



The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

July, 2021

DVS Offices Reopen With Appointment-Only Visits

New Mexico Department of Veterans Services offices has reopened its offices to the public on an appointment-only basis.

Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm beginning Monday, July 12.

For this initial re-opening phase, veterans or their eligible dependents must make an appointment with a DVS veterans service officer (VSO) prior to a visit via the contact information below.

“We are so excited to once again be able to meet our veterans and their eligible dependents in-person,” said DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith. “I want to thank the veteran community for their patience and understanding while we offered our assistance remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

All unvaccinated veterans or their eligible dependents who visit DVS offices must wear a protective facemask. DVS staff will observe COVID-19 six-foot social distancing and will clean & disinfect the office in-between customer visits.

Secretary Smith said that, while DVS did not miss a beat serving the state’s veterans via remote service, the staff is looking forward to getting back to working in their offices.

“The pandemic did show us that we as an agency can offer the same level of excellent service by email, phone, or video conferencing,” she said. “And we will continue to do this. But the pandemic reminded us that, for most veterans, nothing can ever replace good old-fashioned, face-to-face service—and we are all eager to start re-connecting in person with veterans again.”

On the next page is a listing of all re-opened DVS field offices, along with the office’s veterans service officer (VSO) and his or her contact division in the downtown Santa Fe office, and the information about the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC).

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Albuquerque VSO (Downtown) George Vargas 500 Gold Ave. SW (575) 520-2634 george.vargas@state.nm.us	Carlsbad VSO Dagmar Youngberg 101 N. Halagueno (575) 988-5900 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us	Clovis VSO Matt Barela 904 W. Sixth St. (575) 825-9602 matthew.barela@state.nm.us
Farmington VSO Beverly Charley San Juan College Veteran Center (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us	Gallup VSO Durrell Tsosie 908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A (505) 218-0348 durrell.Tsosie@state.nm.us	Grants VSO George Garcia 515 West High St./Suite C (505) 288-7605 george.garcia2@state.nm.us
Hobbs VSO Dalton Boyd 2120 N. Alto (575) 241-0714 dalton.boyd2@state.nm.us	Las Cruces VSO Rosa Bycenski (505) 216-8782 rosa.bycenski@state.nm.us	Las Vegas, NM VSO Martín Márquez 917 Douglas Ave. (575) 520-5079 martinM.marquez@state.nm.us
Las Vegas, NM VSO Arturo Marlow 917 Douglas Ave. (505) 331-8838 arturo.marlow@state.nm.us	Rio Rancho VSO Dustin Newsom (temporarily offering email or phone assistance until signing of a new office lease is finalized). (505) 221-7190 dustin.newsom@state.nm.us	Roswell VSO (VSO on maternity leave. Please contact the DVS Carlsbad, Hobbs, or Clovis office for assistance)
Santa Fe VSO Bataan Memorial Bldg/ 1st floor 407 Galisteo St. (Temporarily vacant. Please contact the DVS Rio Rancho office for assistance)	Women Veterans Program/VSO Robin Wilson 5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (505) 372-9106 robin.wilson@state.nm.us	Santa Fe (State Benefits Div.) Jeff George Bataan Memorial Bldg/ 1st floor 407 Galisteo St. (505) 827-6300 jeff.george@state.nm.us
Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)-Albuquerque Rich Coffel 5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (505) 220-9932 richardL.coffel@state.nm.us	VBOC/Southern & Southeast NM (Roswell) Jim Cassidy 1600 SE Main St./Suite A (575) 228-3024 jamesM.cassidy@state.nm.us	



Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (at left) meets with DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith and DVS State Benefits Division Director Ed Mendez on June 28 at the Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery.

Governor Lujan Grisham Tours the Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery & Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham made her first official visit to the Angel Fire Veterans Cemetery and adjacent Vietnam Veterans Memorial on June 28.

