylor
Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

DATE 12 July 2022

RE State Veterans' Grave Registration Record System

The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to your memorandum, dated 20 June 2022, subject as above.

The State Veterans Commission's (SVC's) general powers and duties are to "advise The Adjutant General and the Department on all matters pertaining to the status, welfare, benefits, employment and support of veterans and veterans' programs in this Commonwealth and shall perform such other functions as are provided by law." The SVC does not have a specific power or duty that grants it investigatory or oversight authority regarding the Department's statutory duty to compile a record of burial place of deceased Veterans.

However, I have discussed this matter with senior staff within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA). In short, burial records are received from the counties on a routine basis that are then filed alphabetically by county and retained for a period of one year by DMVA prior to being sent to the Pennsylvania State Archives. The Pennsylvania State Archives has a partnership with Ancestry.com to digitize family history records (to include these burial records) and makes them available online. As a result, the Department's collection of this information serves a state historical preservation purpose that benefits the families of Veterans and future generations of Pennsylvanians.

I appreciate you bringing this matter to the attention of the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission.


NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
Chairman
Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission