

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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THE NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES (DVS)

DVS Mission

To provide the highest quality service and advocacy for New Mexico's veterans and their families.

DVS Vision

To be recognized as a premier agency that anticipates and meets the changing needs of New Mexico's veterans and their families by investing for tomorrow—and delivering today.

DVS Core Values (C.A.R.E.S)

Commitment

DVS is committed to the agency's mandate—the sole reason of the agency's existence—of serving our state's veterans and their families.

Accountability

DVS will hold the agency's employees to the highest standards expected of a premier professional service organization.

Respect

DVS will treat every veteran, regardless of their rank while they were in military service, with the respect and gratitude they have earned for sacrificing to serve and protect our country.

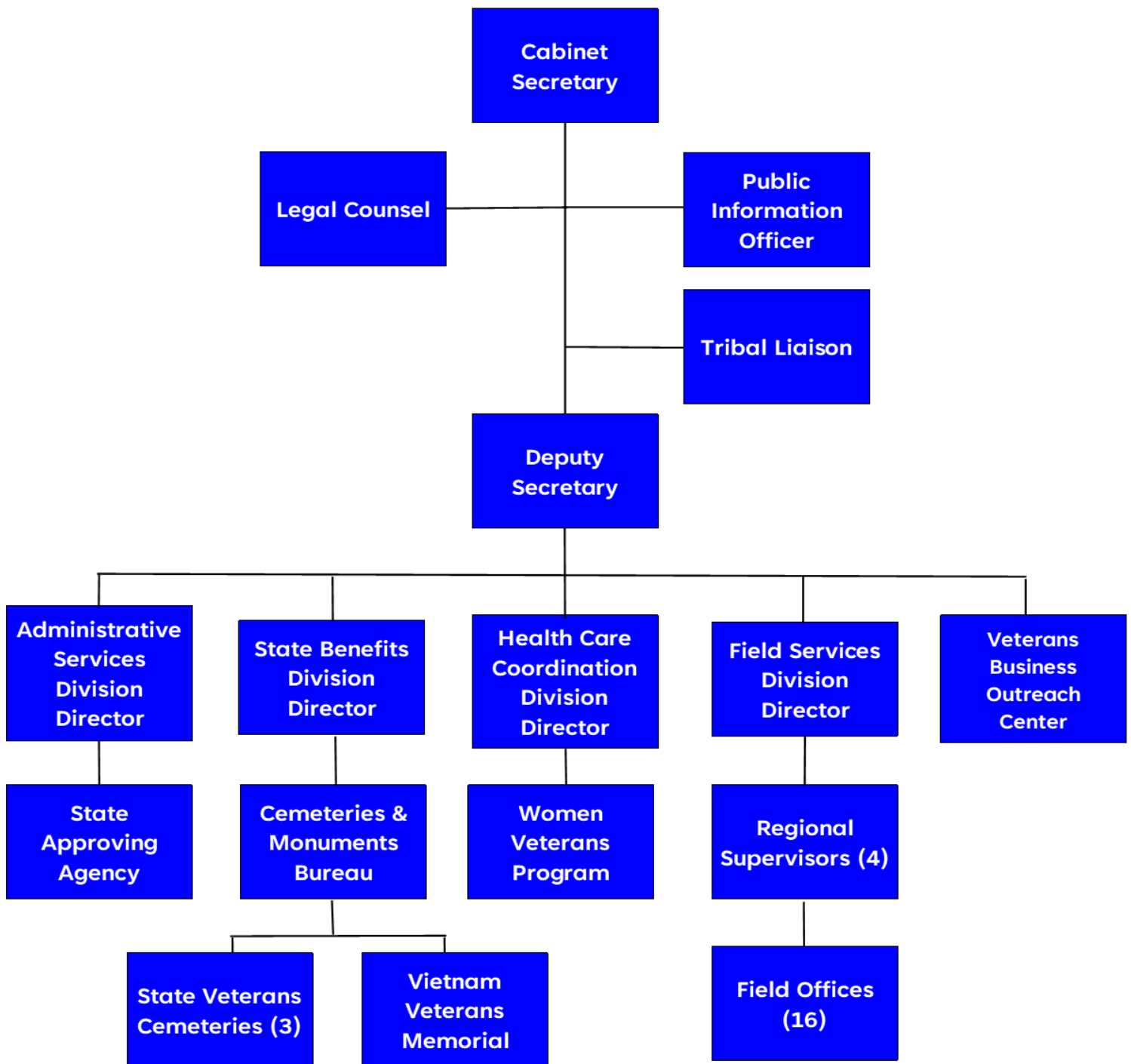
Empathy

DVS staff are all veterans, are closely related to a veteran, or strongly support those who have served in the military—and therefore understand and have a strong compassion for all veterans and their families.

Stewardship

DVS staff will ensure responsible stewardship of the human, financial, and informational programs and resources entrusted to us. We will improve performance through the use of innovative technologies, evidence-based practices, and sound business

DVS Organizational Chart



DVS Secretary-Designate Donnie Quintana



Donnie Quintana
DVS Secretary-Designate

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed retired New Mexico Army National Guard Col. Donnie Quintana as DVS Secretary in January of 2023. He had been serving as deputy secretary and interim leader of DVS since late October, working closely with outgoing Secretary Sonya Smith and department staff to ensure a smooth and effective transition of leadership.

“Donnie brings decades of leadership experience in both state government and the military to his new role at the Department of Veterans Services,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “As a native New Mexican, a veteran, and a well-respected public servant, his background with both the constituents he serves and the intricacies of state government services will be invaluable. I am grateful for his continued service and look forward to what he will accomplish at the department.”

Secretary-Designate Quintana has several decades of experience in public service. He most recently served as the local government division director for the state Department of Finance and Administration, where he played an integral role in the establishment of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which managed the distribution of over \$200 million in emergency rental assistance funds.

Secretary-Designate Quintana also previously served for 20 years at the state Economic Development Department in various leadership roles.

He also served nearly three decades with the New Mexico National Guard in a variety of leadership positions. Among his most notable were as brigade commander, chief of staff, and in a deployment to Afghanistan as executive officer and corps commander/senior mentor for the Afghan National Army as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The native of Pecos, NM, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics, with a minor in Economics, from New Mexico State University, and is also a graduate of the Inter-American Defense College at Fort Lesley McNair in Washington, D.C.

“I am extremely humbled and honored to be able to serve New Mexico veterans and their families. I am committed to ensuring we honor their dedicated service to our country and state by advocating on their behalf and supporting them and their families in every way possible.”

Secretary-Designate Quintana is set for a confirmation hearing by the state senate during the 2023 New Mexico Legislature that convened on January 17 before the session adjourns 60-days later on March 18.

Directory of DVS Main Offices

MAIN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Bataan Memorial Bldg.
407 Galisteo St./first floor, Room 134
Santa Fe, NM 87501

•CABINET SECRETARY-DESIGNATE **Donnie Quintana**

(confirmation hearing to be held during the 2023 legislature Jan. 17-Mar. 18)

Executive Assistant	Shannon Quintana	(505) 827-6334
General Counsel	Gabrielle Sanchez-Sandoval	
Public Information Officer	Ray Seva	(505) 362-6089
Pueblo & Tribal Liaison	Beverly Charley	(575) 241-3322

•Deputy Secretary **(temporarily vacant)**

•Administrative Services Division **Director (temporarily vacant)**

Budget Bureau	Danelle Lucero— <i>Chief Financial Officer</i>
State Approving Agency	Katherine Snyder — <i>Agency Director</i>
Information & Technology Services	Terrence Rickard— <i>Chief Information Officer</i>

•State Benefits Division **Ed Mendez—Director**

Receptionist/Intake Specialist	Christina Kreutz	(505) 827-6300
State Benefits Bureau	Jeff George— <i>Bureau Manager</i>	
Cemeteries & Memorials Program	David Walker— <i>Program Manager</i>	

State Veterans Cemeteries

Angel Fire	Randal Myklebust— <i>Supervisor</i>	(505) 225-4341
Ft. Stanton	Stephen McConnell— <i>Supervisor</i>	(505) 383-4381
Gallup	Gilbert Lopez— <i>Supervisor</i>	(505) 905-9771
Vietnam Veterans Memorial	DB Herbst— <i>Manager</i>	(575) 377-2293

ALBUQUERQUE OFFICE

5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Receptionist/Administrative Support	(505) 383-2400
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•Field Services Division **Robin Wilson—Director** **(505) 219-5564** (see pages 8 & 9 for contact information)

•Health Care Division	Diane Mourning Brown—Director	318-6273
Women Veterans Program	Theresa Figueroa— <i>Coordinator</i>	372-9106

•Veterans Business Outreach Center	Rich Coffel—Director	220-9932
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Pueblo & Tribal Liaison

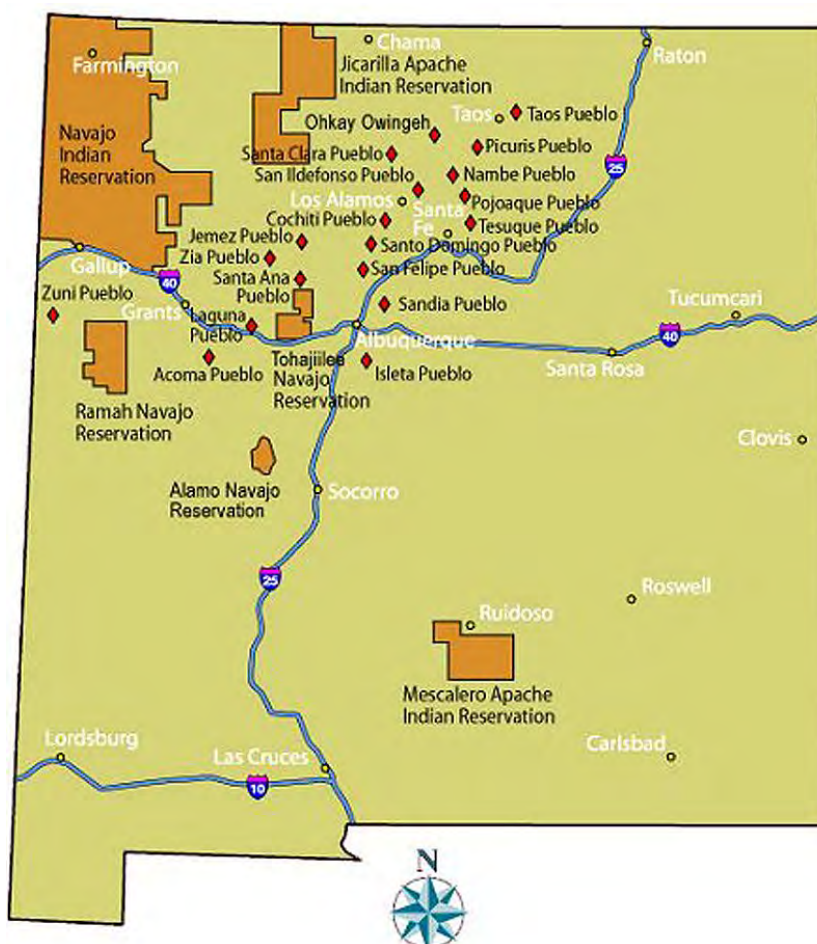
DVS created a pueblos and tribal liaison position in 2022 to provide advice and guidance to the DVS cabinet secretary and division directors on matters regarding the 9,000 Native American veterans living in New Mexico.

An emphasis is on serving Native American veterans living in the 19 federally recognized pueblos and three Apache nations within the state, and the Navajo nation which also spreads to Arizona and Utah.

The vast majority of New Mexico is rural, and many New Mexicans do not have access to adequate transportation to get help with filing VA claims or applying for state veterans benefits. This is often the case with many Native American veterans, who also lack phone or internet service to get the help they need.

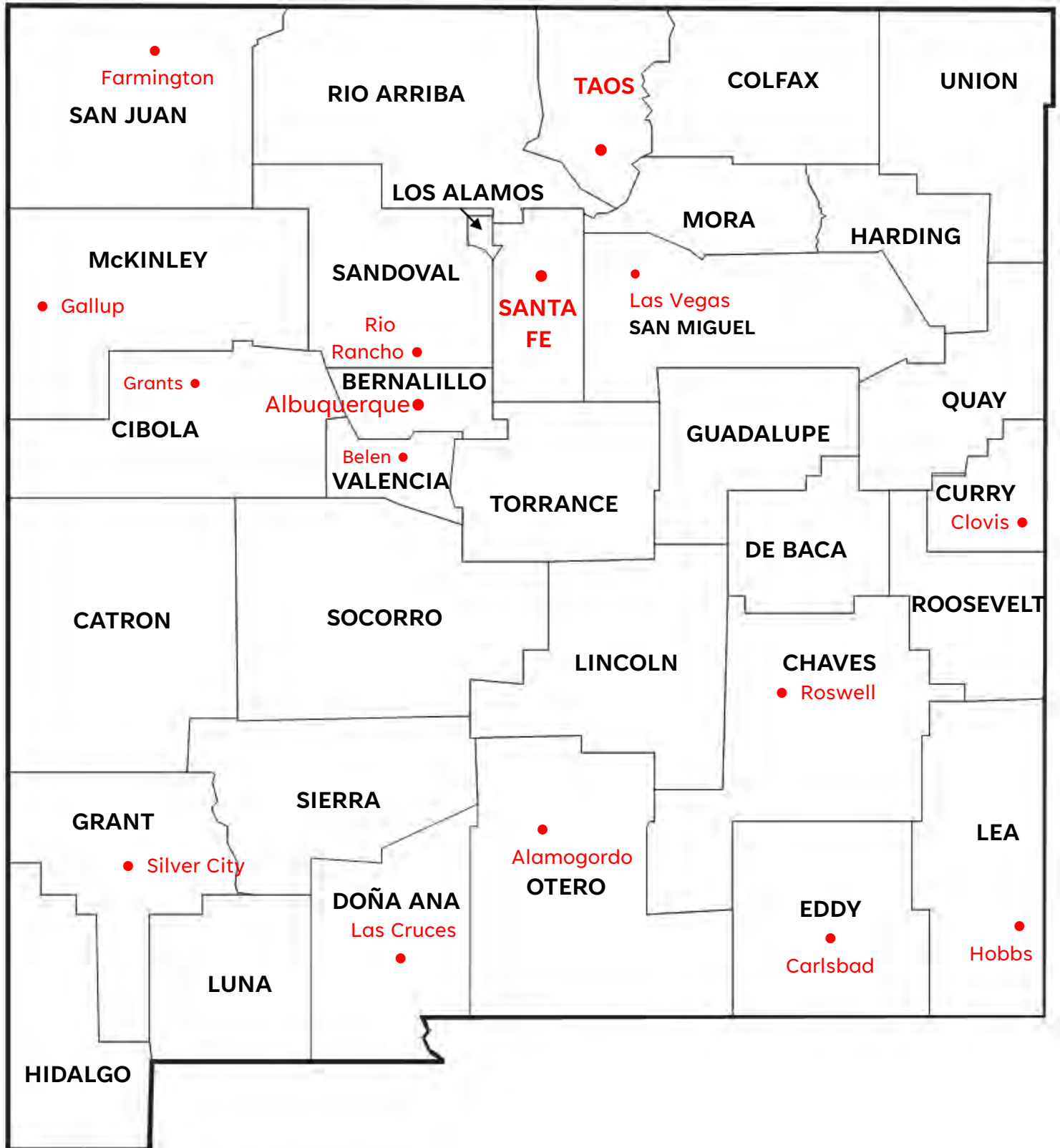
The DVS tribal liaison therefore focuses on outreach to veterans in New Mexico's pueblos and tribal nations to educate about their eligible benefits. As a certified veterans service officer, the tribal liaison can help file benefits claims or assist with any other issues a veteran or his/her family needs help with.

To strengthen this service, the DVS tribal liaison has formed strong relationships with the New Mexico VA Health Care System, the Albuquerque VA Regional Office, the New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs, and many other federal, state, and local county governments. DVS frequently teams with these other entities to host combined outreach events, conferences, and workshops. The tribal liaison also hosts monthly virtual and in-person briefings at the pueblos and tribal nations to educate attendees about their benefits and answer any questions. Native American veterans can contact DVS Pueblos & Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley at beverly.charley@dvs.nm.gov or (575) 241-3322.



