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DVS Transition & Employment POC Report

The Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) Directorate of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services ensures that every Veteran or eligible person has a full and fair opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential through access to G.I. Bill-approved post-secondary education, training/licensure/certifications, career preparation, and workforce entry services.

Within VETE, the Transition and Employment (T&E) programs and initiatives include:

- The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program
- Virginia's Women Veterans Program (VWVP)
- The Virginia Military Spouse Liaison (MSL)
- The Military Medics and Corpsmen Program (MMAC)

Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?

The V3 Program's transition clients include transitioning service members (TSMs), veterans, military spouses, dependents, and caregivers. Moreover, partners include state/local/federal partners, veteran service organizations, and military installations. The employment clients include private sector businesses, public sector employers, non-profits, vocational facilities, higher education institutions, economic development stakeholders, and more.

VWVP clients include women veterans, advocacy organizations, networking groups, and community partners.

MSL clients comprises of military spouses, state/federal partners, interstate compacts, advocacy organizations, and networking groups.

MMAC clients include TSMs, veterans, and military spouses with prior healthcare employment/service experience. In addition, MMAC works closely with Partner Healthcare Systems (PHS), which include hospitals, clinical care centers, V3 Certified Employers, and facilities that hire for various types of healthcare positions.

What are the service line's primary objectives?

The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program is a dual-functioning workforce development program. Clients receive peer-to-peer transition support and transition, training, entrepreneurship, and employment assistance. Employers receive free training and state certification to implement nationally

recognized best practices in recruiting, hiring, and retaining highly skilled and dependable veterans, military spouses, and dependents.

Virginia's Women Veterans Program (VWVP) provides access to community resources to educate, unify, and empower Virginia's women veterans who have served in the military in all eras by ensuring they receive timely yet appropriate transition and benefits support/ employment and education outreach, health and community advocacy.

The Virginia Military Spouse Liaison (VMSL) serves as the Commonwealth's military spouse advocate. The liaison conducts outreach and provides advocacy for military spouses and their families. The liaison also works with key stakeholders within federal, state, local government, military installations, and the private sector to develop and implement a resource system to provide access to licensure reciprocity, employment, benefits, childcare, and community resources.

The Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program recruits, reviews, and refers candidates to healthcare employers statewide. The hiring decisions and scope of practice are up to the employers. Veterans or transitioning Combat Medic/68W, Corpman, or Medical Technician/4NOX who have practiced hands-on clinical care for less than 12 months may continue to practice their clinical skills without the required civilian healthcare credentials.

What are the key results / accomplishments from the past fiscal year in support of the primary objectives?

Within the past fiscal year, the V3 Program has expended the entire \$100,000 V3 Grant allocation provided by the Virginia Assembly. This afforded each approved small business \$1,000 per veteran hired. Additionally, the program successfully launched a newly established partnership with American Corporate Partners (ACP) for mentorship services and the U.S. Chamber Foundation for military spouse employment. The V3 Program grew by approximately 844 newly certified employers. Our reports indicate that 19,367 veterans, 3,993 women veterans, and 2,034 military spouses were hired by V3 Certified Employers in the Commonwealth during 2023.

The VWVP has focused the last fiscal year on outreach and has successfully launched Women Veteran's Week, which included the annual Women Veteran Pinning Ceremony with over 200 attendees. In addition, the VWVP partnered with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to establish a new Virginia Women Veteran license plate.

From the beginning of 2023 to June 12, 2024, MMAC has successfully assisted over 167 TSMs, veterans, and military spouses in achieving healthcare employment within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The program has also assisted over 715 service members, veterans, and military spouses with healthcare employment.

What trends are you seeing from data pertaining to your service line?

Data for the V3 Program confirms that our clients seek a direct connection to each other and prolonged engagement with V3 staff (Transition Resource Coordinators and Military Spouse/Dependent Resource Coordinators). When clients were surveyed about current services, they indicated a need for additional opportunities for the following services:

- Hands-on resume writing assistance
- Job placement assistance
- V3 Hiring Events
- V3 Networking Events
- One-on-One Career Coaching

The V3 program also surveyed employers and found that the feedback was similar to transitioning service members requests for additional services and support for access to job vacancies. Employers were interested in trainings to help their organizations learn more about recruiting and marketing to military job seekers, participation in virtual events, and the ability to receive resumes from military job seekers.