The governor was greeted at the cemetery by New Mexico Department of Veterans Services Secretary (DVS) Sonya Smith, Deputy Secretary Bryan Osterhage, State Benefits Director Ed Mendez, and cemetery staff... before heading up the hill to tour the Memorial.

The ten acre cemetery, managed by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, opened in the spring of 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic cancelled a scheduled opening ceremony, so the governor placed roses atop some of the 40 headstones of veterans and spouses laid to rest to honor their service for our country and christen the cemetery. (right photo)

“This facility provides such appropriate recognition



and tribute for so many New Mexico veterans and their families,” said the governor. “Creating more veteran cemeteries, in a state with a great number of veterans, is a real service – it cuts down on travel time, it ensures there is appropriate and adequate space for all those who served our country.”

Speaking to DVS staff on hand to greet her, the governor said she couldn’t help but think of her late Father Llewelyn “Buddy” Lujan... a retired U.S. Air Force captain who passed away ten years ago... and was buried with military honors at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.”

“I know, from visiting my Dad, that it’s a very important ceremony for the family...to feel like there’s national recognition for your service,” she said. “These veterans cemeteries can bring great peace to family



DVS Secretary Smith told the governor she also felt humbled while visiting the Angel Fire cemetery shortly after being appointed by the governor as cabinet secretary.

"It was such a profound feeling," said Secretary Smith, who is an Air Force veteran who served as a medical technician in Operation Desert Storm. "As a veteran, obviously, I could connect. But on the drive back I just had to be silent...and still...to just really appreciate what we're doing here."



The governor then made her way up the hill...to the adjacent Vietnam Veterans Memorial—also managed by DVS—where she was greeted by additional DVS staff and a group of local veterans, spouses, and residents.

The Memorial was built by Albuquerque residents Victor and Jeanne Westphall as a tribute to their son...U.S. Marine Lieutenant David Westphall.

Lt. Westphall, along with 16 other marines, were killed in action by North Vietnamese forces on May 22, 1968 outside Con Thien, South Vietnam.

The memorial now honors all who served in Vietnam. It was the first Vietnam War memorial in the nation when it was built in 1972...and served as an inspiration to build the national Vietnam Veterans memorial in Washington, D.C. which opened ten years later. DVS assumed management of the Memorial in 2017.

The governor was shown a rendition of a replica of the national Vietnam wall ([bottom photos](#)), which is in the initial stages of planning for construction at the Angel Fire memorial and is scheduled for completion next fall.



Like the national wall, this replica will have the names of the 58,282 American service members killed in the Vietnam War—including 398 from New Mexico.



Local Vietnam Veterans Group Seeking Donations to Help Build Angel Fire Replica Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall



The non-profit veterans service organization *Vietnam Veterans of America/Northern New Mexico Chapter 996* is seeking donations to help build a half-scale replica of the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

VVA Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 and DVS are working together on the memorial wall project and hope to have it completed next year.

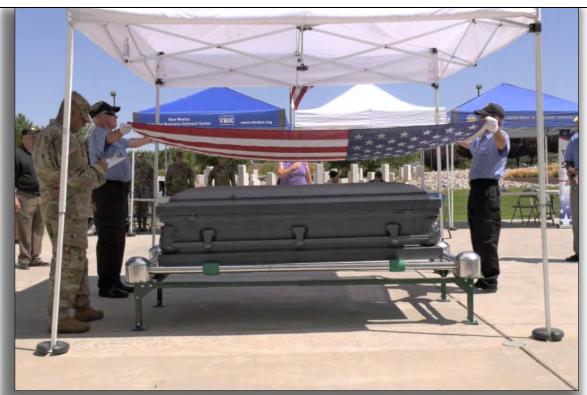


To Make a Donation

VVA Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 is a Congressionally-chartered 501(c)19 nonprofit organization. Donations for the building of the replica wall can be made by going to a special website dedicated by the chapter to help with fundraising for the wall effort:

www.vietnammemorial.net

Your donations are tax-deductible.



