



The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Dept. of Veterans Services
February, 2022

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NMDVS Salutes Black History Month



“No mail, low morale.” The story of the 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion



U.S. Army Capt. Abbie N. Campbell and Maj. Charity Adams inspect the 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion.

“No mail, low morale”, was the unit motto of the 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion, which was also the first and only all-Black Women’s Army Corps to serve in WWII. In February, 1945, the 688th, or “Six-Triple Eight”, as they were later called, arrived in Birmingham, England, to process backlogged pieces of military mail. Living up to their motto, the unit processed over 17 million pieces of mail in just three months by working three shifts a day, seven days a week.

Their commander was Maj. Charity Adams, who had joined the Women’s Army Auxiliary in 1942—becoming the first Black woman to receive a U.S. Army commission. At the end of the war, she was a Lt. Col.—the highest-ranking Black woman in the Army.

Today, 99-year old Lena King is one of the last surviving members of the 688th. She joined the Army when she was 18. In a recent interview, she shared seeing mail piled floor to ceiling, adding, “We had promised we could get it done”. And they did. The U.S. Senate unanimously passed the *Six-Triple Eight Congressional Gold Medal Act* in December, 2020. The bill remains in the U.S. House of Representatives today.



I stand on the shoulders of these women who paved the way for my military service. I am grateful to them for their sacrifice and service to our nation. As the first Black person appointed as cabinet secretary of New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), I am humbled, and strive everyday to serve our veteran community with excellence. I salute my incredible team at DVS who work hard at ensuring that “Every Day is Veterans Day!”

Sonya L. Smith, Cabinet Secretary
New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

Virtual VA Benefits Clinic in Honor of Black History Month

Get information on
Veterans benefits
and how to apply

Tuesday, February 22, 2022
1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Speakers

Opening Remarks



Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith
New Mexico Department of
Veterans Services

Minority Veterans Program



Samira Ahady
Regional Office
Minority Veterans
Programs Coordinator

State Veterans Benefits



George Vargas
Director of Field Operations
New Mexico Department of
Veterans Services

VBA Benefits



George D. Titsworth
Regional Office
Public Contact Coach

Register for Seminar
<https://bit.ly/3gklS6Y>

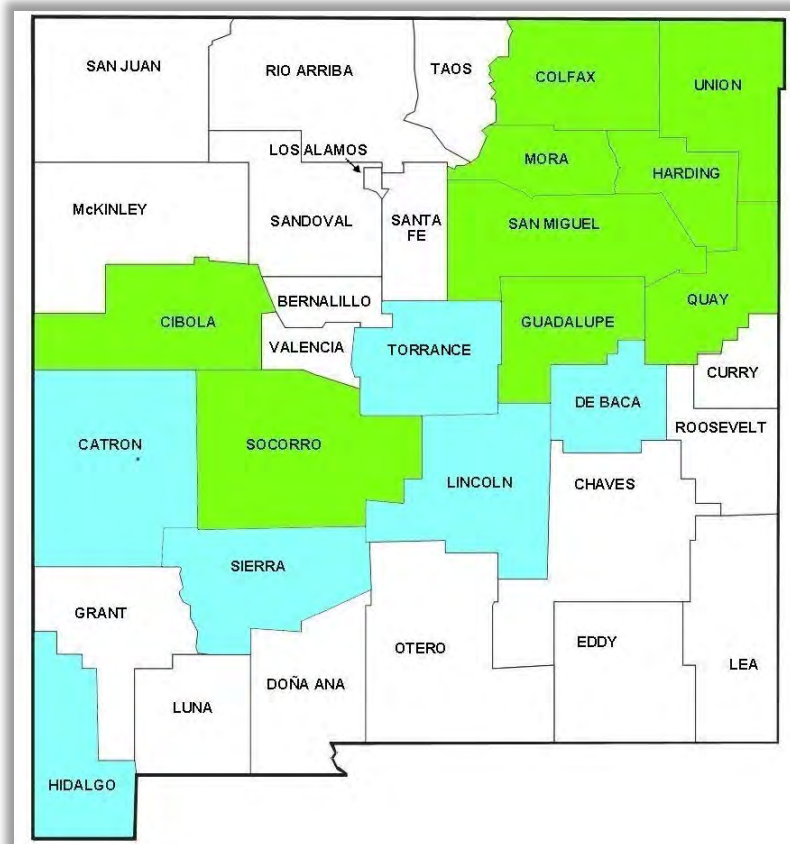
For questions call
George Titsworth
(505) 514-8328



Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program Now Serving All 15 Highly Rural NM Counties

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program has expanded to include all fifteen New Mexico counties identified as “highly rural” by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The program is now available in Catron, De Baca, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Sierra, and Torrance counties (*map at right/shaded in light blue*). Veterans in these six counties can call DVS to make reservations for free round-trip rides between their home...and any VA medical appointment, or VA-approved medical appointments at non-VA facilities.



