



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

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Commissioner

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Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) Operations Update for the Joint Leadership Council

July 14, 2022

VDVS remains steadfast in service to Virginia's veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. With funding in the approved budget, we are able to enhance and strengthen services across the Commonwealth, to include greater capacity within our service lines to reach more veterans. We are creating new opportunities within our Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program to enhance veteran employment with V3 certified companies. We are also excited for the new Suicide Prevention program, and our two new veteran's care centers opening later this year.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) will be implementing the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline on July 16, 2022. VDVS will participate as a partner to promote the 9-8-8 line on the July 20th "Digital Day of Action" focused on informing criminal justice stakeholders about the opportunities this new dialing code presents.

Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program staff continues to expand in-person outreach and community training opportunities to reach Service Members, Veterans, and families in need of behavioral health, rehabilitative and supportive services. In June 2022, staff assisted 100 new clients compared to 94 new clients in June 2021. The total number of clients (including new and existing clients) served was also higher in June 2022 (369) compared to June 2021 (343). The number of returning clients in the last year is higher than pre-pandemic years and many of them have increasingly complex service needs.

In June 2022, veterans and families needed assistance with resource connections for housing needs (42%), behavioral health support (13%), benefits assistance (9%), employment (10%), and homeless assistance (10%). Together VVFS and Benefits staff screened 1,063 veterans and family members for suicide risk. Among those screened, 13 individuals screened at medium or high risk for suicide and received critical behavioral health support. To enhance internal agency and community capacity for suicide prevention, VVFS will recruit a new Suicide Prevention Director position this month. This new leadership position will enhance internal and community staff training (i.e. suicide prevention/risk screening and lethal means safety) and direct services delivery; Federal, State, and local stakeholder engagement; and research and data coordination. VVFS will also recruit for a new Housing and Criminal Justice Services Coordinator position to increase internal agency and community capacity to serve

vulnerable veterans and families coping with housing instability and homelessness and navigating the criminal justice services system.

The Benefits team continues to see Virginia veterans at a steady pace. 1,888 Compensation & Pension claims were submitted in the month of June through 4,300 in-person appointments and walk-in services.

Benefits Appeals Attorney and 2 VSRs partnered with the Attorney General's office to provide a Wills Clinic for 20 veterans in the tidewater region. This partnership provided veterans with free legal service for power of attorneys, wills and advance directives. Benefits continue to increase outreach and partnerships with military installations to ensure we are available to process claims and referrals to all transitioning service members.

The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) and V3 Transition Programs, working closely with the Virginia Chamber, embarked on a robust Hire Vets Now (HVN) Networking Event calendar in 2022. We had 1,028 service member and military spouse attendees over 12 networking events spanning five different military installations. The attendees were able to network with a total of 271 Virginia Values Veterans Certified employers as well as other strategic partners and resource providers. V3 Transition Coordinators and V3 Regional Program Managers attend all events to ensure quality customer service to service members and military spouses as well as our V3 Certified Employers.

The Military Medics and Corpsmen Program (MMAC) assisted 119 Veterans and 5 military spouses with obtaining healthcare related employment in the Commonwealth in FY22, setting a new fiscal year hiring record for MMAC. The program also added three new MMAC Partner Health Systems – The National Neuropathy Center, Kaiser Permanente and Velocity Health.

Between January 1 and July 8, 2022, The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) processed 4,662 applications, a 90 percent increase compared to the 2,460 applications processed during the same time in 2021. The VMSDEP Staff processed all applications in FY22 within 10 calendar days, which is 35 calendar days sooner than applications processed in FY21. The 10-calendar-days processing time frame for applications was accomplished while maintaining one business day response time frame for voicemails and emails, ensuring callers were able to speak with a representative at the time of call.

Military Education & Workforce Initiative (MEWI) partnered with the Veterans Services Foundation, Tech 4 Troops, and Altria Group to provide 50 refurbished laptops to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). MEWI will host the Virginia Military Student Veteran Manufacturing Summit, its first sector strategy event on November 4, 2022, at the William H Tally Workforce Center, located at John Tyler Community College. The Virginia Chamber Foundation, Community College Workforce Alliance, and Virginia Employment Commission are partners for the event.

The Military Spouse Liaison conducted outreach and advocacy on behalf of military spouses and families in the Commonwealth. In June, the Liaison organized a Virginia working group consisting of military spouses and veterans that are leaders in their military-affiliated organizations. All service branches and sponsor statuses were represented. The group created ideas for potential initiatives and

legislation to ease the burdens our military families face when it comes to military family mental health and wellness, military child care and education, and military spouse employment. She is continuing to collaborate with Blue Star Families (BSF) to be the first state to bring the BSF Welcome Week Campaign statewide to include Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Ft. Lee in welcoming military families to those areas this fall.

The Administrators for the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center in Virginia Beach and the Puller Veterans Care Center in Fauquier County are both now on board, and we have begun hiring the senior leadership teams for both centers. Positions are posted on the state job website: [Jobs.Virginia.Gov](https://www.jobs.virginia.gov). We are targeting "Month 1" (first resident) in late 2022 for Virginia Beach and early 2023 in Fauquier County. We will be holding community open houses prior to opening - look for announcements from us in the coming months.

Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears was the keynote speaker at the Commonwealth's Memorial Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial. Over 1,200 people attended in-person and more than 60,000 watched on CBS TV-6 or livestream. The Virginia War Memorial is already planning for the Commonwealth's Patriot Day Ceremony on Monday, September 12 and the Commonwealth's Veterans Day Ceremony on Friday, November 11. Please plan to join us at both ceremonies. The Veterans Day ceremony will be broadcast and livestreamed.

DVS conducted an interment at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk on Monday, April 25, 2022 for CMCN David A. Corona, who was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy Reserve in 1996 after serving for eight years. It was the first interment since the signing of the federal Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act into law on March 15, 2022. The new law authorizes state veterans cemeteries to provide an honored final resting place to former Guardsmen and Reservists who may not have previously qualified for interment at a veterans cemetery because they did not meet the minimum active duty service time. With the interment of CMCN Corona on April 25, Virginia became the first state in the Nation to bury a former reserve component service member under the new eligibility standards. Under its new Special Category Interment Program (SCIP), DVS will offer three interment options for former Guardsmen, Reservists, and eligible family members: in-ground casketed burial, in-ground cremated burial, and above-ground cremated burial (in a columbarium niche). SCIP fees are \$2,000 for casketed burials and \$1,700 for cremated burials. These fees include the burial plot or columbarium niche, a headstone or niche cover, an outer burial receptacle for caskets, opening and closing of the grave, a place to conduct a committal service, and perpetual care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan. Gade", written in a cursive style.

Daniel Gade, PhD.