

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes June 22, 2023

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on June 22, 2023 at the American Legion Building in Richmond

Members Present

- Carl Bedell
- Joe Campa
- Mike Cherry
- Michael Dick
- Mario Flores
- Buddy Fowler
- Joyce Henderson
- Jamie Inman
- Carlton Kent
- Thurraya Kent
- John Lesinski
- Terrence McKnight
- Matthew Miller
- Kathy Owens
- Bryce Reeves
- Melissa Watts
- Denice Williams, Chair, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
- Paul Houghton, Chair, Veterans Services Foundation
- Daniel Gade, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
- Pam Seay, President, Virginia War Memorial Foundation

Members Attending Virtually

- David Ashe

Members Absent

- Victor Angry
- Jason Ballard
- John Bell
- Mamie Locke
- Kathleen Murphy

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Craig Crenshaw, Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Jordan Stewart, Assistant Secretary
- Steve Combs, VDVS
- Claudia Flores, VDVS

- Ravi Padma, VDVS
- Brandi Jancaitis, VDVS
- Michele Crone, VDVS
- Brian Wolford, VDVS
- Montwrace Cunningham, VDVS
- Patrice Jones, VDVS
- Glendalynn Glover, VDVS
- Jayla Plymouth, VDVS

Members of the Public

- Bronte Montgomery, National Bar Association
- Jimmie Fedrick, VSU
- Jack Lanier, VSF
- Mike Coleman, VSF
- Tim Pillion, VSF

Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet (sent via e-mail and posted on BVS webpage)

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes of the April 27, 2023 meeting
- VDVS Operational Update
- JLC Report
- VSF Report
- VWM Report

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Michael Dick called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Chairman Dick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call, Introduction of Members, and Quorum Determination

The roll call determined that there were 14 of 25 members present at the meeting site, and a quorum was established. One member attended the meeting virtually (as noted above) citing Electronic Member Participation Permission #3: Principal residence is more than 60 miles distance from the meeting location. Chairman Dick asked if there were any objections to allowing the virtual members to participate. No objection noted.

Approval of Agenda and April 27, 2022 Draft Minutes (See Attachment 1)

Chairman Dick made a **motion, seconded by** Buddy Fowler to approve the April 27, 2023 draft agenda. The motion carried by unanimous consent.

Chairman Dick asked for a motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the April 27, 2023 meeting. Mike Cherry made a **motion, seconded by** Buddy Fowler. The motion carried by unanimous consent.

Introduction of VDVS staff and guests

Commissioner Gade recognized DVS staff.

Update on current VDVS operational status *(See Attachment 2)*

VDVS Commissioner Gade provided an operational update on the strategic planning working group progress. Commissioner Gade also provided an update on the agency's veteran data effort to identify all of Virginia's veterans. He further noted DVS' outreach efforts to smaller subsets of veteran data and a major outreach effort over the next few months to increase awareness of DVS programs.

Chairman Dick asked about the strategic planning timeline and Commissioner Gade responded that the final report is due before the 2024 General Assembly session.

Chairman Dick asked for an update on the Care Center openings. Commissioner Gade responded that the Puller Care Center should have their first resident by the soft opening planned for November and the grand opening of Jones & Cabacoy is planned for Veteran's Day.

Point of Contact Reports – written reports attached as noted below:

Behavioral Health and Rehabilitative Services *(See Attachment 3)*

David Ashe, Carlton Kent, Mike Cherry

Mr. Ashe presented the POC report on Behavioral Health and Rehabilitative services noted paragraphs 5 and 6 of the written report. Mr. Ashe reported the Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) staff is attuned to the established metrics for the service line's efforts. Mr. Kent recognized the Director of VVFS, Brandi Jancaitis for her leadership and Delegate Cherry reported that VVFS is hitting established benchmarks.

Chairman Dick recognized Secretary Craig Crenshaw. Secretary Crenshaw thanked the Board for all their work and effort on behalf of Virginia's veterans.

Benefits *(See Attachment 4)*

Carl Bedell, Jamie Inman, Carlton Kent

Mr. Bedell presented the POC report on Benefits and noted the new Benefits Director is Michele Crone. Mr. Bedell discussed recruitment and retention within the Benefits service line. He also noted the increased number of contacts and new veteran service organization relationships. He highlighted the online scheduling platform.

Chairman Dick asked about the regional Facebook pages and asked about the traffic on those pages.

Mr. McKnight reported a 20% increase.

Commissioner Gade commented on the effort to get DVS as a state agency into Transition Assistance Program classes to brief service members.

Communications *(See Attachment 5)*

Terry McKnight, Melissa Watts

Terry McKnight provided the Communications report and noted current resources, a campaign to update the DVS website and the monthly eNews.

Commissioner Gade noted a multi-phased outreach campaign. Ms. Kent suggested BVS members consider writing op-ed pieces as an outreach strategy.

Joint Leadership Council Report *(See Attachment 6)*

JLC Chair Denise Williams reported that the Council is working on the 2024 legislative proposals and noted her term completion as Chair of the JLC on June 30, 2023.

Veterans Services Foundation Report *(See Attachment 7)*

VSF Chair Paul Haughton introduced the VSF members in attendance during the BVS meeting and that VSF is working with the BVS POCs to better understand DVS service line efforts.

Virginia War Memorial Foundation Report *(See Attachment 8)*

Pam Seay reported that the War Memorial Foundation has opportunities for non-veterans to learn more about veteran challenges. Ms. Seay noted the Mighty Pen Project and that the documentary titled 'One week in October' pertaining to Beirut will air on October 25th and will be broadcast on all PBS stations throughout Virginia.

CDC Steve Combs provided an update on the Virginia War Memorial Carillon project.