Launched last February, the program began with service to veterans in Cibola, Colfax, Guadalupe, and Socorro counties—with service added two months later for veterans in Harding, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, and Union counties (*earlier nine counties shaded in green*). DVS contracts with private transportation agencies to provide this round-trip service. The program is funded through a successful application by DVS for a VA Highly Rural Transportation Program grant. VA awards funding to agencies that can demonstrate the need—and willingness—to serve rural veterans who, according to DVS and VA research, often neglect their health care due to the lack of transportation. VA defines “highly rural” as any county with less than seven people per square mile. It identified fifteen counties in New Mexico—the fifteen counties now being served by the Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program.

“As we successfully stated in applying for this grant, DVS strongly believes that the lack of transportation should absolutely not be a factor for veterans to get health care,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya L. Smith. “So we are thrilled to now provide this critical transportation service to veterans in our most rural parts of the state.”

To get these free round-trip rides, veterans in the fifteen counties must make a reservation at least three days before a medical appointment by calling (505) 429-5906 Monday through Friday from 9am-5pm.

Secretary Smith added that DVS is also working on developing transportation options for veterans throughout the state through collaborations with other state, federal, local, and private agencies, and transportation service providers.

“This issue is not confined just to our highly rural-area veterans,” said Secretary Smith. “Veterans in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Santa Fe, and other communities have told us they have trouble making their medical appointments because they can’t get to their doctor’s office. Coming up with a viable transportation-option plan for the state is a priority for DVS in 2022.”

DVS Promotes Two VSOs; Fills Other Department Vacancies

DVS has promoted from within its ranks to fill two leadership positions, welcomes back a familiar face in a new administrative role, and brings aboard new faces to fill other key vacancies.

George Vargas is the new Field Operations Division Director who will be based at the DVS Albuquerque Northeast Heights office. The former Las Cruces and Albuquerque Veterans Service Officer (VSO) and U.S. Army veteran will supervise the agency's 20 VSOs in 14 field offices throughout the state—and outreach visits by the VSOs. George can be contacted at george.vargas@state.nm.us or (575) 520-2634.



George Vargas
DVS Field Operations
Division Director



Beverly Charley
DVS Tribal/Pueblos Liaison

Beverly Charley has been promoted from her Farmington VSO position to full-time DVS tribal/pueblos liaison—a position she was serving concurrently with her VSO duties. The new title will allow the U.S. Army veteran and proud member of the Navajo nation to focus on strengthening DVS with the state's 19 pueblos, 4 tribal nations, and the more than 9,000 Native American veterans in New Mexico. She can be reached at beverly.charley@state.nm.us or (505) 241-3322.

For now, veterans needing in-person VSO assistance in the Farmington area can contact the DVS Gallup-based VSOs—who will be making regular outreach visits to the area. Or as with any veteran in the state, any DVS VSO in the state can be contacted for phone/email assistance.
(VSO contact information can be found on pages 23-24)

DVS is pleased to welcome Mark Woffindale as its new VSO in the agency's Hobbs office, located at 2120 North Alto Street.

Mark served 7-1/2 years in the U.S. Army as a 12B combat engineer. He was deployed twice to Iraq, and was also stationed in Germany and Ft. Campbell, KY. He is available to assist with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or with anything else veterans and their families need help with.

As with all DVS VSOs, in-office visits are by appointment only, and can be made by contacting Mark at (575) 392-5290 or mark.woffindale@state.nm.us. He can also provide assistance by phone or email.



Mark Woffindale
DVS Hobbs VSO



Danelle Lucero
DVS Chief Financial Officer

The DVS administrative services division is pleased to welcome back Danelle Lucero as its new chief financial officer.

Danelle previously worked in the division from 2009-2019 as an accountant auditor/finance supervisor, before leaving the agency's office on the first floor of the Bataan Memorial Building in downtown Santa Fe...to be the chief procurement officer and A/P finance manager for the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs—on the second floor of the Bataan Building!

Though she enjoyed her time at DCA, she is glad to return to serving veterans. Her father, Juan Jaquez, is a U.S. Army Vietnam War veteran who was held prisoner for 4-1/2 years at the infamous Hôa Lô prison in North Vietnam...sarcastically dubbed the “Hanoi Hilton” by American prisoners of war (POWs) due to the facility's miserable conditions and brutal treatment by their North Vietnamese captors.



Kathy Snyder
SAA Director

Kathy Snyder has been named the new State Approving Agency (SAA) director. She had been serving as SAA consultant since coming to DVS in the spring of 2019. In her role as SAA director, she will oversee the reviews, evaluations, and approval of all education and training programs offered by colleges, universities, and trade schools available for use by veterans using the GI Bill®. This is a requirement by VA to ensure a program's compliance with strict state and federal statutory and regulatory criteria.

She will also engage in outreach activities throughout the state to promote awareness of the GI Bill® education benefit—advocating for quality and diverse education and training opportunities for veterans and other eligible persons.

Coming to Las Cruces Next Month: Veterans Property Tax Waiver/Exemption “Curbside” Service Day

Heads Up! DVS is planning a property tax exemption/waiver certificate drive-up “curbside” service day in Las Cruces next month. More details will be released as soon as they are finalized.

At this curbside service day, which was very popular on its initial launch last year in Albuquerque, veterans and unmarried widows of veterans—seated in the comfort and safety of their vehicles—will be provided with “carhop-style” assistance from DVS staff with filing for the veterans state veterans property tax exemption or property waiver.

