



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## *Department of Veterans Services*

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Commissioner

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### **Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Operations Update**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On November 20 DVS presented a virtual briefing to members and members-elect of the General Assembly entitled *"An introduction to the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and how we can help you help our veterans and families."* Delegate David Reid and Senator Bryce Reeves provided an overview of the General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus (GAMVC) and the work of the DVS Strategic Planning Group. A copy of the briefing, along with DVS Points of Contact and the DVS One-Pager is attached.

The Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) program, part of Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS), continues to build critical community and research capacity with DVS grants. Forty-one community grants were awarded totaling almost \$4.1 million and eight research grants awarded as of November 1, 2023, totaling almost \$1,650,000. Grantees will implement, study, and expand best practices in veteran peer support, suicide prevention training, risk screening, and clinical therapies for Service Members, Veterans, and Families across the Commonwealth.

For VVFS direct services delivery in October 2023, there was a 60% increase in clients from October 2022 (153 new clients compared to 96). Veterans and families received assistance with resource connections for housing needs (36%), behavioral health support (15%), benefits assistance (10%), homeless assistance (9%), employment (9%).

DVS Benefits continues to strive to respond to the enactment of the Federal PACT Act in FY23 which drove an increase of 12% in DVS claims production over the last year. Among many efforts to meet the growing demand, the service line is innovating and pursuing new technologies such as Appeals management software, Virtual Contact Center, online digital forms, and digital signatures. Internally we have begun to develop Objectives and Key Results down to the individual level, with the intent of achieving first-in-class claims service to Virginia's veterans. We also continue to support the DVS Transition & Education team in their effort to reach more

transitioning military members and their families through Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and other associated programs.

The Veterans Education Transition and Employment (VETE) continues to bridge employment and education gaps for our transitioning service members, veterans, and dependents through the following programs and initiatives: Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, Military Medics and Corpsman (MMAC) Program, Virginia Women Veterans (VWVP) Program, Virginia State Approving Agency (SAA), Military Education and Workforce Initiative (MEWI), and Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP).

The V3 Program commemorated its tenth anniversary at the V3 Awards Luncheon held October 11, 2023. Governor Glenn Youngkin and General Stanley McChrystal served as keynote speakers before 362 attendees. During this luncheon, V3 recognized fifteen small, medium, large, and enterprise V3 certified organizations for their advocacy and development of veteran friendly programs. V3 has certified 3,236 organizations who have hired more than 129,000 veterans since our program's inception. V3 awarded 69, \$1,000 V3 grants during FY24 to V3 certified companies with fewer than 300 employees to support veteran employment.

Military Education and Workforce Initiative (MEWI) partnered with the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) to provide laptops to 134 VMSDEP students enrolled at colleges and universities across the Commonwealth.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) awarded DVS three grants, totaling \$10.6M, to add additional columbarium niches at the Amelia, Dublin, and Suffolk state veterans cemeteries, part of the phased expansion of the three cemeteries. Construction is nearing completion on the Amelia and Dublin projects; the Suffolk project is scheduled to start before the end of the year. The cemeteries will host wreath placement ceremonies on December 16: Suffolk at 9 a.m., Amelia at 12 p.m., and Dublin at 1 p.m. We invite you to join us.

Resident # 1 was admitted to the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center in Virginia Beach on November 8, just ahead of the Commonwealth's Veterans Day Ceremony and JCVCC Grand Opening on November 10. Construction delays will push the opening of the Puller Veterans Care Center in Fauquier County into next year. The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond and the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke hosted special Thanksgiving meals for residents and their families on November 23. DVS will host a special ceremony on December 12 at 11 a.m., when the Virginia Veterans Care Center will be renamed in honor of two Virginia heroes. We invite you to join us.

The Virginia War Memorial hosted the annual Commonwealth's Patriot Day ceremony on September 11; a special ceremony marking the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon on October 23; the annual Veterans Day ceremony on November 10; the "Bringing Honor Home: A Native-American Heritage Month Event" on November 28; and the annual Commonwealth's Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony on December 7. All were well attended. In addition to these in-person ceremonies, the Memorial hosted virtual programs covering the

Battle of the Bulge, the Pathway to Pearl Harbor, and the World War I Christmas Truce. We invite you to join us for future programs – please visit <https://vawarmemorial.org/events/> to learn more.

Sincerely,

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

Daniel Gade, PhD  
Commissioner