FIELD SERVICES DIVISION

The heart and soul of DVS are the agency's 25 nationally-certified veterans service officers (VSOs) working in the agency's 16 field offices throughout the state shown below in red. These VSOs are the "boots on the ground" staff that help veterans or their eligible dependents with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or assisting with any other issues facing a veteran and their family.



DVS Field Offices in New Mexico

DVS has field offices throughout the state that are staffed with nationally accredited veterans service officers who are dedicated to helping their veterans with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or with anything else a veteran or their family needs.

Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, (excluding holidays). Though this service is free, appointments are required and can be made by contacting the VSOs below. **Please note: in addition to in-office assistance, veterans from anywhere in the state can also contact any DVS VSO for phone or email assistance.**

Alamogordo/Southeast NM

David Henley

411 10th Street #107

(575) 937-5620

david.henley@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque Metro Area

Dayle Bad Warrior

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE/Suite 2

(505) 383-2400

dayle.badwarrior@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque Metro Area

Austin Walker

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE/Suite 2

(505) 274-0393

austin.walker@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque Metro Area

Temporarily vacant. Please contact the other Albuquerque VSO for in-office assistance...or any VSO for phone/email help.

Belen/Albuquerque Metro Area

(opening soon)

718 South Main St/Space A, Unit 8

(TBD)

[TBD](#)

Carlsbad/Southeast NM

Dagmar Youngberg

101 N. Halagueno

(575) 988-5900

dagmar.youngberg@dvs.nm.gov

Clovis/Southeast NM

Matt Barela (supervisor)

904 W. Sixth St.

(575) 825-9602

matthew.barela@dvs.nm.gov

Clovis/Southeast NM

Benny Padilla

904 W. Sixth St.

(505) 537-1445

benseslado.padilla@dvs.nm.gov

Farmington/Northwest NM

Robert Guinn (supervisor)

San Juan College Vet Center/
Room 1715-B

(505) 327-2861

robert.guinn@dvs.nm.gov

Farmington/Northwest NM

Temporarily vacant. Please contact the other Farmington VSO for in-office assistance...or any DVS VSO for phone or email benefits assistance

Gallup/Northwest NM

John Livingston

908 E. Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A

(505) 389-8731

john.livingston@dvs.nm.gov

Grants/Northwest NM

April Ball

908 E. Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A

(505) 389-8731

april.ball@dvs.nm.gov

(more offices are on the next page)

Hobbs/Southeast NM**Fred Solis-Littlejohn**

2120 North Alto St.

(575) 241-0714

fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov**Las Cruces/Southwest NM****Miguel Martinez** (*supervisor*)

2024 E. Griggs Ave.

(505) 216-8782

miguel.martinez@dvs.nm.gov**Las Cruces/Southwest NM****Vincent Tellez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.

(505) 216-8782

vincent.tellez@dvs.nm.gov**Las Cruces/Southwest NM****Clint Anderson**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.

(505) 216-8782

clint.anderson@dvs.nm.gov**Las Vegas, NM/Northeast NM****Arturo Marlow** (*supervisor*)

917 Douglas Ave.

(505) 331-8838

arturo.marlow@dvs.nm.gov**Las Vegas/Northeast NM**

Temporarily vacant. Please contact the other Las Vegas VSO for in-office assistance, or any VSO for phone/email help

Rio Rancho/Albuquerque Metro**Dustin Newsom**

Sandoval County Admin. Bldg.

1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D, Room 2041

(505) 221-7190

dustin.newsom@dvs.nm.gov**Roswell/Southeast NM****Danielle Thompson**

1600 SE Main Street /Suite 2A

(575) 416-2282

danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov**Santa Fe/Northwest NM****Nick McKenzie**

Bataan Memorial Bldg.

407 Galisteo St./Room 134

(505) 218-3125

nicholas.mckenzie@dvs.nm.gov**Silver City/Southwest NM****Clarissa Sierra**

Western New Mexico University

Juan Chacon Bldg/Rm. 138A

1000 West College Ave.

(505) 313-5627

clarissa.sierra@dvs.nm.gov**Taos/Northwest NM****Leticia “Lety” Cano**

Health & Human Services Bldg/

145 Roy Rd.

(575) 709-5263

leticia.cano@dvs.nm.gov**Women Veterans Program****Theresa Figueroa**

DVS Albuquerque Office

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE/Suite 2

(505) 916-7449

theresa.figueroa@dvs.nm.gov**Pueblos/Tribal Liaison****Beverly Charley**

San Juan College Veterans Center

4601 College Blvd./Room 1715-B

(575) 241-3322

beverly.charley@dvs.nm.gov

FIELD SERVICES DIVISION

End-of-Year Report

NUMBER OF OFFICE VISITS	8,177
PHONE ASSISTANCE	10,409

General Contacts

Phone	6,011
Walk-ins	471
Emails	12,260
VA claims	4,337
New POA assignments	1,373
Total forms filed	10,843
Claims research	3,183

FEDERAL BENEFITS

Intent to File	1,012
Service-Connected Claims	1,710
Non-Service Connected Pension Claims	25
Health Care	295
Dependency & Indemnity Compensation	217
Appeals	553
Total	4,337

STATE VETERANS BENEFITS

Tax exemptions & waivers	1,341
License Plates	718
Parks Passes	364
Hunting & Fishing Licenses	233
Education Scholarships	11
Total	2,667

VETERANS SERVED (according to conflict/era)

Post-WWI	1
WWII	106
Korea	256
Vietnam	2,238
Persian Gulf	109
Afghanistan	529
Iraq	640
Peacetime	279
Other	47
Not applicable	10,358
TOTAL	15,532

STATE BENEFITS DIVISION

The DVS State Benefits Division encompasses the state benefits bureau and the cemetery & memorial operations bureau. It oversees the many state veterans benefits that are described below that are available for honorably-discharged veterans living in New Mexico.

The cemetery & memorial operations bureau oversees the DVS State Cemetery Program and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

The state benefits division director continuously works to identify additional benefits—bringing these to the attention of the cabinet secretary for possible introduction to state legislators for consideration as state law. The director also coordinates with the DVS Field Services Division for outreach throughout the state to increase awareness of these benefits and programs.

State Benefits Division 2022 End-of-Year Report

(January 1— December 31, 2022)

Property Tax Exemptions	2,870
Disabled Veteran Property Tax Waivers	1,450
License Plate Applications	730
State Parks & Museum Passes	512
Lifetime Hunting & Fishing Licenses	475
Wartime Scholarships	63
Vietnam War Veteran Scholarships	11
TOTAL	6,111

State Veterans Benefits



Veterans Tax Exemptions

Veterans Property Tax Exemption

Any veteran who served a minimum of 90 days consecutive active duty, was honorably discharged, and is a legal resident of New Mexico qualifies for a \$4,000 reduction in the taxable value of their real property for county taxation purposes. If not applied towards a property, the veteran may receive a 1/3 'discount off of their vehicle registrations. This benefit is also available to non-remarried surviving spouses of a veteran who would have otherwise qualified for this benefit.

Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption

Any veteran who has been rated 100% service-connected disabled (permanent & total) by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and is a legal resident of New Mexico qualifies for a complete property tax waiver on their primary residence. This benefit is also available to non-remarried surviving spouses of a veteran who would've otherwise qualified for this benefit.

Exemption from Excise Taxes on Vehicle Purchases

Any veteran who has suffered the loss or complete loss of use of one or more limbs due to their military service shall be exempted from excise taxes when purchasing a new vehicle.

Veterans Service Organization Property Tax Exemption

Any U.S. Congressionally-chartered Veterans service organization is exempt from paying property tax on the property of its facility. Many VSO's—especially those in rural areas of the state—have been devoting much of their fundraising revenue to paying property tax.



Veterans Education Benefits

Vietnam Veteran Scholarship

Veterans who have been residents of New Mexico for a minimum of ten years, have served in the Vietnam War, and were issued the Vietnam Campaign or Service Medal are eligible. This scholarship pays full tuition and provides a stipend for all books at any state-funded post-secondary school.

Wartime Veteran Scholarship Fund

Can be used by any veteran who has served in combat since August 1, 1990, and who has exhausted all available federal G.I. Education Benefits options. Veterans must be residents of New Mexico for at least ten years and have also been awarded a campaign medal. Tuition and fees for books are also capped on an annual basis.

In-State Tuition for Veterans

Veterans, their spouses and their children no longer have to wait to establish “in-state” residency status when applying for college. Those who wish to use their G.I. Education Benefit Bill can now immediately take advantage of less-expensive “resident” in-state tuition rates at any state funded college, university, vocational school or vocational training program.