2021 Honor Guard Training & Conference Set For August 19

New Mexico's Honor Guards are encouraged to attend the 12th Annual Honor Guard Training & Conference on August 19 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial, located at 1100 Louisiana Blvd. SE. Registration begins at 7:45am, and the conference begins at 9am.

Honor guards are all-volunteer units that perform the flag-fold ceremony, 21-Rifle Volley, and a bugle rendition of *Taps* at the funerals of active-duty military personnel or veterans—providing a proper “Final Salute” befitting men and women who have served our country in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The day-long conference is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP New Mexico has a learning and training opportunity for Honor guards from throughout the state. Last year’s conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NOTE: Groups interested in forming an all-volunteer honor guard are invited to attend to obtain information about honor guards and register with DVS.

Instruction and coaching will be provided by U.S. Army Honor Guards. The highlight of the conference is the two-tiered performance competition between large and small-size honor guards. A free catered lunch will also be provided courtesy of AARP-New Mexico. For more information, contact Deanna Anaya at Deanna.anaya@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6356.

Photos are from the 2019 Honor Guard Conference



DVS to Present Quarterly Briefing on August 6 in Albuquerque

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) invites commanders, presidents, and representatives of veterans and community service organizations—as well as any interested veteran--to a DVS quarterly briefing on August 6 at 9am at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque.

The briefing will be in the indoor meeting room at the Memorial, which is located at 1100 Louisiana Blvd. SE. DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith and DVS division directors will provide an update on agency goals, plans, and news—along with information on other veteran-related issues.

In addition to being a great opportunity to be updated on veterans' issue, the briefing also provides an excellent networking opportunity for New Mexico's veteran community. For more information, contact DVS Executive Administrative Assistant Shannon Quintana at shannon.quintana@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6334.



WWII Veterans Honored at Albuquerque Ceremony

DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith was among a group of dignitaries honoring World War II veterans for their service on June 26 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque ([left photo](#)).

The ceremony, hosted by Honor Flight of Northern New Mexico, was in lieu of a scheduled annual "honor flight" that was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The flight would've taken the veterans and chaperones on a free two-day trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the National World War II Memorial.

"On a personal note, I stand on your shoulders," she told the World War II veterans. "Your sacrifices have paved the way--not only for me to serve in the Air Force, but to now serve you in my current position today. My staff and I don't take this lightly. We are here to now serve you."

Maj. Gen. Ken Nava, the Adjutant General of New Mexico, handed out his Coins For Excellence to the veterans on behalf, he said, of the 4,000 Soldiers and Airmen of the New Mexico National Guard ([right photo](#)).

"As I walk by and shook all your hands, I saw both my grandfathers, Thomas Arrey and Eleuterio Nava, who served alongside you and World War II, one in the European theater and one in the Pacific theater," said Nava. "What an incredible group of individuals you are, members the greatest generation and I thank you for your sacrifices."



Special Quilts of Valor were presented to each of the sixteen WWII veterans honored at the ceremony by the group Quilts of Valor/New Mexico ([left photo](#)). The quilts are presented by the group as a means of providing comfort and healing through the hand-knitted quilts.

"We honor you for your service and strength of duty and allegiance to our country, said Ms. Robinson. "for freedom is not free, and the cost of freedom is dedication of lives like yours. This quilt is meant to say thank you for your sacrifice. It is meant to offer comfort and remind you that you are forever in our hearts."

Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller and U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-New Mexico) were also present at the ceremony—each also praising the veterans for their service and sacrifice for our country.



(all photos courtesy of Joe Vigil/PAO, New Mexico National Guard)



LEFT PHOTO:

Maj. Gen. Ken Nava
(NM Adjutant General)



ABOVE PHOTO:

U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan
(D-New Mexico)

Booth & Table Registration Open for Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair

Registration is open for table and booth space for 2021 *Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair* on September 14 at the state fairgrounds in Albuquerque.

Veterans or community service organizations can register online for a space along “Main Street” by going to the following website: <https://statefair.exponm.com/p/things-to-do/mainstreet/application-sept-14>. The deadline to register is Monday, August 16, at 5pm.