New Business

Joyce Henderson provided an overview of proposed changes to the BVS Bylaws. The recommendations will be provided to BVS members with a planned vote during the September 2023 meeting.

Good of the Order Reports

John Lesinski recognized the DVS staff at the Front Royal Office Thanked the Secretary and Senator Reeves for visiting Hero's Bridge in Warrenton.

Joyce Henderson noted the Arlington Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and the Women Veteran pinning event.

Public Comment

Mike Coleman from the VSF Finance Committee noted financial need and donations received.

Ms. Bronte Montgomery, U.S. Army retired noted a veteran's benefits seminal collaborative for underrepresented communities

Wrap Up & Adjournment

Chairman Dick adjourned the meeting at 1150.

ATTACHMENT 1

**June 22, 2023
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**American Legion Building
1708 Commonwealth Avenue, Richmond, VA**

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:00 – 10:02)
- II. Roll Call and Quorum Determination – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:02 – 10:10)
- III. Approval of Agenda – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:10 – 10:11)
- IV. Approval of Minutes of the April 27, 2023 meeting – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:11 – 10:12)
- V. Introduction of DVS staff and guests – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:12 – 10:15)
- VI. BVS Responsibilities - Freedom of Information Act – *James Flaherty, OAG* (10:15 – 10:30)
- VII. DVS Strategic Plan and Operational Update – *Daniel Gade, DVS Commissioner* (10:30 – 10:45)
- VIII. Point of Contact Reports (10:45 – 11:30)
 - a. Behavioral health, Rehabilitative Services and Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) – *David Ashe, Carlton Kent, Mike Cherry*
 - b. Benefit Services – *Carl Bedell, Jamie Inman, Carlton Kent*
 - c. Communications – *Melissa Watts, Terry McKnight*
- IX. Reports (11:30 – 11:40)
 - a. Joint Leadership Council – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair*
 - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *Paul Haughton, VSF Chairman*
 - c. Virginia War Memorial Foundation – *Pam Seay, VWMF President*
- X. New Business: (11:40– 11:50)
 - a. ByLaws - *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
 - b. “Good of the Order” Reports – *all members*
 - c. Other new business – *as requested by members*
- XI. Public comment (11:50 – 11:55) – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
- XII. Wrap Up & Adjourn – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (11:55 – 12:00)

ATTACHMENT 2

VDVS OPERATIONAL UPDATE



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

Daniel M. Gade, PhD
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220
Fax: (804) 786-0302

Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Operations Update for the Board of Veterans Services

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Strategic Planning Working Group created by House Bill 1759 (Delegate David Reid, 2023 General Assembly) held its first meeting on June 6. Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Vice Chair Thurraya Kent represents you. The priorities for the Working Group are centered on the mission to keep veterans and their families in Virginia. The next meeting is planned for July 12 at the Virginia War Memorial. Members of the BVS are invited to attend.

The Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) team continues to build and launch a new grant program for Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) led by Dr. Angela Porter. The SOS team also hired Danielle Rock as the new Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC). As SPC, Danielle will provide training and technical assistance to grantees and broader community stakeholders on topics such as suicide prevention, harm reduction, overdose prevention, lethal means safety etc. The SOS team successfully awarded the first cohort of 18 community grants (\$1.9 million). The team is finalizing an additional 6 community contract awards and is reviewing 5 research grant proposals for higher education institutions.

The VVFS team also added a second Veteran Justice Specialist (VJS), Ryan Morris, in the North region. This is the first region to have two VJS positions to work with local law enforcement, veteran treatment dockets, jails, and prisons.

For VVFS direct services delivery in May, there was a 12% increase in clients from May 2022 (134 new clients compared to 117 in May 2022). The total number of services provided including new and existing clients was higher in May 2023 (314) compared to May 2022 (269). In May 2023, veterans and families needed assistance with resource connections for housing needs (35%), benefits assistance (13%), behavioral health support (12%), homeless assistance (9%), and employment (8%).

DVS 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. In addition, Benefits is working towards standing up a virtual region. The work has begun with Veteran Service Contact Representatives pulling voicemails and returning phone calls for the busiest offices. Long term goal is to stand up a virtual Artificial Intelligence (AI) phone system and staff at headquarters to answer the calls and subsequent questions. Primary objective is when the veteran arrives at the field office for an appointment, preliminary work has been completed and the field Veteran Services Representatives can focus on the veterans and their appointments.

Since April 2023, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, which includes employment and transition services, worked closely with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce to host six Hire Vets Now (HVN) networking events. Events were held at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Fort Gregg-Adams, Fort Belvoir, and Joint Base Langley-Eustis. Each event had approximately 80-100 service members and military spouses present to engage over 25 V3 Certified Employers and five resource providers.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) 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 USDVA approval of a \$5.85M grant for 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 openings of those new care centers later this year.

DVS hosted the Commonwealth’s Memorial Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial on May 29. Governor Glenn Youngkin was the keynote speaker, with Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Craig Crenshaw and Major General Timothy Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, also speaking. The ceremony was broadcast live on CBS TV-6 Richmond and also livestreamed on the DVS and Virginia War Memorial Facebook pages.

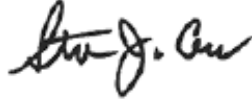
Hundreds attended the Memorial Day Ceremonies at Virginia’s three state veterans cemeteries. Guest speakers at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Cemetery in Suffolk were Matthew T. Sullivan, Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning and CFO, National Cemetery Administration and Major General Jerry F. Prochaska (US Army), Deputy Director, Joint Force Development and Design Center, J-7, Joint Staff, Suffolk.

DVS Commissioner Daniel Gade and Colonel Bobby Arnold (US Army, Retired) spoke at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia and at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, the guest speakers were former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney McKinley and former Vietnam War Prisoner of War Major Theodore “Ted” Sienicki (USAF, Retired).