The veteran's property tax exemption is a \$4,000 reduction off the taxable value of the primary residence of a veteran or unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran. A property tax waiver of the entire amount is available for veterans rated by VA at 100% service-connected permanent-and- total disabled.



Veteran-Owned Businesses Now Have Access to Purchasing Government Surplus Property

The New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)—the business development division of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services--and the New Mexico State Agency for Surplus Property (SASP) are announcing the opportunity for veteran-owned business owners to purchase federal and state government surplus property/equipment at

reduced cost.

Items such as vehicles, heavy equipment, tools, furniture, and much more are now available to help veteran-owned businesses grow their businesses with this surplus government equipment for a fraction of their original acquisition cost.

This opportunity is courtesy of the full implementation of the *Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act* (S.2679), initially passed in April of 2018 to amend the Small Business Act--directing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to give access to and manage the distribution of government-owned surplus property to veteran-owned small businesses. This was pursuant to a memorandum of agreement between the SBA, the General Services Administration (GSA), and the heads of state agencies for surplus properties

To purchase this surplus equipment, veteran-owned business owners must be enrolled in *VetBiz*, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system for verifying veteran ownership of small businesses. To enroll, please go to <https://www.vetbiz.va.gov/vip/>.

For additional information, or for assistance with enrolling, contact VBOC Director Rich Coffel at (505) 383-2401 or RichardLCoffel@state.us.mil

Once enrolled, veteran-owned business owners should contact New Mexico's SASP office at the information below to be approved.

Christopher Barela
New Mexico SASP Director
1990 Siringo Road
Santa Fe, NM 87505-4757

Phone: (505) 476-1949
Email: christopher.barela@state.nm.us

SAVE THE DATE!!!

Saturday, June 11, 2022

2022 Women Veterans Conference



Albuquerque, NM

(More details to be announced in the coming months...)

To RSVP for sponsorships and vendor/booth space,
contact DVS Women Veterans Program Manager
Robin Wilson at robin.wilson@state.nm.us or (505) 372-9106



*Presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
Women Veterans Program*



A Look at Veteran-Related Bills In the 2022 State Legislature

The 2022 New Mexico Legislature, which convened at noon on January 18, adjourns at noon on Thursday, February 17. The following are the twelve veteran-related pieces of legislation that were Introduced by legislators:

HB 76: Military Retirement Income Tax Exemption (duplicate of SB 85)

Sponsors: State Representatives Phelps Anderson (I-Chaves, Lea & Roosevelt Counties), Harry Garcia (D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley, Socorro, San Juan, & Valencia), T. Ryan Lane (R-San Juan), Joy Garratt (D-Bernalillo), Jane Powdrell-Culbert (R-Sandoval)

Allows an armed forces retiree to claim an exemption to paying income tax on pension income under \$30,000.

HB 168: Disabled Veterans Transportation

Sponsors: State Representatives Rebecca Dow (R-Gran, Hidalgo, & Sierra), Harry Garcia (D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley, Socorro, San Juan, & Valencia), Brian Baca (R-Valencia), Randal Crowder (R-Curry)

Appropriates \$1 million from the state's general fund to DVS to establish a program to provide disabled veterans with round trip transportation between their homes and medical appointments.

HB 195: Tax Proof of Disabled Veteran Status

Sponsors: State Representatives Rachel Black (R-Otero), Joshua Hernandez (R-Sandoval), Debra Sariñana (D-Bernalillo), Randal Crowder (R-Curry), Susan Herrera (D-Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, & Taos)

Provides flexibility/makes it easier for qualified veterans and unmarried widows of veterans to claim the veterans property tax exemption or waiver. Once such an exemption or waiver is successfully filed and claimed, they need not be claimed for subsequent tax years if there is no change in eligibility. Exemptions and waivers allowable under this subsection shall be applied automatically by county assessors in subsequent tax years.

HJR 6: Veteran Property Tax Exemption

Sponsors: State Representatives Eliseo Alcón (D-Cibola & McKinley), Randall Pettigrew (R-Lea), Rachel Black (R-Otero), Patricia Roybal Caballero (D-Bernalillo)

Proposes an amendment to Article 8, Section 15, of the New Mexico Constitution to expand the current property tax exemption for 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans or their unmarried widows... to veterans with less than a 100 percent disability. The exemption or waiver would be tied to the service-connected veteran's federal disability rating. The question would be on the ballot at the next general election, or a special election called for the purpose.

(continued on next page)

HJR 7: Armed Forces & Widow Property Taxes

Sponsors: State Representatives Eliseo Alcón (D-Cibola & McKinley), Randall Pettigrew (R-Lea), Rachel Black (R-Otero), Patricia Roybal Caballero (D-Bernalillo)

Proposes an amendment to Article 8, Section 5 of the New Mexico Constitution to increase a property tax exemption for honorably discharged members of the armed forces and their widows and widowers from \$4,000 to \$10,000 off the taxable value of their primary residence, effective for the 2023 property tax year, which begins January 1, 2023. After the 2023 property tax year, this \$10,000 property tax exemption would be indexed to inflation. The question would be on the ballot at the next general election, or a special election called for the purpose.