There is a limited amount of space allotted for displays on Main Street. Applications will be selected at random to ensure an equal chance for all applicants. Organizations that are selected will be notified by email. There will also be spaces available on other side streets on the fairgrounds.

Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair

Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair is the annual day during the state fair presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the New Mexico National Guard, and the New Mexico State Fair to honor and thank the men and women who have served our country as members of the United States Armed Forces.

Free admission for the day will be given to veterans, national guard/reserve personnel, and retirees who present either a valid Uniformed Services Retiree Identification Card, a veterans-designation driver’s license, VA Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), or a copy of their DD-214 Separation Papers at the front gate. Active-duty personnel must show a valid Uniformed Services ID card for the free admission. Non-veteran/non-military spouses or family members are not eligible for the free admission.



ABOVE TWO PHOTOS: DVS and the New Mexico State Fair held a briefing on July 8 at the state fairgrounds. While State Fair “Main Street” Coordinator Craig Vencil (**right photo/standing**) reviewed table/booth rules and protocol, DVS Event Coordinator Joseph Dorn (**RIGHT PHOTO/ seated at left;** **LEFT PHOTO/standing in center**) also provided an on-site booth/table registration opportunity.

Online booth/table registration, which began July 5, ends on August 16. Applications will then be randomly drawn for the limited spaces available on “Main Street.”



DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith reads the governor's Juneteenth Proclamation on June 18 at a Juneteenth festival in downtown Albuquerque's Civic Plaza.

Juneteenth Celebrated in New Mexico

DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith attended ceremonies in Albuquerque and Española on June 18 and 19 celebrating *Juneteenth*, the day 156 years ago—June 19, 1865--when Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, TX, to free a large population of slaves still in captivity.

Juneteenth became our nation's newest federal holiday on June 17, when President Joe Biden signed the *Juneteenth National Independence Day Act* into law.

Speaking at the ceremonies in Albuquerque's Civic Center on June 18 and Española's plaza the following day, DVS Secretary Smith noted the military's role in Galveston on that day 156 years ago--calling the actions

of General Granger's troops as one of the great civic and humanitarian missions in our nation's history. She then read the governor's proclamation, which highlights the significance of the *Juneteenth* holiday.
(see next page for a copy of the Proclamation)



ABOVE & RIGHT PHOTOS: At the June 19 Española Juneteenth celebration, New Mexico National Juneteenth Observance Foundation State Director Willie Williams (*at left*) presents a Juneteenth flag to veterans and civic leaders...who then raised it on the flagpole at the city's plaza.

The flag features a red, white, and blue color scheme just like the American **flag**. It has a white star in the center, meant to represent both Texas (the Lone Star State), and the freedom of enslaved people in all 50 states.





STATE OF NEW MEXICO **EXECUTIVE OFFICE** SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Proclamation

WHEREAS, Our nation was created on July 4, 1776, with the Declaration of Independence, which states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

WHEREAS, the enslavement of African citizens, which increased shortly after this birth of our nation, remained a shameful stain in our country's history—one that divided our country and led to the American Civil War to rectify; and

WHEREAS, on New Year's Day, January 1, 1863, during this Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, providing that all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free;" and

WHEREAS, word of this historic signing took two and half years to reach authorities those enslaved in the South and Southwestern United States and it wasn't until June 19, 1865, when Union Army Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery; and

WHEREAS, June 19th has a special meaning to African-Americans, and is called "Juneteenth"-- combining the words "June" and "nineteenth" and is celebrated throughout our great nation; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 New Mexico became the nineteenth state to recognize "Juneteenth Freedom Day" and the important role African Americans have played shaping New Mexico's history, their contributions socially, intellectually, culturally, and with a willingness to serve and defend our state and our nation through military service:

NOW THEREFORE, I, Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor of the State of New Mexico, do hereby proclaim June 19, 2021 as:

"Juneteenth Day"

throughout the state of New Mexico.