For the fifth consecutive year, the hillsides of the Virginia War Memorial will be awash with the red, white, and blue of twelve thousand American flags during the Memorial’s Hill of Heroes

commemoration, June 23 to July 14. The flags are placed to honor and remember the nearly 12,000 Virginia men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in military service from World War II to present day and whose names are inscribed on the Memorial's Shrine of Memory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven J. Combs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Combs" being clearly legible.

Steven J. Combs
Chief Deputy Commissioner

ATTACHMENT 3

POINT OF CONTACT REPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

BVS POC REPORT

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

1. **Date of Report:** June 2023
2. **BVS POC(s):** David Ashe, Carlton Kent, Mike Cherry
3. **Service Area/Program:** Behavioral Health & Rehabilitative Services, Suicide Prevention
4. **VDVS Director/Program Manager:** Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS)
Director - Brandi Jancaitis, and Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS)
Director – Dr. Angela Porter
5. **Mission of service area/program:**

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program (VVFS) is operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and provides OUTREACH, CONNECTION and SUPPORT to Service Members, Veterans, caregivers, and family members as they address the challenges of military service, transition, deployments, Post Traumatic Stress, and other behavioral health concerns, as well as Traumatic Brain Injuries and other physical injuries. VVFS also provides housing/homeless, and justice services care coordination.

SERVICES THEY PROVIDE: VVFS provides peer and family support, care coordination, and resource linkages to Service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF). Referrals are coordinated with Community Services Boards, community nonprofits, brain injury service providers, VA medical facilities and other public and private agencies. VVFS also provides outreach and support to justice-involved service members and veterans interfacing with courts, diversion/veteran treatment docket programs, during incarceration in jails and prisons, and while on probation and/or parole supervision.

In July 2022, VVFS began to build a new Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) subprogram. The 6 person SOS program designed the agency's first behavioral health grant program for community services providers and researchers. Through grant funds and ongoing coordination of the statewide Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide, SOS will build training and direct services capacity for suicide prevention and substance use disorders.

6. **Who does the service area/program serve?**

VVFS direct services - Veterans of any era (regardless of discharge status) who are Virginia residents; members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves; transitioning service members, and family members/caregivers. VVFS staff work hard to

provide a "no wrong door approach", meaning if they can't provide that service within the program, they'll do their best to connect them to a resource/provider that can.

SOS grant program – grants are currently offered for community services providers, and public in or out of state higher education institutions (as long as the work benefits SMVF in the Commonwealth).

7. What are the service line's primary objectives?

VVFS provides care coordination, peer and family support services to Service Members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF).

VVFS facilitates access to behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services at the Federal, State, and local levels for SMVF.

SOS aims to enhance understanding of suicide prevention and opioid addiction among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) and build community support capacity to ensure the right help is widely available right now to military-connected citizens and families.

8. What are the key results that support the objectives?

In FY23 (thru May 2023), VVFS served an average of 322 total clients (new and existing clients) each week. Of these clients, 1,123 were new clients. This included connecting veterans and their family members for resources to approximately 2,523 service needs. These include housing needs (41%), behavioral health support (11%), benefits assistance (10%), employment (7%), and homeless assistance (9%).

In addition, VVFS provided 102 trainings (e.g. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Military Cultural Competency, Crisis Intervention Training, Mental Health First Aid) to approximately 2,939 participants (community partners and providers).

9. What specific objectives has the service line established and what progress has the service line/program made toward achieving the objectives.

FY23 Data Overview (thru May 2023):

- 90% of all new VVFS clients will have a needs assessment completed in 7 days of initial client contact for the purpose of creating a coordinated resource plan (95% out of 1,302)
- 90% of veterans with a identified behavioral health need will be connected to an appropriate resource (100% out of 218)
- 90% of veterans experiencing literal homelessness will be connected to a shelter/housing resource (98% out of 195)
- VVFS and Benefits will screen 95% of new SMVF for suicide risk (94% out of 17,733)

10. What are some operational highlights from the past year?

VVFS expanded justice services in Northern Virginia and hired a second Veteran Justice Specialist (VJS) position in Northern Virginia to support outreach to local Veteran Treatment dockets (Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William) and jails. West, Central, and East regions have one VJS position.

Suicide Prevention – VVFS has been integral in training and supporting DVS Benefits staff in suicide screening efforts. Over a 1,000 veterans monthly are now being screened for suicide risk in VVFS and Benefits.

Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide (GCPS) – Nationwide Federal Call to Action from Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to implement a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention.

DVS/VVFS and DBHDS coordinate the Challenge activities including:

- Virginia's Identify, Screen, and Refer program
- Lock and Talk Virginia lethal means safety campaign
- Veterans Affairs, DVS, and local peer recovery support to enhance connectedness and care transitions.

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

VVFS continues outreaching to state and community partners and building resource connections to assist clients. The outreach consists of both in-person and virtual events as well as training on military culture and resources for veterans. VVFS also regularly participates in state workgroups for behavioral health and suicide prevention, housing/homelessness, peer support, and criminal justice.

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

For FY23, VVFS received new General Funds to hire a new Suicide Prevention Director who oversees new funding (\$5 million) to develop a Suicide and Opioid Addiction Prevention Program (now called SOS) within DVS/VVFS.

