

## **BVS EDUCATION REPORT**

1. Date of Report: 09/21/2023
2. BVS POC(s): Terry McKnight, Mario Flores
3. Service Area/Program: *Education*
4. DVS Director: Tramaine Carroll-Payne, *Deputy Director of Education Programs*
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):  
*The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) Education Service Line encompasses the following programs: the Virginia State Approving Agency (SAA) for Education and Training (i.e., G.I Bill benefits), the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program benefits (VMSDEP), and Military Education Workforce Initiatives (MEWI).*

*The SAA is responsible for effectively reviewing and monitoring education programs in accordance with the provisions of Title 38 of the United States Code (U.S.C.). The SAA is the sole approval authority in Virginia for approving education institutions and establishments that enroll students in programs involving United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Education Benefits. Educational programs eligible to enroll such students may include state-supported colleges/universities, private and for-profit/non-profit colleges/universities, technical/trade schools, licensing/certification programs, preparatory programs, and OJT/Apprenticeship programs.*

*In addition, the VDVS Education Service Line administers the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), which provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who have been rated by the USDVA as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of military service. Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard.*

*The Military Education and Workforce Initiative (MEWI) assists Veterans and service members with their transition from active duty to civilian life. MEWI enhances employment opportunities for Virginians who have served in the United States Military and their spouses by providing a pathway to education, training, certifications, and technology. Within MEWI, there exist two distinct service lines, Military Educational Enhancement Programs, and the Virginia SkillBridge Program. Military Educational Enhancement Programs include our Technology Initiative, where laptops are provided at no cost to veterans, active-duty service members, or their spouses who are enrolled at approved colleges and universities, as well as our Pathways to Careers program, which through a partnership with the Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA) provides 11 industry leading certifications and credentialing opportunities at no cost to veterans or their spouses. The Virginia SkillBridge Program is VDVS's Department of Defense approved SkillBridge Program which allows for service members who are active duty and 180 days prior to leaving service, to participate in internship at approved providers, gaining the training and work experience necessary to secure good employment after leaving service.*

6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)? *Colleges, Universities, GI Bill beneficiaries, Active-Duty Service Members, Veterans, their spouses and children of military service members.*
7. What are the service line's primary objectives?
- Remove barriers to state and federal education benefits to facilitate the appropriate and timely delivery of education benefits to veterans and entitled dependents*
  - Ensure education programs are administered efficiently and in accordance with controlling law and regulations*
  - Protect the G.I. Bill from Fraud, Waste, and Abuse*
  - Provide training and educational opportunities to active-duty service members, veterans and their spouses to enhance their educational and employment opportunities.*
8. What are the key results that support the objective(s)?
- *The Key results include meeting the requirements of the Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA), which the SAA must process approvals for facilities within 30 days of receiving a complete application from facilities. All programs must be approved via the Virginia State Approving Agency in order for facilities to be able to certify it for payment. Also, the SAA uses data to assess risk factors to conduct Risked-Based Surveys to determine if a facility remains approvable for the State Approving Agency. The staff must complete the surveys (audits) and submit written reports to the VA, including findings and reported outcomes. Our OKRs for this objective are:*
    - 1) *Process 100% of G.I. Bill approval request within 30 days of receipt, and*
    - 2) *Complete 100% of Veterans Affairs assigned compliance visits annually per agreement. This year the cooperative agreement included 42 compliance Surveys.*
  - *The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program seeks to increase awareness of using the Program towards economic self-sufficiency and increase college enrollment for eligible beneficiaries. VMSDEP OKRs are:*
    - 1) *VMSDEP will increase the number of active participants to at least 6,000 unique participants during the 2022-23 academic year.*
  - *The Military Education and Workforce Initiative seeks to increase program visibility and availability to the military community while providing ever expanding opportunities and exceptional customer service. MEWIs OKR is:*
    - 1) *MEWI will increase the number of Virginia SkillBridge Approved Providers to 100 by calendar years end.*
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).