The Military Spouse Liaison identified that Virginia reports focused on childcare do not have a military family component. This is a missed opportunity as the Department of Defense is a large part of the Virginia economy and military families are forced to look into childcare providers in the community due to the 2+ year long waitlists for the installation child development centers. Community providers are also not required to participate in the military fee assistance which adds another challenge for military families to find affordable childcare options. This contributes to Military spouse unemployment which is estimated to be at 21-24% and continues to be a major factor for military families being financially stable. This impacts the success of the transitioning service member to veteran status and making the decision to stay in Virginia post-military career. Unfortunately, states are not able to track unemployment rates for military spouses because it is not a mandated data point tracked by all states through the Department of Labor, unlike Veteran data. Coupled with job placement, spouses re-entering the workforce that need to reinstate an expired professional license experience challenges. This process is not as simple as licensure reciprocity with an active license transferring to Virginia, and is dependent on the previous state license held and how much time has passed. With each state having different requirements, every situation is on a case-by-case basis.

MMAC has also seen a significant need for more resources to provide certifications/licensure outside of secondary education options, forcing service members to use their GI Bill or out-of-pocket expenses.

What type of outreach did the service line conduct and what are the results?

The V3 Program conducts outreach to transitioning service members monthly to distribute a Welcome Home letter and directly regarding DVS services. As a result, the agency has contacted thousands of service members and their spouses. Moreover, the V3 Program joined forces with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce to host Hire Vets Now hiring and networking events. Approximately thirty V3 Certified Employers network monthly and present their current job vacancies with 75-100 service members and spouses. To date, the V3 Program has over 3,500 certified employers that have hired over 142,000 veterans.

The VWVP program recently hired new staff earlier this year who has already conducted several outreach events. They include:

- The Virginia Women Veteran Week Capstone Event, which results in over 200 women veterans in attendance.
- Employment Workshop with Fort Gregg-Adams Women War Memorial and the Army Women Museum. 50+ women veterans in attendance.
- Women Veteran Virtual Roundtable focusing on Housing Stability, 25 women veterans in attendance.
- Women Veteran Supporters License Plate unveiling after meeting General Assembly requirements to recruit paid applicants to establish a new license plate in Virginia.

The Virginia Military Spouse Liaison (VMSL) participated on a panel discussion at the November Association of Defense Communities (ADC) Installation Innovation Forum in Orlando, FL with Washington State Military Spouse Liaison and Alabama Military Family Liaison. The panel discussion focused on accomplishments within the role of serving as state military spouse liaisons, best practices for starting similar positions within other states, and collaborations with the military installations. Approximately 70 guests were in attendance. The VMSL also participated in a virtual panel discussion with Crucial Convos. The theme was Advocates of Change: Part 2 moderated by Sharene Brown, Five and Thrive Co-Founder and Spouse of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. This panel discussion was focused on military spouses as it pertains to advocating for the military spouse population within our respective areas. The VMSL addressed how other states can bring similar positions to their state and best practices for advocating for the military spouse community. Approximately 47 participants attended. The VMSL also regularly attends events on installations across the state for awareness and advocacy.

MMAC was the first program of its kind in the nation. The team has served as a subject matter resource to other states aspiring to develop similar programs. In addition, MMAC facilitates virtual and in-person hiring events and presentations to communicate the program's mission and vision. Additionally, the hiring events provide an opportunity to connect our military talent with healthcare providers seeking to fill various levels of positions.

What, if any, new initiatives / innovative solutions were launched during the past year?

The V3 Program focused on increasing the number of V3 Certified Employers, developing memorandums of understanding with strategic stakeholders and increasing the number of staff dedicated to providing employment and transition support. This fiscal year, the team intends to utilize the feedback received from clients surveyed to develop a more comprehensive transition services catalogue.

VDVS became a partner with the Department of Defense Military Spouse Employment Partner (MSEP) program in February 2024 and is only the second Virginia state agency participating in this free federal program centered on hiring military spouses. The program allows the DVS Human Resources department the ability to post position vacancies, search for potential candidates, and track military spouse hires through their platform. As a vetted DoD organization, the Liaison is now a member of the

DoD Spouse Ambassador Network which meets quarterly to discuss initiatives, resources, and advocacy for military spouses.

MMAC is working with the Virginia Community College System to develop a more accessible route for service members to achieve their nursing licenses within the state.

What are the biggest challenges facing the service area / program at present?

The biggest challenges facing the V3 Program are:

- Tangible return on investment for employers
- Lack of access to the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program
- Inefficient relationships with military installations to foster pre-TAP opportunities

To bridge the gap, the V3 Program must identify and facilitate opportunities with service members and their families at the earliest time while in service. Historically, access to participate in and receive a roster from DOD-approved TAP programs has been limited. As a result, our program has to be creative about finding avenues to present information about our agency and reach potential clients.