The new SOS team consists of the Director, three Grant Administrators, Procurement and Contracts Officer, and Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

SOS (Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services) Community and Research Grant Status Updates:

- Request for Application (RFA 1) – Community providers, closed 02/28/23 (18 grants awarded - \$1,885,000.00)
- RFA 2 – Community providers, closed 03/31/23 (16 applications reviewed, finalizing 6 contracts)
 - 6 referred for review in RFA 3 (one review team)
- RFA 3 – Community providers, will post for recruitment in July 3rd

- MOA – by way of a Research RFI, proposals due 06/02/23 (5 proposals under review, group consensus 6/23/23)

Another important highlight is the continued roll out of the new 988 crisis and suicide lifeline number. This replaced the previous suicide crisis hotlines and will streamline access to those needing behavioral health supports. The Veterans Affairs Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) has been combined with 9-8-8 (veterans can dial 1). Here's more information on the connection between 988 and the VCL <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/about/what-is-988>

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

Justice service needs – Veteran treatment dockets are expanding in Virginia (8 current dockets, growing to 10 with addition of Pulaski and Chesterfield).

Housing service needs - affordable housing continues to be a challenge as well as the impact on inflation to our clients. Statewide rents have increased on average about 15% and production issues have slowed the development of affordable housing. Stable housing is a key protective factor for behavioral health and in-turn suicide prevention.

VVFS has also experienced significant direct services staff turnover (~40% since 2020) due to competitive positions in other human services sectors (higher salary and telework eligibility).

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

VVFS helps Service Members, Veterans, and their families access care and support for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services needs. Often this can prevent a crisis and/or suicide. VVFS staff strive to help SMVF link to services and benefits in federal, state and local systems. In addition, leadership team members serve on statewide advisory committees (on justice, housing, peer support, behavioral health and suicide prevention services) and form strategic partnerships that enhance systems of care for SMVF.

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

By helping the veteran, it helps the Commonwealth by continuing to ensure Virginia is the most military and veteran friendly state and provides comprehensive and wrap-around services for those residing in Virginia. Ready access to care and supportive services helps veterans and families Stay, Work, and Thrive in Virginia.

16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

Expanding Justice Services. VVFS would like to grow to 2 Veteran Justice Specialist positions in all regions – will need 3 new VJS positions (West, Central, and East regions) to continue to support outreach to Veteran Treatment dockets, and local and regional jails.

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

VVFS assists a range of veterans and their family members with complex needs including criminal justice involvement, caregiver support, homelessness and other housing issues, and behavioral health needs. VVFS staff are a crucial touchpoint and provide support to navigate through complex systems of care.

With the new \$5.1 million in general funds for Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS), DVS/VVFS received the largest general fund investment in veteran suicide prevention (at the state level) to date.

Prepared by:

Brandi Jancaitis – VVFS Director

ATTACHMENT 4

POINT OF CONTACT REPORT BENEFITS

1. **Date of Report:** June 22, 2023
2. **BVS POC(s):** Carl Bedell, Jamie Inman, Carlton Kent
3. **Service Area/Program:** Benefits
4. **DVS Director/Program Manager:** Michele Watson Crone
5. **Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):** Advocate for Virginia veterans and their families by connecting them to the benefits and services they have earned by providing accurate, timely and ethical education and assistance. Primarily develop claims to be submitted to the Department of Veteran Affairs.
6. **Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?** Virginia Veterans and their family members who are seeking federal, state, and local benefits and services.
7. What are the service line's primary objectives?
 - a. For FY24 we are retaining our objective to increase veteran population served with a target increase of 10% over FY23 totals. This targets an additional 1299 veterans over FY23 projected totals.
 - b. For FY24 we are retaining an objective for 100% Transition Assistance Program (TAP) participation on all Military Installations (Veteran Service Representatives and V3 team)- Provide service to transitioning service members by 2025.
 - c. For FY24 we are retaining our objective to increase Compensation and Pension Claims to the VA, with a target increase of 10% over last year's production. This targets an additional 2,223 claims over FY23 projected totals.
8. What are the key results that support the objective(s)?
 - a. For FY24, to make contact with 1362 new Veterans per month.
 - b. For FY24, to obtain access to 2 new installation TAP programs this year.
 - c. For FY24, to submit 2,039 C&P claims on a monthly basis (supporting 24,460 per year).
 - d. For FY24, to achieve over 300 hours of outreach per month.
 - e. For FY24, to submit 217 BDD claims per month (2604 per year).
 - f. For FY24, to screen 100% of new clients for suicide prevention.
 - g. For FY24, to establish a virtual customer contact center (to improve efficiency in customer contacts).

- h. For FY24, to use and modify the VESA interface to enable lower traffic offices to virtually assist higher traffic offices via Teams/Zoom and to digitally refer clients across service lines utilizing the Gold Standard Digital Hub interface.
9. What specific objectives (end of FY2022, end of FY2025) has the service line established and what progress has the service line/program made toward achieving the objective(s).
- a. For FY23 our goal was increasing the veteran population served by 20%. As of June 1, 2023, Benefits served 13,613 new veterans, and we are forecasting a total of 14,851 for the FY, which is an increase of 11% over FY22. We fell short of the objective and the monthly key result for new veteran numbers. The 20% target was set subjectively in FY23 without any baseline data (this was the first time tracking new client data). Given this year's data, we have refined the objective for FY24 to an additional 10% which we think is achievable yet challenging. Other than the new client numbers themselves, we achieved 100% of our other key results in this area: creating 4 regional Facebook pages with weekly posts; establishing 4 new offsite locations serving veterans; establishing 10 new VSO partnerships; and, codifying the process for tracking of new veteran contacts and outreach hours within our claims software. Additionally, we had a target of 2000 Before Date of Discharge claims in order to gain new customers by targeting separating/transitioning service members. For FY23, as of June 1, 2023 we filed 2,201 BDD claims, and are forecasting 2400 for the FY, exceeding the 2000 target number. For FY24, we have extended that goal to increase by 10%. For suicide prevention, we screened 94.4% of all veteran clients in FY23 as of June 1, 2023.
 - b. For FY23, we had an objective to work towards 100% TAP program participation by 2025. At the beginning of FY23, we were regularly briefing at 3 of 9 locations offering TAP classes (Quantico, Dahlgren, Ft Greg Adams). We gained irregular access to one additional location (Ft Eustis) and are in the process of adding a second (Norfolk). We were unsuccessful in engaging DoD leadership for TAP access and have found that access to the TAP programs are relationally based/personality driven, depending on the program manager and base Commander. We are having some success in gaining access to set up tables around the TAP briefings (catching traffic during lunch/breaks) but are very limited in our ability to get on the formal TAP briefing schedule due congressionally mandated TAP content guidelines. FY24 goals will seek to add 2 new locations where we are able to brief/connect with transitioning service members during TAP.
 - c. For FY23, we had an objective to increase claims submitted to the VA by 10% over the prior year. As of June 1, 2023 total claims submitted was 20,384, and we are forecasting to hit 22,237 total for the FY – an increase of 13%, exceeding the goal. For FY24, we have set a new goal to again increase claims by 10%.
10. What are some operational highlights from the past year?
- a. For FY23 as of June 1, 2023 there were 43,103 total submittals to VA.
 - b. For FY23 as of June 1, 2023 'In-person' contacts in the 34 offices totaled 41,032, and are forecasted to be 44,762, an increase of 8,323 in person contacts over FY22.
 - c. Benefits service line developed a statewide veteran online appointment tool "Veteran Engagement and Scheduling Application (VESA), which allows customers