Attest:

Maggie Toulouse Oliver

Maggie Toulouse Oliver
Secretary of State

*Done at the Executive Office this
9th day of June 2021.*

*Witness my hand and the Great Seal
of the State of New Mexico.*

Michelle Lujan Grisham

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor





U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan Meets With DVS Staff and Veterans in Gallup

U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-New Mexico) met with DVS staff and veterans at a meeting in Gallup on June 30 to hear concerns about veterans issues in the area. (*Left photo/standing in center; below photo/at far right*)

The meeting also provided a chance for veterans to meet with officials from the city and the Navajo nation, and meet the two DVS veterans service officers from the DVS Gallup office: Durrell Tsosie and Ben Stewart.

One of the issues raised was the lack of transportation for veterans to get to their medical appointments—either at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, or the VA-managed community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in Gallup or Farmington.

DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith and other DVS staff provided details of a Highly Rural Veterans Transportation (HRVT) Program launched by DVS this spring to provide such a service to some of the more rural areas in the state. The program has initially started with service to neighboring Cibola County. DVS will re-apply for grant funding to expand service to more rural communities.

DVS VSO's Tsosie and Stewart also helped several with filing for VA claims and state veterans benefits.

Senator Lujan promised to work with DVS to help with the transportation and other veterans issues in the Gallup area and western New Mexico.

"I am honored to speak with Gallup's veteran community and offer my sincere gratitude for their service," said Senator Lujan. "Our country must honor its promise to take care of our veterans, and I will continue working to ensure that they have the access and resources to live long, healthy lives."

"We are honored and grateful that the senator took some time from his busy schedule to meet with us today," said DVS Secretary Smith. "We thank him for his support, and pledge to work with him and his staff to address these issues not only here in Gallup, but throughout the state."



DVS SAA Director, VSO Honored by the VA

DVS State Approving Agency (SASS) Director Marilyn “Mandy” Dykman is among a handful of women veterans selected for a national VA *I Am Not Invisible* project to increase awareness and visibility of women veterans and their service for our country.

Director Dykman served 21-years as a helicopter pilot in the United States Coast Guard—the Coast Guard’s first Hispanic helicopter pilot. Posters with photos of her and other selected women veterans are now on display at VA medical centers throughout the country.

The copy at the bottom of the poster reads: *There are over two million women veterans, making up over 10% of the veteran population and growing. Yet they continue to face significant barriers and challenges in accessing necessary health care and other services, while experiencing a lack of recognition. The “I AM Not Invisible (IANI) project, developed in Oregon, aims to increase awareness and dialogue about women veterans, as well as open viewer’s eyes to the myriad of contributions, needs and experiences of women who have served in the military. In support of Women’s History Month 2020, this virtual IANI exhibit celebrates and honors these veterans who continue to serve their country and communities in New Mexico.*



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And DVS Farmington Veterans Service Officer Beverly Charley Received a certificate of appreciation from the VA for being featured in an earlier VA Center for Women Veterans (CWV) Women Trailblazers: Women Veterans Leading the Way project.

Ms. Charley was among two dozen women veterans selected from across the nation honored for who the VA considers as trailblazers for their actions during and after their military service. The campaign showcased the impact these women have made on a single event or action or demonstrated over time in the areas of education, employment, entrepreneurship, homelessness, law, mental health and wellness. She was honored as a driving force behind Farmington’s annual *Operation Stand Down/Project Hand-Up* homeless veterans Stand Down to help homeless veterans.

The certificate reads: *Department of Veterans Affairs Certificate of appreciation presented to Beverly A. Charley for being a 2021 woman veteran trailblazer! Your commitment and stellar contributions to the community in which you serve prove to be invaluable to women veterans. Your accomplishments embody the characteristics that define a trailblazer and are instrumental in promoting positive cultural transformation in the general public. Thank you for your participation in the 2021 Center for Women Veterans Trailblazers Initiative.*

Your accomplishments embody the characteristics that define a trailblazer and are instrumental in promoting positive cultural transformation in the general public. Thank you for your participation in the 2021 Center for Women Veterans Trailblazers Initiative. Dennis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans Community Bulletin Board

The following page(s) feature event and informational flyers provided to DVS by veterans and community service agencies. These flyers are published for the convenience of New Mexico's veteran community. Inclusion in The Guardian does not constitute an endorsement by DVS of the organization, content, products, or services contained therein.