HM 37: Mexican 201st Squadron

Sponsors: State Representatives Linda Serrato (D-Santa Fe), Javier Martinez (D-Bernalillo)

Recognizes and honors the contributions of the *Aguilas Aztecas*, or “Aztec Eagles.” The squadron, from the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force, reformed as the U.S. Army Air Force’s 201st fighter squadron and flew as part of the U.S. Army Air Force’s 58th Fighter Group that saw action in the Philippines in the summer of 1945.

SB 28: Hiring Preference for Veterans

Sponsor: State Senator Harold Pope (D-Bernalillo)

Would permit private employers to adopt employment policies to give veterans’ hiring preference to veterans, spouses of veterans, and widows and widowers of veterans. The preference would not be considered a violation of state or local equal employment opportunity law.

SB 39: Procurement Preferences Changes

Sponsors: State Senator Benny Shendo, Jr. (D-Bernalillo, McKinley, Rio Arriba, San Juan, Sandoval), Rep. Harry Garcia (D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley, Socorro, San Juan, & Valencia)

Increases the preference for NM resident businesses and contractors from 5% to 8%...while maintaining the 10% preference for veteran-owned businesses (VOBs). Removes language stating only businesses with annual revenue or \$3 million or less qualifies for the veteran preference designation...and removes language that prohibits resident VOBs and resident veteran contractors from claiming the veteran preference for more than 10-years.

SB 45: Veteran Business and Contractor Procurement

Sponsors: State Senator Harold Pope (D-Bernalillo)

Would make permanent the certification of a resident veteran-owned business and resident veteran contractor

SB 85: Income Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Pay

Sponsor: State Senator Harold Pope (D-Bernalillo)

(duplicate of HB 76)

SB 128: Uniformed Services Retiree Income Tax Deduction

Sponsors: State Senators William Burt (R-Chaves, Lincoln & Otero), Mark Moores (R-Bernalillo), & David Gallegos (R-Eddy & Lea)

Would provide the following deductions for the retirement income of a military retiree, the retiree's surviving spouse, or the spouse of a service member killed in the line of duty. This deduction would be 33% of military retirement income, not to exceed \$16,333 for a taxable year beginning on or after January 1, 2023 and prior to January 1, 2024....66% not to exceed \$33,666 for a taxable year beginning on or after January 1, 2024 and prior to January 1, 2025...and 100% not to exceed \$50,000 for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2025.

SM 7: Military Spouse License Reciprocity

Sponsor: State Senator Bobby Gonzales (D-Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, & Taos)

Reaffirms the state senate's support for military spouse professional & occupational licensure reciprocity/expedited licensures...and affirms the senate's support for the inclusion of military spouse attorneys.

More information about these and all pieces of legislation can be found at the New Mexico Legislature website: <https://www.nmlegis.gov>

SB-140: Free College Tuition For New Mexicans at In-State Public Universities/Colleges

SB 140, the *Opportunity Scholarship Act*, offers another avenue for veterans who want to pursue a post-high school education here in New Mexico. The bill, sponsored by State Sen. Liz Stefanics (D-Santa Fe County) and State Rep. Joy Garratt (D-Bernalillo) would pay for tuition and fees for New Mexicans at any public university, college, or tribal college in the state...provided you are a legal residents of New Mexico, enrolled in at least six credit hours, and maintain a 2.5 GPA.

“The Opportunity Scholarship breaks down barriers that keep New Mexicans from accessing the higher education and career training they need to provide for their families, power New Mexico’s workforce, and drive the innovations that will make our state a leader now and for years to come.” said Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, who strongly supports the bill. “Free college will uplift our state and empower New Mexicans to reach higher and think bigger in 2022 and beyond.”

If passed, the new law would eliminate the existing New Mexico *Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships*, which are only available to high school seniors who must begin attending a state college or university with 16 months of graduation from high school. New Mexicans can learn more about New Mexico’s plan for free college at www.freecollegenm.org. Veterans still have the option of using their GI education benefit bill. For more information about the GI Bill, go to <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/>. Veterans can also call VA’s Education Call Center toll-free at 1-(888) 442-4551. Or you can submit a question through Ask VA* at <https://www.ask.va.gov>.



Diane Mourning Brown
DVS Healthcare
Division Director

A Reminder: No Co-Pays Or Out-Of-Pocket Charges for Insurance-Covered Behavioral Health Care

(by Diane Mourning-Brown/DVS Healthcare Division Director)

Last year, the New Mexico Legislature passed, and Governor Lujan Grisham signed into law SB 317, which forbids charging a copay or other out-of-pocket cost for behavioral health services covered by insurance. The new law applies as of January 1, 2022. *(Caution: This does not apply to some insurance plans – see below for information on which ones don't have to waive copays.)*

If your insurance plan is covered by SB 317, you cannot be charged a copay or other out-of-pocket cost for behavioral health

services you receive. This includes doctor's services, inpatient hospital costs, medications, lab services and other costs. If you are mistakenly charged a copay, your insurance company should reimburse you. If you can't resolve the issue with the insurance company, you can submit a complaint to the Managed Health Care Bureau at the Office of the Superintendent of Insurance at <https://www.osi.state.nm.us/index.php/managed-healthcare-complaint/> or by calling 855-427-5674.