the ability to book an appointment online across any of our 35 locations. The agency moved from concept to testing to full fielding in 35 offices in 4 months - a process that industry takes 6 months to a year to build and implement. Part of this new software was a new "Landing Page" which has become the centerpiece for the Governor's Gold Standard Digital Hub initiative.

- d.** Benefits service line weathered the publishing of the Federal PACT Act in August 2023, which opened the door for a large number of additional veteran disability claims. During this time, Benefits experienced our highest turnover and vacancy rate in 7 years, and endured changing out 100% of our software-based tools (new claims management system, new email system, new leave/pay system, new online customer contact system). Despite these obstacles, our benefits staff produced 12% more claims and 22% more in person contacts than FY22.

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

- a.** Benefits established 4 new regional Facebook pages and maintained posts weekly.
- b.** Benefits established new VSO/Veteran support Partnerships with:
 - a.** Virginia Tech Student Veteran Caucus (Wytheville Office)
 - b.** Piedmont Area Veterans Council, Farmville (Lynchburg Office)
 - c.** Garner North Carolina Veterans Service Center (Danville Office)
 - d.** City of Hopewell (Petersburg Office)
 - e.** Henrico Community Based Outpatient Clinic (Henrico Office)
 - f.** Arlington American Legion (North Region)
 - g.** Virginia Military Institute Chief of Staff (Staunton Office)
 - h.** Hampton Roads Council of Veteran Organizations (Williamsburg Office)
 - i.** JB Langley-Eustice (Hampton Office)
 - j.** Norfolk Naval station Regional TAP Office (Hampton Office)
 - k.** Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia (Appeals Section – Williamsburg)
- c.** Benefits established new offsite work locations at
 - a.** Patrick County Workforce Center (Danville Office)
 - b.** Farmville AL (Lynchburg Office)
 - c.** City of Hopewell (Petersburg)
 - d.** Arlington American Legion (new office)
 - e.** Henrico CBOC (Petersburg Office)
 - f.** Fort Eustis (Hampton Office)
 - g.** Langley AFB (Hampton Office)
- d.** Benefits Director served as the Petersburg Community Resource Center Executive Director, standing up the center as part of a Governor's initiative. In this capacity she shared responsibility for Benefits leadership while coordinating all aspects of the center's

development, partnerships, logistics, and agreements to ensure success of the center, which provides numerous services to help veterans and citizens in the Petersburg area to Work and Thrive in Virginia.

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

- a. Technology:** Drawing on the best from industry and other governmental services, the Benefits service line developed a statewide veteran online appointment tool *Veteran Engagement and Scheduling Application (VESA)*, which allows customers the ability to book an appointment online across any of our 35 locations. The agency moved from concept to testing to full fielding in 35 offices in 4 months - a process that industry takes 6 months to a year to build and implement.
- b. Technology:** Part of this new software is a new "Landing Page", or central location on our website used to access DVS services. This has become the centerpiece for the growth and implementation of the Governor's Gold Standard Digital Hub initiative.
- c. Technology:** Benefits is in the process of upgrading internet services at all field offices to be placed on the COV network with an expected completion date of August 2023. This upgrade both meets security requirements, reducing the risk to cyber threats, but also increases internet speeds at many of our more rural offices providing better access to our increasing use of virtual and technology-based tools.
- d. Transition to Appointment Centric services.** With the fielding of the new VESA software this year, we were able to take an innovative look at how we provide services to our veterans. Previously, many offices suffered from long wait times for walk-in services, and lack of appointment availability during certain times of the day. The limited access to services for veterans who were still working or only available during certain times of the day. This also presented us with employee overload and having to turn away many veterans during illnesses or other absences where the waiting room remained full, despite short staffing. The planning, oversight and management capability of the software along with the ability to shift or cover appointments during absences provided a solution to each of these issues simultaneously.
- e. TAP Integration:** Norfolk TAP integration with transitioning service members was successful from a staffing and VA perspective. The Civilian Navy Regional TAP Staff embraced DVS participation as well as the VA Site Leads. The curriculum set forth is tightly controlled and DVS has been unable to be included in the actual brief. We have integrated at lunch time briefs and a table set up in the vendor area on the VA day. We have integrated DVS service lines of VVFS and VETE to make sure we are all encompassing in addressing possible needs of the transitioning service members.