Note: Actions associated with USDVA requirements are measured against the federal fiscal year calendar, not the Virginia fiscal year calendar. The federal fiscal year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September.

- A. Complete 100% of Veterans Affairs assigned compliance visits annually per the Cooperative Agreement. *As of August 24, 2023, the SAA has completed 42 (100%) of the assigned surveys for the federal fiscal year per the Cooperative Agreement with USDVA.*
- B. VMSDEP will increase active participation to at least 6,000 unique participants during academic year 2022-23. *During academic year 2021-22, the Program had 3,480 unique participants.*
- C. Increase approved On-the-Job Training & Apprenticeship (OJT/APP) active facilities by 5% quarterly. *The SAA has developed an outreach strategy with the Virginia Values Veterans program (V3) in order to create a pathway for approval for V3 companies. In this regard, V3 Regional Program Managers will encourage companies to consider approval to certify employees for the G.I. Bill. After V3 Certification, employers will be encouraged to meet with the SAA to determine eligibility for approval.*

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

*The State Approving Agency has met the FY 22 compliance survey contractual requirements with the US Department of Veteran Affairs. The agency was contracted to conduct 56 surveys before August 15, 2022. The amount of funds recovered as a result of the surveys to date is \$76,735.49 in overpayments and \$5,888.95 in underpayments. (Overpayments are amounts that must be repaid to the VA based on errors, underpayments should have been paid out and will be paid to the school and/or the veteran as a result of findings during a compliance survey.)*

*The VMSDEP and the MEWI partnered with Old Dominion University, Radford University, and Northern Virginia Community College to host a VMSDEP/MEWI Open House and Laptop Rollout initiatives at each of the listed institutions. Collectively, the VMSDEP and the MEWI presented programmatic information to approximately 100 attendees, accommodated such attendees with application to VMSDEP benefits and MEWI services, and provided 89 laptops, made possible by a generous grant from the Altria Group, to eligible VMSDEP beneficiaries.*

*MEWI through the Virginia Veterans Service Foundation has received an additional \$25,000 funding grant from Newport News Shipbuilding to replicate the Pathways to Careers Program in the Tidewater region, allowing for the expansion of services to a far greater number of service member, veterans and their families. MEWI through VSF has secured an additional \$75,000 funding grant from the Altria Group to continue funding Pathways to Careers in the Richmond Region and explore other educational and training opportunities. MEWI has added one full time employee who started in September and has added one wage position which will start on May 25<sup>th</sup>.*

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

*The MEWI Program has attended Transition Assistance Program (TAP) classes, joined 50 Strong's nationwide employment and SkillBridge program, Secured the Army's Career Skills Program (CSP) program approval and MOU, attended the Hampton Roads Workforce*

*Council's DoD SkillBridge Expos and partnered with the VMSDEP Program to visit Colleges and Universities across the Commonwealth sharing our programs with students, their parents and school faculty.*

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

*MEWI has continued to develop new strategies by partnering with Newport News Shipbuilding to bring credentialing and certification opportunities to the Tidewater region.*

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

*Visibility of the VMSDEP program*

*Funding expansion efforts to allow MEWI to better serve military communities throughout the different regions of Virginia.*

14. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans? *The SAA program ensures the timely and accurate delivery of education benefits, helps decrease higher education "predators", and ultimately protects the GI Bill from fraud, waste, and abuse. The VMSDEP provides tuition waivers to eligible beneficiaries. MEWI provides critical technology equipment, educational, and training opportunities.*

15. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth? *Education programs provide resources and assistance to help veterans, live, work, and thrive in Virginia. Having access to high-quality education programs is essential for keeping veterans in Virginia.*

16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future? *There is an opportunity to create state grants for veterans, spouses and dependents who may not be eligible for the G.I. Bill or may have used their benefits and need to complete or start their education journey. GAP funding would be great. More specifically, not every veteran who has served is eligible for GI Bill benefits, those who are eligible may have exhausted their benefits before completing their training or education, and others may have become ineligible due to date of service restrictions. Grants would be helpful for such students.*

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