For details on the new policy, you can read this Bulletin from the Superintendent of Insurance: <https://www.osi.state.nm.us/index.php/news/senate-bill-317-applying-cost-sharing-waivers-to-behavioral-health-services/>. (It's directed at insurers so it's a bit technical, but it will give you an idea of which services are exempt from cost-sharing.)

Some types of insurance plans don't have to waive copays for behavioral health services:

The ban on cost-sharing doesn't apply to "self-insured" plans like those offered by most large employers, where the employer is responsible for paying its employees' health care costs. Federal law exempts those plans from state regulation, so the state doesn't have the power to apply the new law to them. Keep in mind that self-insured employers often contract with an insurance company to administer their self-insured plan. If that company is simply administering the plan—and it's the employer that is responsible for paying for services provided—the cost-sharing ban doesn't apply. If you have questions about whether your employer's plan is self-insured, you may want to check with the human resources office. The new law also doesn't apply if you have a high-deductible health plan with a health savings account, because federal rules permit those plans to waive cost-sharing only for preventive services.

New Mexico's new law should make it easier to access behavioral health services by removing a financial barrier to getting those services. This is an important step forward in improving behavioral healthcare for New Mexicans. If you have any questions about VA healthcare, or healthcare for veterans ineligible for VA health care, please contact me at diane.mourningbrown@state.nm.us or (505) 318-6273.

NOW HIRING

New Mexico Workforce Connection RAPID HIRE EVENT Tuesday February 8, 2022 • 2pm-6pm

New Mexico Workforce Connection Centers around the state are hiring now to fill immediate openings! [Contact your local NMWCC](#) or call 1-800-303-3599 for more information. **Apply and interview same day!**

Note: Not all positions available at every location

Employment, Recruitment, and Placement Specialists (Operational, Advanced, Supervisor)

Hiring for multiple positions around the state

Hours are Monday- Friday, 8am-5pm

Weekends and holidays off

****Bilingual candidates are encouraged to apply***

Purpose of the Position (Operational)

Maintains contact within the community to search for promising job applicants. Screens and interviews applicants. Discusses wages, working conditions, and promotional opportunities with prospective employees. Consults in the areas of job analysis, recruitment, and related human resources; provide comprehensive employment services to eligible veterans.

Purpose of the Position (Advanced)

Plans, controls, and/or evaluates one or more of the following statewide programs: Employment Security, Rural Manpower, Unemployment Insurance Claims and Tax programs, Veterans' Service Programs; or Placement Programs. Provides vocational counseling, training, recruitment and placement.

Purpose of the Position (Supervisor)

Directly supervising work of at least two (2) permanent /full time employees. Build and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs.

About the Rapid Hire Event

Interviews will be conducted on site with key decision makers. This event is taking place at local New Mexico Workforce Connection Center Call 1-800-303-3599 for more details on an office location near you.

What to Bring

- Updated printed Resume
- Three professional references
- School Transcripts

Benefits

- Differential pay for Spanish speakers
- Medical, with several provider options
- Pharmacy,
- Dental/Vision/Life
- Short- and Long-term Disability
- Retirement through the Public Employees Retirement Association
- Training and Professional Development
- 10 State-Paid Holidays Each Year
- Free Employment Assistance Program

How to Apply

Contact your local [New Mexico Workforce Connection](#) or call 1-800-303-3599

NMVA Health Care System Virtual Job Fair (Feb. 10)

WE'RE HAVING A JOB FAIR!

The New Mexico VA is having a Virtual Job Fair for Registered Nurses!

Multiple units will be at the event including the Operating Room, Emergency Department, Intensive Care Units, and Medical/Surgical Units.

There are multiple recruitment and relocation incentives in place for Registered Nurses in high need areas.

The VA has extraordinary benefits including 10 paid holidays, 5 weeks of vacation your very first year, health insurance plans, continued education initiatives after one year of employment, and a 5% 401K match.

For more information contact Brenna Ehgartner, Nurse Recruiter, at Brenna.Ehgartner@va.gov or (505)265-1711 x2037 by Feb. 10, 2022.

APPLY ON USAJOBS



VETERAN RESOURCES JOBFAIR

ALL JOB SEEKERS WELCOME!

DATE: Tuesday, February 22nd

TIME: 9:00AM-12:00PM

LOCATION: Embassy Suites

1000 Woodward PI NE, ABQ 87102

Excellent Career Opportunities with Great Pay & Benefits!!!

*****Masks required. COVID-19 health & safety protocols will be observed.*****
Equal opportunity program in which auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.



For questions or additional information:

Call: 505-843-1900

Email: NMWorkforceConnection@wccnm.org

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"Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico"



**New Mexico
Workforce Connection**

A Proud Partner of the American Job Center Network



New AARP Job Center Helps Veterans, Spouses Find Jobs

To help alleviate unemployment and underemployment in the veteran community, AARP created a Veteran and Military Spouses Job Center to help veterans and their spouses find employment.

For many of our nation's 8.3 million military veterans in the civilian workforce, transitioning into a career can be a difficult process. Even after securing a civilian job,

veterans and their spouses often find themselves in roles that leave them underemployed, meaning their skills are not fully utilized, making it difficult to make ends meet.