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

- a. Codifying the transition to Appointment Centric Services:**

Challenge: The transition to Appointment Centric services is challenging from multiple standpoints. Initial results are favorable, but remains a challenge to alter the expectations of our customers who are used to years of walk-ins. Additionally, each encounter and claim with a veteran is unique whereby the same type of claim may take 30 minutes with one customer but an hour and half with another. Such flexibility does not easily fit into a rigid, preplanned appointment schedule. Our challenge is to grow smarter on time management, refine our planning methodology, update the system for flexibility as able, and manage veteran/client expectations.

- b. Change Management**—As DVS moves forward with more advanced technology (GSDH), the challenge for leadership is to engage the field in its development, glean their knowledge and experience while providing clear intent and boundaries to achieve the goal. Benefits remains a large service line that is geographically separated and very busy. Proactive, frequent, flattened, 2 way communication is critical to ensuring both the leadership intent is met, and that the process works at the front line for both customer and employee.
- 14. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia’s veterans?**
Financially, emotionally and full service access to all DVS service lines.
- 15. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?**
Benefits assists Virginia’s veterans and transitioning service members in applying for compensation, pension and other benefits claims with the Federal VA. Approval of a claim results in monetary monthly payments, which translates to more dollars spent in the economy as well as more sales tax revenue for state a local government. The increased financial assistance through the granted claims directly contributes to a veteran’s ability to “Thrive” in Virginia.

Furthermore, with each new veteran or transitioning service member encounter, we screen for suicide risk and interview for referrals to all DVS service lines ensuring they have access to all the Benefits that Virginia has to offer – further enabling them to “Thrive” while also influencing their decision to “Stay”. Finally, Virginia’s Transitioning Service Members are also briefed, both formally and informally, during Transition Assistance Program session briefings, Benefits Delivery at Discharge claims briefings and events in and around military installations. In these formats, they learn valuable information about Virginia and the benefits offered. Working with them early and often increases the chance they will “Stay” in Virginia.
- 16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?**
The service line is seeking to better utilize technology to centralize and streamline customer access points to services, such that person-to-person interactions are conducted as efficiently and productively as possible. We are seeking implementation and integration of a Virtual Customer Service phone system with Virtual assistant and Artificial Intelligence technology to answer basic questions and provide basic information before a person is engaged. We want to utilize online forms and signature capabilities, digital veteran identification, digital referrals between service lines to be more efficient with time spent with our customers, and share workloads across our offices. Each of these improvements are intended to enable us to serve more veterans and provide better service, enabling them to Stay, Work and Thrive in the Commonwealth.
- 17. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?**
 - a.** The FY23/24 Budget Increase has been a tremendous help to increase VSRs and supporting staff to reach more veterans and provide much needed training. We have

hired 13 new VSR positions across the state, 2 Appeals Attorneys and 3 VSA positions. The positive impact of these hirings can be seen in the increase in number of claims and contacts generated this year (ref question 10 above).

- b. This past FY has been one of the service line's worst in recent history for employee retention. The service line experienced a 14% vacancy rate this year (vs 5% historical) and turned over 1/3 of our total positions. Inflation, higher costs of living, increased pace of work following the PACT Act as well as much higher salaries and remote working opportunities offered by the Federal VA for comparable jobs have all played into this problem. Given that it takes upwards of 6-8 months to train a new Veteran Service Representative, the loss of each employee strains our remaining employees, exacerbating the problem. In response to this the service line implemented a number of new technologies and methodologies (e.g appointment centric services) which should help regulate workloads while offering better customer experience. The agency also utilized a recent salary study and took some budgetary risk using funds from an historical 5% vacancy rate to implement experienced-based raises with increases every 5 years in hopes of affecting retention – though we still fell short of the study's median (middle of the pack) recommended salaries. Additional budget increases have also been requested to assist with continuing this effort and offering future raises to make our positions even more competitive.

The service line is exploring methods to rejuvenate employee environments and workloads to prevent burnout and excessive stress.

ATTACHMENT 5

POINT OF CONTACT REPORT COMMUNICATIONS

ATTACHMENT – FORMAT FOR BVS POC REPORTS

1. Date of Report: 22 June 2023
2. BVS POC(s): Terry McKnight, Melissa Watts
3. Service Area/Program: Communications
4. DVS Director/Program Manager: Tina Parlett-Calhoun
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

The Comms team's primary mission is to drive awareness of DVS services to include directing the agency media relations program, public communications program, external website, and social media initiatives. Tactics include overseeing the development of news media strategies and materials, digital resources, special projects, and other direct marketing activities.

Other activities in support of the mission include managing the development and implementation of communication initiatives, speeches, articles, op-eds, talking points, e-news, and additional publications to inform the public about agency issues and activities. Serving as the agency media liaison for all matters concerning veteran centric issues with the Governor's office and media representatives from local, regional, and national markets. Directing agency work groups and preparing talking points for senior staff, the Secretary of Veterans & Defense Affairs in addition to the Governor on demand.

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

The Comms team ultimately serves veterans and their families; however, this division serves as one of the most on-demand agency departments, expected to serve every directorate of the agency, the Governor's office, the Veterans Service Foundation and the office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs.

7. What are the service line's primary objectives?

Primary objective is to spread awareness of all DVS services with limited resources and staff using a variety of creative and proactive strategies.

8. What are the key results that support the objective(s)?

The DVS Comms initiative is tracked by a variety of key metrics to include but not limited to reach, engagement rate, open rates, and earned media value (EMV). Strategically, comms initiatives are tracked very closely to ensure the ROI of limited budget dollars and staff time is efficient and effective.

9. What specific objectives has the service line established and what progress has the service line/program made toward achieving the objective(s).

The Comms team develops mini marketing plans for every project it works on, with very specific objectives regarding reach and engagement.

10. What are some operational highlights from the past year?

See Appendix A (report from Tina).