World War II, Korean, and Vietnam War Veterans High School Diploma

Any veteran who left a New Mexico high school before graduating to serve in World War II, the Korean War, or Vietnam War will be awarded a valid high school diploma issued from the high school they were attending.

Children of Deceased Veterans Scholarship

A child between the ages of 16-26 whose parent was killed in action or died as a result of their combat wounds, was a member of the New Mexico National Guard and passed away while on activation by the Governor, or was a New Mexico State Police Officer who was killed in the line of duty, qualifies for a full tuition waiver at any state-funded post-secondary school. A \$150 stipend per semester will also be issued to help pay for books or fees.

Military Children School Enrollment Priority

Priority enrollment status is automatically assigned to incoming students or the New Mexico schools system whose active-duty, National Guard or Reservist parent is transferred to a New Mexico military facility.

VETERANS RECOGNITION BENEFITS

National Guard and Reserve Defined as Veterans

In New Mexico, veteran status is given to anyone honorably discharged after serving six consecutive years as a member of any national guard or reserve component unit. Veteran status is also given to any commissioned officers of the Public Health Service or the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration who served on active duty in service of the United States.

Veterans License Plates

Honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible for special veterans license plates—provided they show proof of eligibility. The two plates below are available for a one-time vehicle registration fee. Recipients are responsible for any annual vehicle license fees.



Armed Forces Veteran (any branch)



Woman Veteran (any branch)



Medal of Honor Recipient



Purple Heart Recipient



Ex-Prisoner of War

The three special-recognition plates shown above are available free of charge for any qualified veteran who can provide proof of eligibility:



Disabled Veteran License Plate

Honorably-discharged veterans rated at least 50 percent service-disabled are entitled to two free license plates.

Gold Star Family License Plate

For families with a son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, parent or step-parent killed in combat action. There is a four-plate limit per family. The first plate is free, and fees will be waived for the lifetime of the recipient. The remaining three plates are also free, but recipients are responsible for annual registration fees.



Patriot License Plate

The *Patriot License Plate* can be purchased by any licensed New Mexico driver who wants to recognize the contribution and sacrifice of the men and women who are serving or have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The one-time fee is \$27. (Regular vehicle registration fees still apply.)



Special MacArthur Service Medal

The Special MacArthur Service Medal is issued members of the 200th/515th Coast Artillery Units who were residents of New Mexico at their original time of entry into the U.S. Military and served under General Douglas MacArthur in the Philippine Islands during World War II. The medal is also available to surviving family members of the 200th/515th units

Other State Veterans Benefits

Service Member Child Custody Protection

Child custody arrangements cannot be modified while a parent is deployed for military service. All child custody issues involving a deployed parent must wait to be resolved until the deployed parent returns to New Mexico.



New Mexico Personnel Office Veterans Hiring Preference

All veterans honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces or anyone currently serving in the National Guard shall have five (5) points added to their final passing numerical scores on screening examinations performed by the NM State Personnel Office. Veterans honorably discharged with a service connected disability will have ten (10) points added to their final passing numerical score.

5% Procurement Advantage for Veteran-Owned Businesses or Contractors Who Are Veterans

The state of New Mexico shall set aside an additional 5% hiring preference for veteran-owned businesses or contractors over the existing 5% preference currently established for locally-owned businesses during the bidding process for state contracts and jobs.



Military Discharge Papers Protection

Military discharge papers filed with county clerks in the state of New Mexico shall only be made available to the veteran who filed them, the veteran's next-of-kin, or a person designated by a court of law as the veteran's general power-of-attorney.

Deceased Military Person's Disposition Arrangements

A person designated as the immediate contact on the Department of Defense (DoD) Emergency Data Form of an active-duty member of the U.S. Armed Forces can determine the means of disposition of that deceased Armed Forces member. The designee is authorized to make burial, funeral and disposition arrangements.

Veterans Free and Reduced-Fee Recreational Benefits

Veterans Day Recreation and Museum Privileges

Every Veterans Day holiday, any New Mexico resident who was honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces or is currently on active-duty—along with their spouse and children--is entitled to free use of any New Mexico state park. Admission fees will be also be waived for campsites, the Museum of New Mexico, the New Mexico Museum of Natural History, and the New Mexico Museum of Space History.

State Parks Day-Pass and Three Free Camping Nights for Disabled Veterans

Any veteran rated 50% or higher service-connected disabled may obtain an annual free day-use pass and three free nights of camping for personal use only. Qualified veterans may apply for these passes by showing proper identification and proof of disability at any DVS field office.

Free State Parks Monuments and Museums Pass for Disabled Veterans

Any veteran rated 50% or higher service-connected disabled may apply for a free state monument and museum pass for personal use only. Qualified veterans can apply for this pass by showing proper identification and proof of disability at any DVS field office.



Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License for 100% Service-Connected Disabled Veterans

Any veteran who is a New Mexico resident and is rated 100% service-connected disabled is eligible for a free lifetime New Mexico small-game hunting and fishing license.

Reduced-Fee Hunting and Fishing License for Disabled Veterans

New Mexico's 26,000 service-connected disabled veterans may apply for a reduced fee \$10 small-game & fishing license--no matter *what percentage their disability*.

Hunting Fee Discount for Non-Resident Disabled Veterans Undergoing Rehabilitation

Hunting licenses for deer, antelope, elk, javelina and turkey may be sold to non-resident disabled U.S. Armed Forces members or veterans at resident license-fee rates if the applicant is undergoing a rehabilitation program utilizing hunting activities supported by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or an authorized nonprofit organization.

Temporary Hunting and Fishing License for Active-Duty Military Personnel

Any active duty military personnel, National Guard or Reserve member who is a legally domiciled resident of New Mexico can apply for a temporary active duty fishing or small game hunting license. Applicants must show proof of residency and not claim residency elsewhere. Applicants may also apply if they are on active duty outside the state but are currently on leave here in New Mexico for not more than 30 days.

DVS State Cemetery & Memorial Operations Bureau

All honorably discharged deceased veterans of the United States Armed Forces are entitled to a military burial with military honors provided by an Honor Guard. According to the latest VA data, nearly half of New Mexico's 148,377 veterans live beyond the VA's designated 75-mile service-area radius of its two national cemeteries: The Santa Fe National Cemetery in northern New Mexico, and the Ft. Bayard National Cemetery in the southwestern part of the state. DVS created the State Cemetery & Memorial Operations Bureau in 2013 to build four rural-area cemeteries. DVS successfully applied for funding from the VA's Cemetery Grant Program, which funds VA-funded-but state-managed veterans cemeteries.



Ft. Stanton State Veterans Cemetery

New Mexico's first state veterans cemetery was built in Ft. Stanton in Lincoln County (*left photo*). The 14.8-acre, \$5.7 million cemetery opened on Veterans Day, 2017, featuring 510 in-ground crypts, and 140 columbarium and in-ground niches for interment of cremated remains. **2022 interments: 49** **Total interments: 220**

Fort Stanton Merchant Marine & Military Cemetery (*right photo*) Since 2017, DVS has managed the adjacent Fort Stanton Merchant Marine & Military Cemetery, which opened in 1899 to bury members of the U.S. Merchant Marines who perished from tuberculosis while being treated at the adjacent Fort Stanton Hospital. The cemetery also accepted burials from hospital staff and local-area veterans. More than 1,000 remains are interred at the old cemetery, which stopped accepting burials in 2014.



Gallup State Veterans Cemetery

A second facility, the Gallup State Veterans Cemetery (*left photo*) opened on Memorial Day 2019. The 20.6-acre, \$6.6 million cemetery has space 443 in-ground crypts, 140 in-ground cremains gravesites, and 400 columbarium niches.

2022 interments: 46

Total interments: 195

Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery (*right photo*)

The latest facility, the Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery, opened on July 23, 2020 as the third state veterans cemetery managed by DVS. The 10.3-acre, \$3.2 million dollar cemetery located in the meadow below the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and features 100 in-ground crypts, 100 in-ground cremains gravesites, and 200 columbarium niches.

2022 interments: 51

Total interments: 122



Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery

Plans are in the development phase for the Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery. The 436-crypt facility will be built on ten acres just north of the existing Sunset Memorial Gardens Cemetery.

