



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 Board of Veterans Services

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the activities of the Department of Veterans Services. We have many successes to report, and many opportunities on the horizon.

A major initiative this year was the rollout of the “Gold Standard Digital Hub”. UniteUs was chosen in a competitive bidding process to provide the initial, pilot version of the hub. Our initial fielding shows that the hub provides a unique new tool to connect veterans and their families to resources; we are still building out capacity across other service lines, but the VVFS service line is operational on the hub. VVFS services fit well on the UU platform which specializes in connecting individuals and families to statewide resources for social care needs. Veterans can request services by clicking on [link] on our website.

Our new scheduling application is also live on our website. The previous method for getting an appointment with DVS was both inefficient and ineffective, literally requiring 4-5 emails and several phone calls. The new system simply requires a few mouse clicks, and is currently available on our website as well: [VESA \(virginia.gov\)](https://vsa.virginia.gov)

VVFS team is building a new grant program for Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS). The SOS team is led by Dr. Angela Porter and consists of four current team members (two Grant Administrators and one Ops Manager) and recruiting for a final Suicide Prevention Coordinator position. The SOS team launched two rounds of community grants to enhance suicide prevention and opioid addiction services among military-connected individuals and families in February and March. Both rounds of applications (30 complete applications) are being evaluated. The first two rounds of funding awards should be finalized by the end of May. The SOS team also launched a call for research proposals which will be implemented with Memorandums of Agreement with Higher Education institutions. Research proposals are due in mid-May.

Since January 2023, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, to include V3 Transition, worked closely with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce to host two Hire Vets Now (HVN) networking events. One event was held at Fort Eustis and the other was held on Naval Air Station Oceana. Both events had approximately 100 service members and military spouses present to engage with over 25 V3 Certified

Employers and five resource providers. The V3 Transition Coordinators, V3 Military Spouse and Dependent Employment Specialist provided customer service, along with VDVS service lines such as the Military Medics and Corpsman Program and the Education Directorate.

VDVS Benefits is driving a new initiative to reach more transitioning military members and their families through Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and other associated transitioning programs. We are taking a dual pronged approach to integrate with military members transitioning to reserve and/or retire status. Our primary goal is to provide a 30-minute brief to all TAP participants.

The VDVS Director of Research Development and Partnerships is working with the Office of Data Governance and Analytics (ODGA) to maintain a veterans contact list for the Commonwealth to integrate with services and develop a tracking method to identify veteran's needs. We received new contact information for over 550k veterans; our next step is a major marketing and outreach push to let these veterans know about the services the Commonwealth provides for them.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) awarded DVS two grants, totaling \$3.5M, to add additional columbarium niches at the Amelia and Dublin state veterans cemeteries. Construction is underway on both projects, part of the phased expansion of both cemeteries. We expect final VA approval of a similar project at the Suffolk cemetery later this year.

We are ever closer to the "soft opening" of the Puller Veterans Care Center in Fauquier County and the Jones and Cabacoy Veterans Care Center in Virginia Beach. Please plan on joining us for the grand openings of those new care centers on 10 and 11 November, respectively.

Sincerely,

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

Daniel Gade, PhD.