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

The Comms team develops and manages on site media events, extends opportunities for outreach events to the Governor's team, produces a monthly Enews letter with 200,000+ subscribers. Manages agency social media and digital campaigns and engagement. Leads the most aggressive state agency earned media campaign in the Commonwealth, resulting in an average of \$300,000 in Earned Media Value (EMV) each year across the Commonwealth and beyond.

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

See Comms report regarding *Virginia Is for Veterans* co-branding campaign. Also initiated some direct mail campaigns to segmented veteran audiences using recently obtained Trans Union veteran data.

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

Legacy of very little or no dedicated marketing budget to the communications effort and until this fiscal year only one FTE dedicated to the Comms effort for the entire agency - making it very difficult to strategically plan sustainable outreach efforts year over year. However, this fiscal year the comms team was afforded a small budget dedicated to outreach and marketing research and an additional FTE.

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

By spreading awareness regarding DVS services, we assist in driving veterans to our offices, reducing the stigma of requesting behavioral health service connections and ultimately help to provide a better quality of life for veterans and their families in Virginia.

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

Veterans have a long legacy of contributing a great deal to the Commonwealth to include filling crucial positions in its workforce. By informing veterans and their families of the vast array of resources and support available to them, we aim to keep and/or attract them in/to Virginia. To that

end, the Comms team recently developed a “Why Virginia” presentation that is being used at all TAP briefings. (attached)

16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

Comms will begin a DVS website redesign overhaul in the beginning of July. (Website is 10 years old, new site to incorporate new technology and lay the foundation for an improved user experience.) We will also use the results of the brand awareness survey to develop direct marketing campaigns targeted to a variety of specific veteran and military spouse audiences across the Commonwealth.

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

Comms team recently developed a video in collaboration with Justice Involved Veteran (JIV) program team members that describes the mission of this program. The video now airs in all state prison common areas, reaching veterans before they are released and informing them of DVS services that can assist with their re-entry journey.

Additional video content production is underway for a variety of programmatic areas.

ATTACHMENT 6

JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT



101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA 23219
Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United States Army
Disabled American Veterans
Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Reserve Organization of America
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association
Wounded Warrior Project

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES June 22, 2023

The Joint Leadership Council (JLC) last met on May 9, 2023 at the Virginia War Memorial. The JLC had the honor of presenting The Adjutant General (TAG) Major General Timothy P. Williams with a certificate and JLC pin to thank him for his tremendous support of military veterans across the Commonwealth during his faithful years serving as TAG.

During the May meeting we received reports from the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services, the Board of Veteran Services (BVS), and the Veteran Services Foundation (VSF). We reviewed the JLC's work leading up to and through the 2023 General Assembly session. We also began planning for the 2024 Session. Several members of the JLC provided initial thoughts on legislative initiatives for the upcoming session.

The JLC received Fentanyl Awareness / REVIVE Training from the Virginia Department of Health. First Lady Suzanne Youngkin and the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, Craig Crenshaw also attended the training event.

Our next meeting is scheduled for July 13, 2023. I am concluding my second term as Chair of the JLC. The nominating committee is requesting and receiving nominations for both the Chair and Vice Chair positions. We plan to vote on those positions during our July meeting.

Therefore, since this is my final report to the BVS as the JLC Chair, I would like to express that it has been my sincere honor to serve alongside you and I remain deeply thankful for your undying support. I will continue to serve the cause of Virginia's veterans during my remaining time on the JLC and in the years following as a member of the Disabled American Veterans. I look forward to the work ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Williams
Chair

ATTACHMENT 7

Veterans Services Foundation Report



VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICE FOUNDATION Report to the Board of Veterans Services June 22, 2023

The Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting on May 4, 2023, at the Virginia War Memorial.

VSF Chair, Paul Haughton welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized Assistant Secretary Jordan Stewart to provide an update on Governor Youngkin's Partnership for Petersburg media event that took place on April 12th. The Assistant Secretary reported the Governor held a ribbon cutting for the Virginia Community Resource Center that day and the event was well attended. The Resource Center houses several community service organizations which includes DVS Benefits, VVFS and VETE service lines. The Governor is focused on expanding veteran services in Petersburg with the help of DVS and VSF.

Kim Barton, DVS Deputy CFO presented the FY 2023 Second Quarter Financial Report to the board as of December 31, 2022. In addition to the Second Quarter Report the Finance Committee has requested the most current financial report be reported at each board meeting. As of March 31, 2023, a total of \$631,544 in donations have been received. Expenditures supporting various DVS service lines in FY 2023 totaled \$522,370.

Tammy Davidson, DVS CFO, reported on behalf of Commissioner Gade who was attending the DVS Benefits Training in Williamsburg. Currently, VVFS grant program staff are evaluating 30 applications. The goal is to finalize the funding awards by the end of May.

The VSF Finance Committee Chair, Mike Coleman announced the VSF Finance Committee will receive a DVS briefing regarding the various service line budget requests for the upcoming FY2024. The presentations are scheduled for Tuesday, May 16th from 12:00 – 3:00 PM at the Virginia War Memorial.

The VSF Chair recommended, and the Board approved, the names of Trustees, Bruce Waxman (Chair), Jack Lanier and Mike Coleman to serve on the 2023 nominating committee. Elections for VSF officers will take place at the June 22, 2023, Board of Trustees meeting.

The next VSF Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for June 22, 2023, at the American Legion Department Headquarters in Richmond.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul Haughton
Chairman
Virginia Veterans Services Foundation

ATTACHMENT 8

War Memorial Foundation



Join Us for these Commemorations and Patriotic Observances

September 11

Commonwealth's Patriot Day Ceremony

September 15

National POW/MIA Recognition Day

September 22

Sips on the Skyline

Join us for our celebration of Virginia Spirits Month as we say goodbye to summer and welcome fall. Sips on the Skyline features a band and dance floor, a dinner and dessert buffet, a beer and wine bar, and craft cocktails and spirit tastings presented by Virginia distillers, including veteran-owned businesses.