Military Honors Burial Program: Providing *The Final Salute*

There are 26 all-volunteer Honor Guards throughout the state to provide a military funeral and “final salute” for deceased honorably discharged veterans.

The DVS Cemeteries & Memorials Bureau oversees the state’s *Military Honors Burial Program* which, courtesy of these Honor Guards, provides a burial befitting someone who was honorably discharged from military service.



The Honor Guards feature trained uniformed men and women who perform the ceremonial military funeral duties of the covering and uncovering of a casket with an American flag, folding and presentation of the flag to a widow or family member, a rifle volley, and bugle rendition of *Taps*. This service is provided free to the family. DVS ensures that all units undergo annual training, and are compensated for their duties with a small stipend for each service performed. It is up to a veterans’ family and/or a local funeral home to schedule an Honor Guard at a funeral. Any veterans service organization interested in registering as an Honor Guard can contact the DVS State Cemetery Division for more information.

New Mexico’s 26 Registered Honor Guards

ACOMA

American Legion Post 116
PO Box 116
Acoma Pueblo, NM 87034
(505) 362-2868

ALBUQUERQUE

American Legion Post 13
1201 Mountain Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 243-1901

ALBUQUERQUE

American Legion Post 69
9000 4th St. NW
Alameda, NM 87114
(505) 379-1136

ALBUQUERQUE

Women Veterans of NM
PO Box 36648
Albuquerque, NM 87176
(505) 306-3756

CARLSBAD

Carlsbad Veterans Honor
Guard/PO Box 615
Carlsbad, NM 88220
(575) 200-6236

ESPAÑOLA

American Legion Post 17
PO Box 1273
Española, NM 87532
(505) 753-6712

ESTANCIA

American Legion Post 22
PO Box 656
Estancia, NM 87016
(505) 384-3096

FARMINGTON

VFW Post 2182
5641 Bloomfield Hwy.
Farmington, NM 87401
(505) 327-2182

GRANTS

VFW Post 3221
202 Davis St.
Grants, NM 87020
(505) 287-2328

(list continues on next page)

ISLETA PUEBLO

Isleta Pueblo Veterans Assoc.
PO Box 338
Isleta, NM 87002
(505) 514-7332

LAS VEGAS

VFW Post 1547
PO Box 1294
Las Vegas, NM 87701
(505) 429-3009

RATON

VFW Post 1793
PO Box 716
Raton, NM 87740
(575) 428-8116

SANTA CRUZ

DAV/Luchetti Castner Ch. 15
7 Fresquez Lane
Santa Cruz, NM 87567

SHIPROCK

VFW Post 9517
4705 Baltic Ave.
Shiprock, NM 87402
(505) 947-5171

TAOS

VFW Post 3259
PO Box 3122
Taos, NM 87571
(575) 779-7850

LAS CRUCES

El Perro Diablo Detachment
478/PO Box 7322
Las Cruces, NM 88006
(575) 523-1236

MORA

VFW Post 1131
PO Box 0555
Mora, NM 87732
(575) 387-2618

RIO RANCHO

Marine Corps League Det. 1316
PO Box 44304
Rio Rancho, NM 87174
(505) 892-5618

SANTA FE

American Legion Post 1
1601 Berry Ave.
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 469-6270

SILVER CITY

Marine Corps League
Detachment 1328/Box 2251
Silver City, NM 88062
(575) 574-0361

TOHATCHI

Tohatchi Veterans Org./
Navajo Nation
PO Box 1236
Tohatchi, NM 87325
(505) 701-6435

LAS VEGAS

Vietnam Veterans of America
Northern NM/Chapter 1063
PO Box 3211
Las Vegas, NM 87701

PORTALES

American Legion Post 31
PO Box 275
Portales, NM 88130
(575) 226-0302

ROSWELL

Roswell Veterans Honor Guard
PO Box 4112
Roswell, NM 88202
(575) 626-3157

SANTA FE

American Legion Post 12
1000 Cordova Pl #906
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 230-9740

SILVER CITY

American Legion Post 18
PO Box 1464
Silver City, NM 88062
(623) 293-1639



The Forgotten Heroes Funeral Program

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services' *Forgotten Heroes Funeral Program* ensures that, in the event no family member comes forward to claim the body of a veteran upon death, the veteran will be provided with a military funeral at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

The program was developed in 2010 through a collaborated effort between DVS, Bernalillo County, and the State Office of the Medical Investigator to provide military funerals for unclaimed deceased Bernalillo County veterans

whose cremated remains had been kept in possession by local funeral homes. DVS and Bernalillo county expressed a desire to provide a funeral befitting someone who had sacrificed to serve our country as a member of the United States Armed Forces.

The Forgotten Heroes Program was then introduced to all 33 counties in New Mexico. The program designates the state as the family of record of any verified unclaimed deceased veteran. Verification of an honorable discharge from the United States Armed Forces is done by county officials and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).



After an unclaimed deceased veteran is cremated, DVS takes possession of the cremains and contacts the Santa Fe National Cemetery and an Honor Guard to provide a military funeral. Since the program's inception in 2010, 196 unclaimed deceased veterans have been laid to rest.

The public is invited to serve as "family"—with the governor, lieutenant governor, or DVS secretary delivering the eulogy. This funeral provides the farewell and final salute these fallen veterans have earned through their service to our country....and ensuring that they are not forgotten in the end.



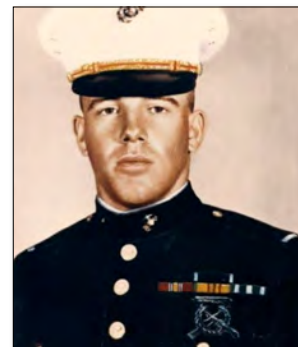
The above photos are from the September 29, 2022 Forgotten Heroes Funeral, where the unclaimed cremated remains of 29 deceased veterans were laid to rest with military honors at the Santa Fe National Cemetery. **Above left photo:** New Mexico Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Miguel Aguilar, the adjutant general of New Mexico, presented the flag used to cover the urns to then-Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire



The DVS Cemetery & Monuments Bureau manages the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire—the first formal Vietnam War memorial in the country. It is at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and along the Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway in northeastern New Mexico.

The Memorial was built by Albuquerque residents Victor and Jeanne Westphall, the parents of U.S. Marine 1st Lt. David Westphall who was among sixteen Marines killed in an ambush on May 22, 1968 in South Vietnam.



**USMC 1st Lt.
David Westphall**

The Westphalls were compelled to build a 32-acre memorial honoring not only their son, but all Americans who served during the war. It was dedicated in 1971—on the three-year anniversary of David's death. The monument received national attention and is credited for inspiring the creation of the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. in 1982. Five years later, the Westphall Memorial was recognized by Congress as a memorial of national significance. In 2004, the David Westphall Foundation donated the Memorial to the New Mexico State Parks Division—becoming the state's 33rd state park.



On July 3, 2017, management of the Memorial was transferred from the state parks division to DVS. Legislators agreed with the following reasoning successfully argued by both agencies:

“The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not a park. It is not a place for families to picnic or hike. It is hallowed ground for visitors to reflect upon and honor the service and sacrifice of American service members during the Vietnam War. It is especially sacred for family and friends of the 58,200 who lost their lives—398 of whom were from New Mexico.”

2022 Visitor Count

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire is the most visited monument in New Mexico, Attracting 48,043 visitors in 2022 from around the world. It is an especially powerful place to visit for Vietnam War veterans, their families, and friends.



HEALTH CARE DIVISION



The DVS Health Care Coordination Division, per state statute, develops and coordinates veterans health care, veteran homeless/transitional living, housing, suicide prevention/behavioral health needs, transportation programs.

The division also manages the agency's Women Veterans Program, and advises and coordinates with other agency divisions regarding education, outreach, and referrals for these programs.

In addition to these agency initiatives, the DVS Health Care Coordination Division also coordinates with and makes referrals to the New Mexico VA Health Care System. The NMVAHCS manages New Mexico's only VA medical center--the Raymond G. Murphy Medical Center in Albuquerque--along with the 15 VA-managed community-based outpatient centers (CBOCs). The NMVAHCS also manages the state's and four Vet Centers that provide behavioral/mental health care for veterans. More Information on VA health care can be found at: www.va.gov/directory/Guide/state.asp?STATE=NM.

The Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program

The DVS Health Care Division is in its third year of managing its Highly Rural Transportation (HRVT) Program that provides free round-trip transportation from a veterans home in 15 counties to any medical appointments at VA facilities, or pre-approved non-VA facilities.

The lack of transportation options was the greatest factor cited by many rural veterans nationwide for not being able to access their earned VA health care benefits. DVS successfully applied for a VA Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Grant in September of 2020 to address this critical need for New Mexico's rural-area veterans.

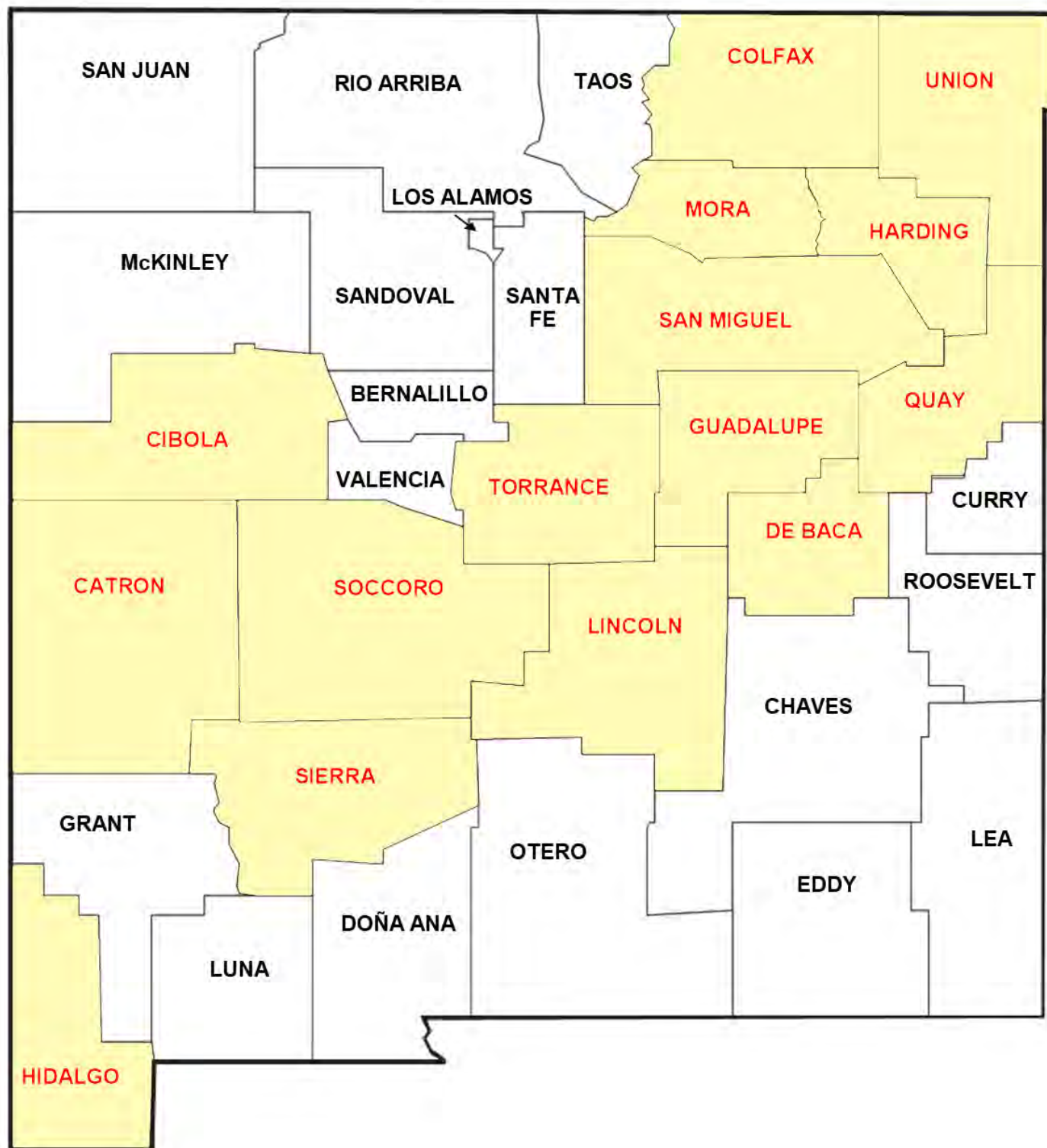


The grant stipulates that only "highly rural" counties are eligible for coverage--counties that VA identifies as those with less than seven residents per square mile. Per this VA definition, the HRVT Program serves the following 15 counties in New Mexico: Catron, Cibola, Colfax, De Baca, Guadalupe, Harding, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Union.

Veterans in these 15 counties must make reservations at least three days in advance of their appointment by calling (505) 429-5906 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

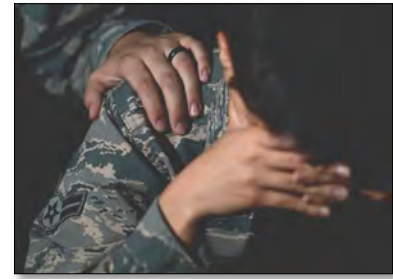
In 2022, the HRVT Program provided 466 rides--covering 124,284 miles of travel-- for 396 veterans for their medical appointments. As 2023 begins, DVS is working on expanding this program to serve the state's 18 other counties through a combination of partnerships, additional grants, and state funding. Details will be released as this plan is developed and finalized

The 15 Counties Served by the DVS Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program



Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Veteran suicide awareness and prevention is another key platform for the Healthcare Division. DVS has joined the nationwide Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Veterans and Family Members--more commonly known simply as The Governor's Challenge.



The health care division is tasked with co-chairing the Governor's Challenge here in New Mexico. DVS will embark on a process of collaborating, planning, and implementing suicide prevention best practices and policies for active service members, veterans, and their families throughout the state. Working with federal, state, and local agencies in New Mexico, this collaborative effort will develop state-wide plans based on a comprehensive public health approach to a national strategy for preventing veteran suicide. Measurable outcomes will be reported to VA and the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Along with taking part in the Governor's Challenge, the DVS healthcare coordination division is also a co-chair of the city of Albuquerque's participation in the nationwide *Mayor's Challenge*—a similar nationwide approach to veteran suicide prevention in partnership with cities across the nation. Albuquerque was one of the first eight cities selected to participate to form interagency teams to increase suicide prevention support for veterans in their communities. As with the Governor's Challenge, the goal is to reduce suicides among service members, veterans and their families using a public health approach to suicide prevention. For more information: https://www.va.gov/homeless/mayors_challenge.asp

Veteran Homelessness

Ending veteran homelessness is another prime focus of the DVS Health Care Division. DVS is a strong supporter of the New Mexico Veterans Integration Center ("the VIC") in Albuquerque—a registered non-profit agency...and the state's only shelter for specifically for homeless veterans.



The DVS healthcare coordination division participates in outreaches by the VIC to help homeless veterans with basic needs (toiletries, clothing, blankets and food) and to assist them with filing VA claims or accessing state veterans benefits. DVS veterans service officers refer veterans who are identified as homeless or at-risk to the VIC and other homeless veteran service organizations for immediate short-term and long-term "re-integration" assistance. For more information about the VIC: www.nmvic.org



DVS Women Veterans Program

The DVS healthcare coordination division manages the agency's Women Veterans Program to specifically focus on assisting New Mexico's women veterans. The program's mission is to advocate for women veterans throughout New Mexico; to ensure women veterans and their eligible dependents are knowledgeable of available state and federal benefits and that women veterans have equitable access to veteran programs and services.

According to VA, women represent the fastest growing segment of our nation's veteran population. VA data indicates there are 2 million women veterans in America—about 10% of the total veteran population of 19.1 million. In New Mexico, VA data show there are 16,600 women veterans—nearly 11% of the state's veteran population of 148,377. VA estimates women veteran enrollment with VA healthcare system will increase 27% by the year 2029.

Women now make up 15% of active duty and 18% of Guard/Reserve service members. Based on the upward trend of women in all branches of service, the number of women veterans and female VA users is expected to double again in the next decade. As American service members retire or fulfill their military commitments, our nation—including the state of New Mexico—must be ready to fulfill its obligation to them for their service.



In addition to providing veterans benefits they've earned for this sacrifice, DVS recognizes that many women veterans may have issues and needs that are unique to women. Many do not identify themselves as veterans...because they are women...believing veterans benefits are only for males, or for those who only went into combat.