DVS invites service agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers or news releases announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will post these flyers as a public service courtesy to the veteran community. However:

- Flyers must have the name of a point-of-contact from the organization...along with the contact's phone number or email address. Flyers without this information will not be published.
- DVS is not responsible for the accuracy of the content, products, or services in these flyers.
- Views expressed in these flyers are the independent views of the authors/owners of the third-party entity that created the flyer—and does not necessarily reflect the views of DVS.
- To the maximum extent permitted by law, DVS expressly denies liability for any and all losses suffered by any persons or organizations who, in their independent discretion and reliance, either directly or indirectly rely on content, products, services or information offered by these independent third-party organizations.
- DVS reserves the right to edit or decline publishing of any flyer.



National Veterans Creative Arts Competition

Art - Creative Writing - Dance - Drama - Music

2021 NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION

The local competition will be held online due to
COVID-19 regulations.

Entries must be submitted by July 31

- Submissions are encouraged to be sent by email
- Record your performance and send to the Rec Hall on a CD or flash drive
- First place winners will be invited to submit their entry to the national competition
- No live performance show this year

**For Category Listings and Entry Information
Please Contact Cory Arling:**

Recreation Hall, Building 2/Room 109
(505) 265-1711 x4208 cory.arling@va.gov

**Visual Art Categories
(Fine Art, Applied Art, and Kits)**

**Performing Arts Categories
(Dance, Drama, and Music)**

**Creative Writing Categories
(Poetry, Essays, and Short Stories)**

Presented By



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



American Legion
Auxiliary



VETERANS HOUSING ASSISTANCE

- Are you a disabled veteran homeowner on a fixed income...or whose income is at or below 80% of the median income level in the county you live?
- Do you live in any of the following counties?
Grant, Sierra, Otero, Doña Ana, Hidalgo, or Luna
- Do you need to make your home more easily accessible for you or your loved ones?

Give us a call to determine how we can help!

Don't wait! We are limited in the number of families we're able to help.

For more information, please contact:

Ruben Trujillo
Tierra del sol Housing Corporation
210 E. Idaho
Las Cruces, NM 88005
(575) 640-4353 or (575) 541-0477
rubenft@tdshc.org





News from the VA



New Mexico VA Regional Center, DVS Reminds Survivors of Veterans About Dependency & Indemnity Compensation

If you're a surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member who died in the line of duty, or a survivor of a veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, you may be eligible to receive a tax-free monetary benefit called VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

As a surviving spouse, you may be eligible for DIC benefits if you meet the requirements listed below. You will also need to provide evidence with your claim showing that one of the descriptions below is true for the veteran or service member. Evidence may include documents like death certificate, military service records, doctor's reports, and medical test results.

One of these must be true. You:

- Married the veteran or service member before January 1, 1957, or
- Married the veteran or service member within 15 years of their discharge from the period of military service during which the qualifying illness or injury started or became worse, or
- Were married to the veteran or service member for at least one year, or
- Had a child with the veteran or service member, aren't currently remarried, and either lived with the veteran or service member without a break until their death or, if separated, weren't at fault for the separation
- Note: If you remarried on or after December 16, 2003, and you were 57 years of age or older at the time you remarried, you can still continue to receive compensation,

You'll also need to provide evidence showing that one of these descriptions is true for the deceased veteran or service member:

- A copy of the veteran's death certificate (unless he or she died while on active duty);
- The service member died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive-duty training, or
- The veteran died from a service-connected illness or injury, or
- The veteran didn't die from a service-connected illness or injury, but was eligible to receive VA compensation for a service-connected disability rated as totally disabling for a certain period of time

The veteran's death certificate is evidence relevant to determining the effective date of any benefits awarded. The death certificate is also used to determine if the cause of death is related to military service or the Veteran's service-connected disabilities.