November 11

Commonwealth's Veterans Day Ceremony

December 7

Commonwealth's Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony

At Ease on The Bus

Insider trips to some of Virginia's most remarkable destinations that celebrate and honor our country's military history.

A seat on the bus is \$127 and includes lunch, snacks, beer/wine for the bus ride, and a tip for the driver. Insider trips are for adults ages 21 years or older. Space is limited.

Register today at vawarmemorial.org/insidertrips. Contact awarman@vawarmemorial.org with questions.

August 9: Hampton Roads Naval Museum and General MacArthur Memorial

Join us on a trip to Norfolk as we explore the MacArthur Memorial, a museum and research center dedicated to preserving and presenting the story of the life of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, and receive a guided tour of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, which celebrates the long history of the U.S. Navy in the Hampton Roads region.

September 13: Fort Monroe

Insiders will be guided through Fort Monroe's Visitor and Education Center and the Casemate Museum, which focuses on the military history at Fort Monroe dating back to the early 1600's.

Leadership in America

September 27: Admiral James Ellis – Why Taiwan is not the Ukraine (and vice versa)

Admiral James (Jim) O. Ellis, Jr. retired as a 4-star admiral. In 2004, he completed a distinguished 39-year Navy career. His final assignment was Commander of the United States Strategic Command during a time of challenge and change. In this role, he was responsible for the global command and control of United States strategic and space forces, reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense. He is a frequent speaker and news commentator on matters of nuclear defense, space exploration and possible "war in space," national security, and national intelligence.

One Week in October

Join us for a special documentary film screening at the Hotel Roanoke on October 23.

Join us at the Virginia War Memorial for a panel lecture and reception on October 25.

October 2023 will be the 40th anniversary of the Beirut bombing. 241 US Military personnel were killed in the Barracks bombing, including 220 Marines. The incident was the deadliest single-day death toll for the United States Marine Corps since the Battle of Iwo Jima. That same week, citing danger to the U.S. citizens in Grenada, President Ronald Reagan ordered nearly 2,000 U.S. troops onto the island, where they soon found themselves facing opposition from Grenadian armed forces and groups of Cuban military engineers who were in Grenada to repair and expand the island's airport. To commemorate these events, the Virginia War Memorial Foundation will debut our newest documentary, *One Week in October*.

This documentary will air on PBS stations across the Commonwealth. Check your local programming guide.

April 19, 2024: Alex Kershaw – Patton's Prayer

Alex Kershaw is the widely acclaimed, prize-winning, New York Times best-selling author of eleven books, including *The Longest Winter* and *The Bedford Boys*. He will return to the Virginia War Memorial to speak on his newest book, *Patton's Prayer* (scheduled for publication in April 2024) on General George S. Patton and his finest hours during the Battle of the Bulge.

Now On Display

Fifty Years Beyond: The Vietnam Veteran Experience

There's still time to see The Virginia War Memorial's exhibition "Fifty Years Beyond: The Vietnam Veteran Experience." Professional photographer, Laura Hatcher (U.S. Navy, retired) and videographer Pamela Vines (U.S. Army, retired) traveled the state with Memorial staff to photograph and document the experiences of Virginia's Vietnam Veterans over the past 50 years. Their photographs and footage create a comprehensive experience for viewers of the exhibit and are shared alongside candid photos of 50 of Virginia's veterans during their time in Vietnam.

Veteran's Art Gallery



"Painting with Light: Visible and Infrared" features the captivating photography of Retired Navy Captain and Virginia native Rich Davis. Davis's work primarily focuses on landscapes, night images, and infrared photographs. This exhibit shares his unique point of view and how various photographic lighting changes alter an image's perspective. Select pieces on display are for sale and 100% of the proceeds will go directly to the Virginia War Memorial Foundation. Pieces are available online and in person, and will be available for pickup upon the exhibition's close in late October.

Medal of Honor Gallery - Beyond the Call of Duty

This gallery is the only place in the Commonwealth where you can learn the history of the brave Virginians who have been awarded the nation's highest and most prestigious military honor for valor. Of the more than 25 million men and women who have served and sacrificed in our nation's wars, fewer than 3,600 have received the Medal of Honor. And of those, 50 have been officially attributed to the Commonwealth of Virginia by the Department of Defense. Each of the Virginia recipients is remembered in this gallery with a plaque that bears the recipient's full name, hometown, military unit, a description of the recognized action, and the full text of the citation. Also in the gallery are video stations where honorees can be researched, and additional information about the individuals and the events related to their service can be reviewed.

Coming in 2024

The Virginia War Memorial's upcoming exhibit, *D+80: The Normandy Invasion*, will mark the 80th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy in World War II. No single action, or single day, remains more recognized or iconic in American military history than the 6th of June, 1944. Virginians played a pivotal role in the invasion, with the 29th Infantry "Blue and Gray" Division leading the first wave assault on Omaha Beach. Virginian units suffered some of the heaviest losses on D-Day, such as the historic 116th Infantry Regiment, which sustained 341 casualties.

Visitors to *D+80: The Normandy Invasion* will share in the experiences of Virginians who answered the call in World War II, were shipped overseas, and trained, prepared for, and conducted the largest amphibious warfare campaign in history. Of particular note, this exhibit will incorporate several previously unseen, "rediscovered" eyewitness accounts provided to the Virginia War Memorial by World War II veterans more than twenty years ago. Their memories, thoughts, and stories will provide captivating insight into an event that still moves us with feelings of awe, disbelief, and pride.