Many women veterans are unaware about their right to VA healthcare, or don't know how to access it. Many have been subjected to military sexual trauma (MST) Many women veterans manage family households—and can face family reunification/assimilation issues. Many women face employment barriers encountered by non-veteran women in the civilian workplace. The women veterans program coordinator recognizes these unique needs of women veterans and strives to improve the awareness of their eligibility for VA and state veterans benefits, and community resources at their disposal.

The program director also advocates for women veterans by assessing their needs, and makes recommendations to the DVS cabinet secretary for changes to existing benefits or possible introduction of future benefits in the state legislature. As a certified veterans service officer, the woman veterans program coordinator can also help women veterans file VA claims or file for state veterans benefits. The program coordinator is also a consistent presence at statewide veterans events—raising awareness of the program, educating women veterans about their available VA and state benefits, and encouraging women veteran participation. The program coordinator also expands the program's scope by partnering with other organizations that serve women veterans.

Women veterans can contact DVS Women Veterans Program Coordinator Theresa Figueroa for assistance at theresa.figueroa@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 372-9106.

The New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)



The New Mexico Veteran's Business Outreach Center (VBOC) was created in 2010 by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to help the SBA increase its effort to help entrepreneurial-minded veterans, transitioning active duty personnel, National Guard & Reserve members, and their spouses interested in starting or growing a small business. DVS was the only state government agency—and just one of a handful of recipients in the nation--selected by the SBA to create a “one-stop-shop” to provide this assistance.

New Mexico's VBOC can help with everything from business planning, start-up and expansion funding, marketing, landing federal contracts, and anything else a small business needs to launch and grow. In addition to providing private one-on-one business counseling, the VBOC conducts numerous *Boots to Business* small-business development workshops throughout the year for veterans...and at military installations for transitioning active-duty service members. The VBOC also presents a yearly *Southwest Veterans Business Conference*—bringing in small-business experts from across the nation to provide invaluable instruction and insight on a much larger scale. *(note: The past two Southwest Veterans Business Conferences were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and scheduling conflicts)*

Though based in the DVS Albuquerque office in the Northeast Heights part of the city, the VBOC also serves veterans and active-duty personnel in Colorado. Drop-in visits are welcome, but making an appointment is strongly encouraged, and can easily be done by contacting VBOC Director Rich Coffel at richard.coffel@dvs.nm.gov/(505) 220-9932; or VBOC Business Advisor Johnny Martinez at johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 469-8501.

VBOC 2022 End-of-Year Report

▪ number of clients counseled	164
▪ number of training events	85
▪ number of federal contracts VBOC helped secure for clients	32
—value of the 32 federal contracts: \$7.57 million	
▪ number of new business started	21
▪ number of jobs created	8
▪ number of Boots-to-Business classes presented	28
▪ number of Boots-to-Business training modules taught	121

Help for Job-Seeking Veterans



DVS has formed a strong partnership with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS)—the agency where DVS refers veterans who are looking for help finding a job.

DWS has a division dedicated to helping veterans, transitioning active-duty service members, and their spouses with all aspects of job-seeking and training opportunities.

DWS employs a state veterans workforce coordinator to manage the federally funded Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program. This grant employs several Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) for veterans' job development, and promotes the value hiring of veterans to employers.

The JVSG program also utilizes the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) to assist eligible veterans who have significant barriers to employment. The grant also provides job readiness skills, job training referrals, and community-based resource referrals. LVERs and DVOPs are assigned to 12 workforce connections centers permanently, and nine workforce connections centers on an out-station basis.



The grant also provides assistance with “Stand Downs” for homeless veterans, the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, and the VA Supportive Services to Veterans and Families Program

Additionally, the grant helps fund veterans suicide prevention efforts, the Veterans Court program, veterans job & career fairs, veteran small-business initiatives, apprenticeships, internships, work-study programs, and other veteran-related activities.

Additional information about DWS is available at www.dws.state.nm.us, the Workforce Connections Online System at <https://www.jobs.state.nm.us>, or the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service website at www.dol.gov/vets.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

The DVS Administrative Services Division manages all financial and administrative matters for the agency. The division works with the cabinet secretary to create the agency's operational budget—according to the parameters set by the overall state budget passed each year by the state legislature and signed into law by the governor.

In addition, the division oversees all inter and intra-agency administrative, information technology, human resources, supply, workplace safety, and other infrastructure matters.

DVS Expenditures

	FY22 (Actuals) (7/1/21 - 6/30/22)	FY23 (Budgeted) 7/1/22 - 6/30/23
Sources		
General Fund Transfers	\$5,265,800	\$6,000,100
Federal Revenue	795,600	784,000
Other Revenue	209,400	250,000
TOTAL	\$6,270,800	\$7,034,100
Uses		
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	4,055,233	5,276,800
Contractual Services	472,309	537,800
Other	978,931	1,219,500
TOTAL	\$5,506,473	\$7,034,100
Full-Time Employees		
Permanent	63	70
Term	4	4
TOTAL	67	74



VA Expenditures in New Mexico

Federal FY21 (Oct. 1, 2020-Sep. 30, 2021) (latest data)

Total VA Expenditures	\$1,877,153,000
Compensation & Pensions	1,008,976,000
Medical Care	781,584,000
Education, Vocational Rehab, Employment	59,263,000
General Operating Expenses	9,232,000
Insurance & Indemnities	7,403,000
Construction	10,695,000

Unique Patients	53,787
<i>(patients who received treatment at a VA health care facility)</i>	

The DVS State Approving Agency (SAA)

The New Mexico State Approving Agency (SAA) is a division of the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) contracted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide approval, oversight, training, outreach, and liaison activities to ensure the quality and integrity of programs of education and proper administration of GI Bill® benefits. The SAA also provides oversight of programs such as on-the job training, apprenticeships, vocational flight, licensure & certification, and correspondence for individuals using their GI Bill benefits.



A key role of the SAA is to review, evaluate, and approve education and training programs for the GI Bill—ensuring compliance with strict state and federal statutory and regulatory criteria. The SAA accomplishes this by making onsite and other supervisory and inspection visits to educational institutions and training establishments throughout the state. Technical assistance for interested colleges, universities, other postsecondary educational institutions, and training establishments is also provided upon request. In addition to this regulatory responsibility, the SAA is also active 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.

The SAA also performs compliance surveys, risk-based surveys, and targeted risk-based reviews to ensure facilities and approved programs are in compliance with all applicable statutory, regulatory, and policy provisions. The SAA verifies the propriety of payments of educational benefits under the provisions of the laws administered by VA. It identifies potential fraud, waste, and abuse by utilizing data and risk factors that are outside of the normal approval and compliance liaison processes.

The SAA also confirms compliance with all approval criteria. It assists educational institution and training establishment officials to determine, on the basis of facts, whether there are deviations from responsibilities and requirements by eligible individuals, educational institutions, or training establishments. The SAA ensures proper action is promptly taken through appropriate channels to correct discrepancies. It will move to discontinue benefits in the event correction is not accomplished in accordance with all applicable provisions of Title 38 of the U.S. Code.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

SAA End-of-Year Data For Federal Fiscal Year 2022

(Oct. 1, 2021 – Sep. 30, 2022)

The New Mexico SAA once again received the highest rating of “Satisfactory” by VA.

Number of program and other approvals	1,428
Number of programs and other disapprovals	222
Number of compliance surveys	14
Technical Assistance	1,673
Outreach Events and Other Outreach	60
Number of liaisons w/other state & federal agencies	546



2022 Year In Review



Cancellations and Closures

DVS, All State Agencies Cancel Jan.-Feb. Public Events

With COVID-19 infection rates remaining high throughout the state, the new year began with all state government agencies continuing with the cancellations of scheduled public events.