(continued on next page)

If you receive a death certificate that inaccurately states the cause(s) of death; an amendment application may be made by the informant or the funeral service practitioner or person acting as such who signed the certificate of death. Applications to amend the medical certification of cause of death shall be made only by the certifier who signed the medical certification or the office of the medical investigator.

Additional information on how to amend a death certificate can be found here: [N.M. Code R. § 7.2.2.17](#)

It is very important to ensure the cause of death listed on the veteran's death certificate is accurate and lists all the causes of death. Inaccurate information can lead to a denial of benefits.

Additional information on DIC benefits can be found here :

[About VA DIC For Spouses, Dependents, And Parents | Veterans Affairs](#)

Questions about DIC can also be directed to the Veterans Benefits Administration Support Line at 1-800-827-1000.

VA to Help Veterans & Spouses Develop Tech Sector Job Skills

The VA is partnering with Salesforce Military to offer programs that will help veterans and spouses develop skills and employment options in the tech-driven economy.

The partnership will build on existing programs and add new ones, offering free technical skills training, career development and veteran-specific resources in a variety of areas, including:



- *Vet Success on Campus*
<https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/vsoc.asp>
- *Veterans Opportunity to Work*
<https://www.benefits.va.gov/vow/>
- *Hiring Our Heroes Fellowship*
<https://www.hiringourheroes.org/career-services/fellowships/industry-focus/salesforce/>
- *The Trailhead Military Program*
<https://veterans.force.com/s/program-overview>

The program includes virtual, self-paced skills training and opportunities to take Salesforce certification exams at no cost. Salesforce will help program participants connect with potential employers. The initiative will also educate veterans and their spouses about VA benefits, vocational readiness programs and other resources.

For more information: <https://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/>

Deadline Approaching For Moratorium on Foreclosures/ Evictions On Properties Financed Through VA

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reminding veterans about the July 31 deadline for its moratorium on foreclosures and evictions on properties financed through its VA home loans program.



The original deadline was June 30, but it was extended to allow households that may have fallen behind on their mortgages more time to recover. Ultimately the extension will help thousands of VA home loan borrowers stay in their homes, and provide those hard-hit by the pandemic, the time needed to get back on a regular monthly mortgage payment schedule.

In addition to the multiple ways VA already helps borrowers avoid foreclosure, the department is implementing a short-term mortgage repayment assistance program via the VA Partial Claim Payment (VAPCP) program (https://www.benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS/partial_claim.asp) to bring certain borrowers current on their mortgage as they resume regular mortgage payments. VAPCP will be available for COVID-19 impacted borrowers to help them remain in their home and continue to enjoy the benefits of homeownership.



Once the moratoriums end, VA will take additional steps to prevent foreclosures on VA-backed mortgages until borrowers are reviewed for COVID-19 home retention options that are affordable.

VA will announce additional steps to offer borrowers payment reduction options that will enable more homeowners to stay in their homes. Additionally, VA will also continue to allow homeowners who have not taken advantage of forbearance to date to enter into COVID-related forbearance through Sept. 30 of this year.

The VHA Homeless Programs Office (<https://www.va.gov/homeless/>) offers a wide range of resources and services for veterans facing housing crises, having helped more than 850,000 Veterans and their families exit homelessness or remain in stable housing since 2010.

The VHA Homeless Programs Office Supportive Services for Veteran Families program gives homeless prevention assistance and has taken a proactive approach to reach Veterans at risk of homelessness during the pandemic. The SSVF program's Shallow Subsidy Intervention Initiative (https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf/docs/SSVF_Shallow_Subsidy_Compliance_Guide.pdf) will also assist by providing a modest subsidy for two years to extremely low-income veterans who are at risk of homelessness.