“When you're a veteran or military spouse, it can be challenging to know where to start your job search and how to get employers to understand how your job skills, experience and character transfer to a new position,” said Troy Broussard, senior adviser to AARP's Veterans and Military Families Initiative.

Despite the drop in veteran unemployment to 3.2 percent in December 2021, two-thirds of all veteran and active-duty spouses employed in the civilian sector say they are underemployed in some way, according to data from the Blue Star Families' annual Military Lifestyle Survey.

“This free, one-stop resource will help veterans and military spouses learn how to effectively leverage their military skills and experience to give them an edge in today's competitive job market and avoid underemployment,” said Broussard.

Here is the link to the job center: <https://campaigns.aarp.org/Veteran-Job-Center>. The center includes a suite of free resources to help find jobs, explore new career fields, get advice, take a job training course and more. Among the resources offered are:

AARP Job Board: Veterans can search for employers who value military experience and how it applies to their industry. Use the “Veterans Wanted” filter to search for employers who are actively seeking applicants with a military background.

AARP Resume Advisor: Get a free expert review of how well your résumé communicates your skills and obtain personalized recommendations on how to make your résumé stand out. Discounted writing packages are also available to rewrite your résumé, cover letter or LinkedIn profile.

2022-2023 New Mexico Hunting Draw Deadline is March 16

(story courtesy of the NM Dept. of Game & Fish)

It is time to submit your military documents and get ready for the upcoming 2022-2023 draw. Military documentation **must be** submitted prior to applying.

You will **NOT** be able to apply for military only, Fort Bliss, or returning Iraq/Afghanistan hunts until you have provided documentation of service to the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (DGF).



Active duty military personnel must provide current orders to qualify for military only hunts. Submission of a military Common Access Card (CAC) will no longer be an accepted form of active duty military status.



These hunt codes will not be visible until your paperwork has been verified and entered into our system.

Due to the high volume of entries, DGF strongly recommends submitting your documentation no later than March 11. If you submit after March 11, DGF cannot guarantee your eligibility will be verified by the draw deadline on March 16.

Please submit your military only, Fort Bliss, or returning Iraq/Afghanistan documents by_email:

specialhunts@state.nm.us or mail it to:

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Attn.: Licensing
PO Box 25112
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

Thank you, thank you for your service and good luck in the draw!

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 government agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers for publication in *The Guardian* announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will run 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 to publish any flyer.

Veterans Legal Clinic

Feb. 8, 2022

*Virtual and In-person at
Veterans' Memorial Park, 1100 Louisiana Blvd SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108*

**Save the
date!**
Location
TBD

June 14, 2022

Sept 13, 2022

November 8, 2022

- Family Law (divorce, custody/
visitation, child support)
- Consumer Rights
- Bankruptcy
- Landlord-Tenant
- Foreclosure
- Employment
- Tax
- Wills/Probate
- General Civil

Clinic is on a sign-up only basis.

Help is contingent on volunteer attorneys.

If you have any further questions, please contact the
Veterans Justice Outreach Program at 505-206-9086.



State Bar of New Mexico
Young Lawyers Division

6TH ANNUAL CAR SHOW

SUNDAY, MAY 1
10AM - 2 PM

NEW MEXICO VETERANS MEMORIAL
1100 LOUISIANA BLVD SE
ALBUQUERQU, NM

Help us send our Veterans to Washington D.C.



REGISTRATION:

\$20 PER CAR

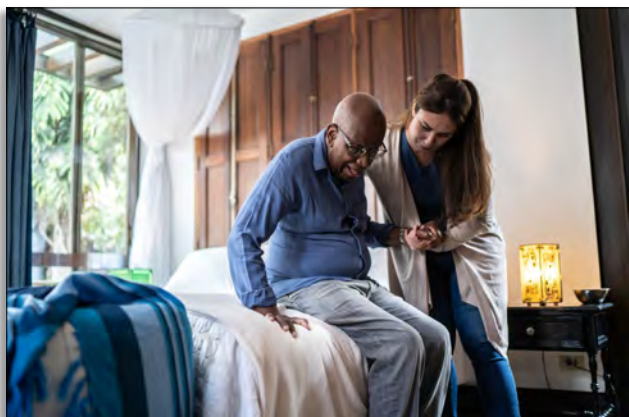
FOR MORE INFORMATION

CALL SHIRLEY 505-410-3978

SPECTATORS ARE FREE!



News from the VA



VA to Expand Care & Services for Aging Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is planning to expand several programs that allow senior veterans to age in their own homes, or live in home-like settings, as alternatives to institutional elder care facilities.

VA will expand its Home-Based Primary Care and Veteran-Directed Care programs, which provide medical care and caregiver services to housebound older veterans, and

its Medical Foster Home program, which provides housing and services to veterans who otherwise would be in nursing homes. The expansion is needed, said officials with VA's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care, to ensure that the department can support a growing number of veterans eligible for nursing home care.

By 2039, the number of elderly veterans is expected to double from 2 million to 4 million.