The VWVP had limited staff and resources in FY23. The biggest challenge for the program is reinstating partnerships and initiatives with newly hired staff and program leadership.

The VMSL has identified that there is a lack of data due to most data coming from surveys since "military spouse" is not a federally tracked demographic.

The biggest challenge with MMAC is the limited scope of the type of healthcare jobs that can be considered MMAC qualified and the inability to help candidates just shy of meeting legislative parameters from working with Partner Healthcare Systems. Current legislation provides pathways for roles related to entry-level nursing. MMAC can increase effectiveness by supporting career development for healthcare fields that require a form of certification or licensure in order to be employed. If this pathway is provided, the program will be able to increase the number of MMAC-Qualified candidates for roles that are technician-like. Examples include phlebotomists, radiation technicians, pharmacy technicians, dental hygienists, etc. Moreover, in order to become MMAC Qualified candidates must have documented hands on experience meeting a set number of technical skills within the last twelve months of their service. If a candidate falls short by a few metrics, the MMAC program would like the ability to work with partners to provide training to ensure that the candidate obtains hands on application to meet the threshold.

How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

All programs under Transition and Employment (T&E) within the Virginia Department of Veterans Services aid Virginia Veterans by providing niche support to address their needs. The T&E team provides tailored support to individuals at any stage of "transition" in life. Whether the individual is transitioning out of service, transitioning to attend a vocational or higher education program, transitioning to full-

time employment, transitioning to start a business, or transitioning to retirement- we have the tools to guide and support that individual.

Virginia is home to over 180,000 women veterans. Women veterans face unique and specific challenges related to transition, community, etc. The Virginia Women Veteran Program pledges to be the front-line service to women veterans. A program that is highlighted and tailored to meet the needs of women veterans allow for women to feel at ease and most importantly, safe about expressing their concerns and needs.

By helping the military spouse, it increases the support for the service member/Veteran before, during, and after the transition to the post-military lifestyle. It also allows an earlier connection to the agency to help make that transition as smooth as possible when that time comes.

MMAC has benefited service members wanting to transition from military medicine to civilian sector employment, providing hospitals with dependable, reliable, and educated employees to fill open positions.

By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

The V3 Program provides specialized support to help clients reach their fullest potential, increasing the likelihood that they will remain in Virginia. Having more residents within the Commonwealth strengthens our sense of community, culture, workforce, and economic development.

The VWVP creates a smooth transition back into our communities, workforce, school systems, government, etc. Successfully reintegrating women veterans into their home communities proves extremely difficult, as female veterans often face systems that remain primarily male-centered in their service delivery for historical and societal reasons. Although women have served in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War, it wasn't until 1988 that the VA began offering medical and mental health services to female veterans. That exclusion is still being felt today. This service area is crucial and has the potential to be the face of the Virginia Women Veteran.

Military spouses give back to the economy through the workforce, mission readiness of the service member, and military/Veteran community. If military spouses feel supported, then the service member can focus on mission readiness which also brings federal money to the state. (For example: Langley Air Force Base scoring high on their scorecard due to community resources, schools, etc. to be the installation of choice to move the 800+ service members and aircraft from Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.)

The Commonwealth benefits from maintaining the MMAC program. It allows us to work with organizations that commit to hiring veterans for healthcare positions because medical service members have the experience and education needed to fill the positions around the Commonwealth.

What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

The V3 Program seeks to expand our services to provide workforce pathways for military dependents in addition to the above-mentioned ideas. Our current strategic plan includes support for entrepreneurship, establishing a wide range training catalog, increasing tangible return on investment for all clients, creating a workflow for opportunity matching for job seekers, and homing in building meaningful relationships with veteran clients.

The VWVP will continue to expand our footprint and brand throughout the Commonwealth by fostering partnerships with other Community-Based Organizations, stakeholders, state and government agencies, and the veteran community. Our goal is to operationalize the agency's strategic plan goals and relaunch a program that provides assistance offerings based on statistical data, documented client needs, and opportunities to offer cohesive wrap-around services to women veterans.

The VMSL will document client needs and serve as an advocate for comprehensive spousal support wrap around services that will allow for an easier transition of the military affiliated family.

The MMAC program plans to define and promote healthcare pathways with V3 Certified Employers that transitioning service members and veterans can leverage for employment. In addition, MMAC will support that effort by working with Partner Healthcare Systems (PHS) to establish Healthcare SkillBridge opportunities and identify licensure and certification pathways.

What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

The team is committed to making Virginia the best place for military families to work, thrive and raise a family. We intent do continue evaluating our services and outcomes for continual improvement and service to Virginia's veterans.