"These evidence-based programs allow veterans to age-in-place, avoid or delay nursing home placement and choose the care environment that aligns most with their care needs, preferences and goals," said Dr. Scotte Hartronft, the office's executive director.

Since 1999, VA has been required to provide nursing home services to veterans who qualify for VA health care and have a service-connected disability rating of 70% or higher, or are considered unemployable and have a disability rating of 60% or higher. This care is provided through short- or long-term nursing home facilities, respite care, VA community living centers, private assisted living facilities, state veterans homes and the Medical Foster Home program.

Medical foster homes are places where veterans live full time in a home setting with a caregiver licensed to provide 24-hour support, meals, housing, help with daily living and companionship. The program places veterans in houses belonging to or managed by caregivers that are licensed by their states as assisted-living facilities.

To be eligible for the program, veterans must be enrolled in VA health care and have a complex disabling medical condition that requires coordination of care across VA services and is severe enough to need a nursing home level of care.

(continued on next page)

Medical foster homes are not considered institutional care, so VA cannot pay the cost directly. However, veterans can use their VA disability compensation, Social Security income and savings to pay the cost, which covers room and board and support.

VA has faced challenges increasing the number of medical foster homes because of the rigorous regulations and requirements of the facilities and caregivers.



The process for becoming a home provider is rigorous.

Applicants must pass a federal background check, complete 80 hours of initial training and 20 hours of additional training each year, and maintain certifications in first aid, CPR and administering medications.

Home caregivers must live on-site, are required to provide around-the-clock supervision and care for their veterans, and have relief staff for when they go on vacation or need to conduct other business.

Veterans in the Medical Foster Care program must also use VA's Home-Based Primary Care program, which provides a team of health professionals to treat veterans in their homes. A VA study found that this type of home-based care yielded a 31% reduction in hospital admissions for veterans in the program and 59% drop in VA in-patient hospitalization days.



VA officials said that more veterans have elected to use the in-home medical care and caregiver programs during the pandemic, as well as the Medical Foster Care program, to reduce their risk of contracting COVID-19 and to have more flexibility in medical treatment.

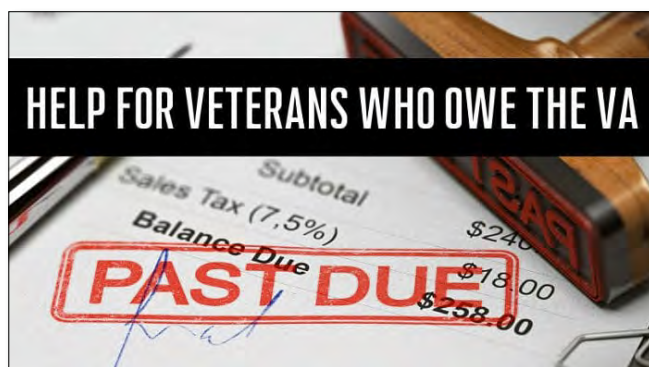
"Veterans using these programs have experienced fewer hospitalizations and emergency department visits, reduced hospital and nursing home days and fewer nursing home readmissions and inpatient complications," Hartronft said.

More information on these programs is available at the VA's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care website: <https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/index.asp>

VA Establishes New Threshold For Reporting Benefits/Medical Debt

VA has published a final rule in the Federal Register, Feb. 2, amending VA's procedures for reporting debt to consumer reporting agencies. These revisions change VA's minimum requirements for reporting debt.

The rule also provides opportunity for relief and helps veterans experiencing financial hardship. This is especially important now that the department has resumed debt collection activities as of Oct. 1, 2021.



“Reporting debt to consumer reporting agencies impacts credit worthiness--and negative reports may cause financial distress for veterans,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “Late remittance or nonpayment can lead to debt collection. However, overpayment of benefits funds is often debt accrued through no fault of the veteran. These new changes will result in a 99% reduction in unfavorable debt reported to consumer reporting agencies, thus reducing financial distress for veterans.”

Roughly 530,000 allowable VA debts were reported annually to CRAs resulting in approximately 60,000 delinquent VA debts being referred to credit reporting agencies each year. The VA secretary is authorized to prescribe regulations for establishing the minimum threshold and methodology used to determine debt reported by the department.

Under these new amendments, VA will not report to CRAs until all available collection efforts are exhausted and the specified debt becomes classified as not collectible. Additionally, the department will not report debts owed by veterans determined to be catastrophically disabled and entitled to VA's cost-free health care due to low income.

“This action by VA sets an important new standard to halt the financial distress many families face when medical debt unfairly hits their credit report,” said Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director Rohit Chopra. “I expect that many in the health care industry will seek to follow Secretary McDonough's lead to end the practice of forcing patients to pay up through aggressive credit report coercion.”

Relief options will continue for veterans still experiencing financial distress. Enhanced relief options include repayment plans, waivers, and temporary hardship suspensions. VA will also continue to report any debt incurred by individuals who have committed fraud, misrepresentation, or bad faith. Veterans and beneficiaries with questions regarding overpayments of benefits may reference frequently asked questions at a page created by VA: <https://www.va.gov/manage-va-debt/>.

You can also call a special toll-free number: (800) 827-0648. For questions about medical and pharmacy copayment debt:

https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/copays.asp). Veterans can contact the Health Resource Center toll-free at 1-(866) 400-1238.



DVS Offices Are Open for In-Person Assistance—By Appointment Only

DVS offices are open for in-person visits for veterans or their eligible dependents for assistance with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or for anything that a veteran or his/her family may need help. DVS has formed partnerships with federal, state, local, and private agencies dedicated to helping veterans and their families.

All DVS office visits are on an appointment-only basis. Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Veterans or their eligible

dependents **must** make an appointment with a DVS veterans service officer (VSO) via the contact information on the following page. With the COVID-19 virus and new variants still posing a health threat, DVS is requiring visitors to wear a protective facemask. DVS staff will observe COVID-19 six-foot social distancing, and clean & disinfect offices in-between customer visits.

DVS VSOs are also continuing to offer the same service by email or phone. Veterans from anywhere in the state can contact *any* DVS VSO for assistance.

Below are the locations and contact information for the fifteen DVS offices and nineteen VSOs, the DVS women veterans program (an option for women veterans), the DVS Tribal/Pueblo Liaison, the Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries, and the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) for veterans who want to open, expand, or purchase a business—or secure government contracts.

Alamogordo

VSO: David Henley

411 10th Street #107

(575) 937-5620

david.henley1@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Otero**, Lincoln,

Albuquerque (Downtown)

Temporarily vacant. For in-person help, contact the Albuquerque NE Heights office. (Or contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance)

Albuquerque (Downtown)

Temporarily vacant. For in-person help, contact the Albuquerque NE Heights office. (Or contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance)

Albuquerque (NE Heights)

Johnny Martinez

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 274-3609

johnW.martinez2@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Bernalillo**, Sandoval, Socorro, Torrance, Valencia

Albuquerque (NE Heights)

Jesus Palomino

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 681-6998

jesus.palomino1@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Bernalillo**, Sandoval, Socorro, Torrance, Valencia

Carlsbad

Dagmar Youngberg

101 N. Halagueno

(575) 988-5900

dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Eddy**, Chaves, Lea

Clovis

Matt Barela

904 W. Sixth St.

(575) 825-9602

matthew.barea@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Curry**, DeBaca, Quay, Roosevelt

Farmington

Please contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance...or to make an appointment for in-person assistance during regularly-scheduled outreach visits.

Gallup

Durrell Tsosie

908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A

(505) 218-0348

durell.tsosie@state.nm.us

Counties served: **McKinley**, Catron, Cibola, San Juan

(continued on next page)

Gallup**Benjamin Stewart**

908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A
(575) 386-7911

benjamin.stewart@state.nm.us

McKinley, Catron, Cibola, San Juan

Las Cruces**Rosa Bycenski**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782

rosa.bycenski@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Doña Ana**,
Grant, Sierra

Las Vegas, NM**Martín Márquez**

917 Douglas Ave.
(575) 520-5079

martinM.marquez@state.nm.us

San Miguel, Catron, Colfax,
Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Union

Roswell**Danielle Thompson**

1600 SE Main St./Suite "A"

(575) 416-2284

danielle.thompson@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Chaves**, Lincoln

Women Veterans Program**Robin Wilson (Program Mgr.)**

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (ABQ)

(505) 372-9106

robin.wilson@state.nm.us

Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery**Randy Myklebust (Supervisor)**

34 Country Club Rd.

(505) 225-4341

Grants

*Temporarily vacant. Please contact the
any DVS office for phone or email
assistance.*

Las Cruces**Miguel Martinez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782

miguel.martinez1@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Doña Ana**,
Grant, Sierra

Las Vegas, NM**Arturo Marlow**

917 Douglas Ave.
(505) 331-8838

arturo.marlow@state.nm.us

San Miguel, Catron, Colfax,
Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Union

Santa Fe**Nick McKenzie**

Bataan Memorial Bldg/1st floor

407 Galisteo St./Room 134

(505) 218-3125

nicholas.mckenzie1@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Santa Fe**, Los
Alamos, Rio Arriba, Taos

DVS Native American Liaison**Beverly Charley**

San Juan College Veterans Center 4601
College Blvd./Room 1715-B

(505) 241-3322

beverly.charley@state.nm.us

Ft. Stanton State Veterans Cemetery**Stephen McConnell (Supervisor)**

1398 State Highway 220

(505) 383-4381

Hobbs**Mark Woffindale**

2120 North Alto St.
(575) 392-5290

mark.woffindale@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Lea**, Chaves, Eddy

Las Cruces**Vincent Tellez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782

vincent.tellez@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Doña Ana**,
Grant, Sierra

Rio Rancho**Dustin Newsom**

1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D, Room 2041
(505) 221-7190

dustin.newsom@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Sandoval**,
Los Alamos

Silver City**Chris Teran**

Western New Mexico University
Juan Chacon Bldg./Room 138-A

1000 West College Ave.

(575) 313-5627

christopher.teran@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Grant**, Hidalgo,
Luna

Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)**Rich Coffel (Director)**

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (ABQ)

(505) 220-9932

richardL.coffel@state.nm.us

Gallup State Veterans Cemetery**Gilbert Lopez (Supervisor)**

333 National Cemetery Dr.

(505) 905-9771