For the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), this meant also cancelling all normally scheduled outreach visits. In-office visits to DVS veterans service officers (VSOs) continued on an appointment-only basis. DVS VSOs also continued offering remote benefits assistance by phone or email to any veteran from anywhere in the state. (Note: DVS resumed hosting public events resumed two months later)

DVS News & Events in February

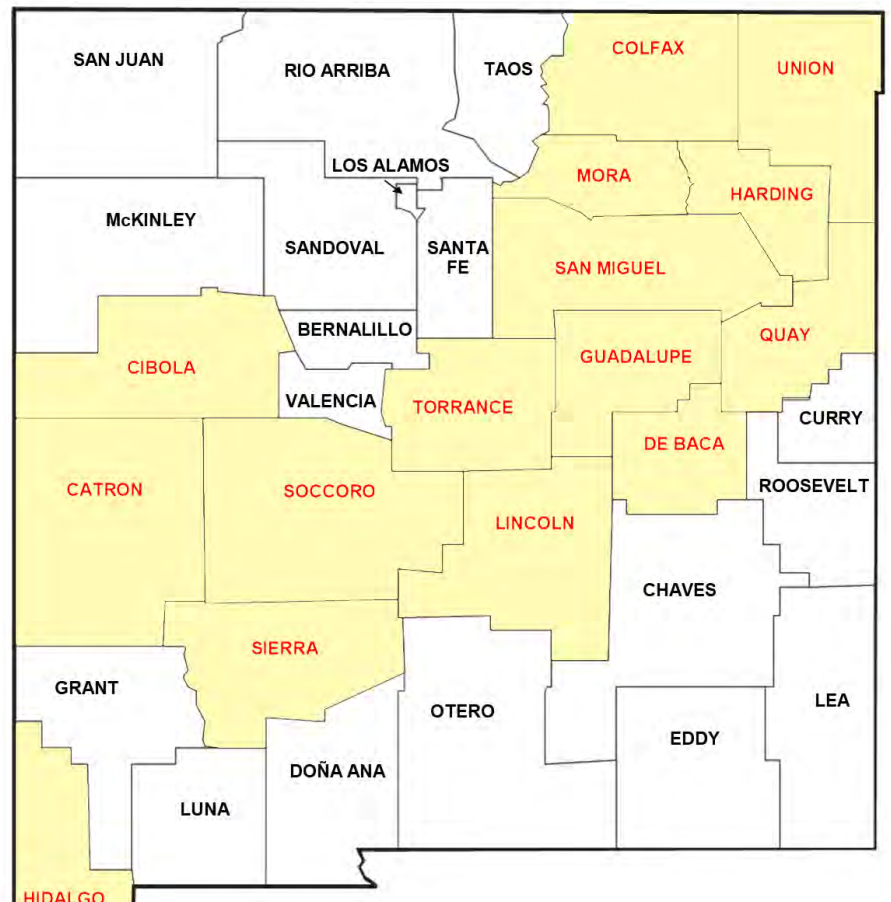
DVS Expands Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program Expands to Final Six Eligible Counties

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

Veterans in the following 15 counties can now call DVS to get free rides to and from their home and any medical appointments at VA facilities—or VA-approved non-VA facilities: Catron, Cibola, Colfax, De Baca, Guadalupe, Harding, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Union.

VA defines “highly rural” as any county with less than seven people per square mile. In 2023, DVS will work on expanding the program to the remaining 18 counties in the state. (for more information about the program, see page 21)

Veterans Transportation Program



DVS News & Events in February (continued)

DVS Joins Nationwide Program to Prevent Military & Veteran Suicides

DVS was tasked by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham with taking the lead for the state's participation in the nationwide *Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families*.

The program, more commonly known as The Governor's Challenge, was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program's focus is to enlist states with helping spread awareness about suicides among our nation's military members and veterans.



DVS has formed partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies throughout the state to develop best practices to prevent veteran and military suicides, educating the public, and seeking out and helping at-risk veterans, service members, and their families. According to SAMHSA, there is a 52% higher suicide rate among military veterans than non-veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 17 veterans take their own lives every day in the United States.



VBOC Director Rich Coffel (upper right, w/red tie) and SBA Administrator Isabella Casillas (seated at the head of the table/ in the middle)

DVS Helps Welcome National SBA Administrator to New Mexico

New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Director Rich Coffel was among a small group of business community leaders invited to meet with U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman during her visit to Albuquerque on February 21.

Administrator Guzman, who leads the federal agency that advocates for our nation's 32.5 million small businesses, wanted to get input from the New Mexico's small business community about recovery efforts as the nation begins loosening COVID-19 pandemic safety measures—making sure the concerns from the state's veteran-owned businesses are also heard.

She also urged the business leaders to encourage veteran-owned business to contact the SBA about the *Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act*, signed into law by President Joe Biden to create jobs and boost the post-pandemic economy.

The VBOC is the business development division of DVS, providing free start-up, expansion, counseling, and mentoring for entrepreneurial-minded veterans, transitioning active service members, and their families. (more information about the VBOC can be found on page 25)



DVS Facilitates Multi-Agency Meeting to Address Historic Albuquerque Fairview Cemetery Restoration

DVS facilitated a multi-agency meeting on March 9 to discuss restoring the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery—where nearly 500 veterans are buried in gravesites that, along with the rest of cemetery’s 12,000 plots, have eroded to the point of needing major repairs.

Among the agencies sending representatives to the meeting were the Historic Fairview Cemetery nonprofit organization, the American Legion, State Historical Preservation Officer Jeff

Pappas, and SBA New Mexico District Director/Formal DVS Secretary John Garcia.

DVS agreed to become the lead agency to lead the cleanup effort at the city’s first cemetery. It is believed that there are veterans from our nation’s Civil War buried at the cemetery—many other older-generation veterans buried in unmarked graves.

Volunteers are welcome to join an ongoing effort that meets the first Saturday every month to do weed removal, mulching, and other light clean-up duties.



DVS Presents First Native American Veterans Collaboration Briefing of 2022

Representatives from Native American communities were invited by DVS to its Albuquerque Northeast Heights office for a *Native American Veterans Collaboration* briefing on March 15.

At the meeting, DVS Pueblos & Tribal Nations Liaison Beverly Charley (*left photo/standing @ top-center*) provided an overview of the agency’s plan to reach out to New Mexico’s Native American veterans—stressing an aggressive DVS

community outreach, hosting monthly meetings, increasing the frequency of multi-agency assistance fairs, and training of community representatives to serve as veterans service officers in their community.

She also stressed the inclusion of pueblos and tribal lands in any agency plans to extend free transportation to and from a veteran’s home and medical appointments at VA or VA pre-approved facilities.

ABQ Vet Property Tax Exemption/Waiver Curbside Service Day

DVS hosted a veterans property tax exemption & waiver “drive-up/curbside service” day on March 24 at its Albuquerque Northeast Heights office parking lot.

The veterans property tax exemption is a \$4,000 reduction off the taxable value of a veteran’s primary residence in New Mexico. The waiver dismisses the entire property tax for any veteran rated by VA as 100% permanent-and-total, service-connected disabled.



Veterans and unmarried widows of veterans, from the safety and comfort of their vehicles, provided verification documents to DVS staff. The paperwork was then brought inside to other DVS staff for verification and processing. The documents were then returned to the veteran—along with the tax certificate needed by the Bernalillo County Assessor’s Office to complete the tax exemption/waiver process.

DVS scheduled similar drive-up and walk-in service days in Edgewood, Roswell, and Las Cruces in the following months. *NOTE: For more information about the veterans property tax exemption or waiver, contact the DVS State Benefits Division at (505) 827-6300. Click [here](#) to watch a short video shot and produced by DVS showing this unique “car hop” service.*



DVS Presents First Quarterly Briefing in Nearly A Year

On March 31, DVS hosted its first quarterly briefing since August 2021, when DVS halted all public events due to a spike in the number of statewide COVID cases. At the briefing, the focus was on VA’s Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission Report released a month earlier that proposed closing the community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in Española, Gallup, Las Vegas, and Raton. The four were on VA’s list of 174 proposed CBOC closures nationwide due to what it said were declining veteran populations in the areas.

The report also proposed closing the PTSD treatment program at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque and moving everything to a yet-to-be-built regional facility in the Phoenix, Arizona area.

DVS staff said the agency had joined the New Mexico VA Health Care System and New Mexico’s five-member congressional delegation to mount a strong and unified opposition to the plan, citing the devastating effect it would have on the health care needs for veterans throughout the state. DVS also vowed to hold town hall meetings around the region to rally support against the plan.

Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery Cleanup

A month after calling a multi-agency meeting to discuss restoring the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery, several DVS staff members took part in an ongoing volunteer cleanup day at the cemetery on April 2.

The DVS staffers brought two front-loaders, two one-ton pickup trucks, and some weed-whackers to help nearly four dozen members of the public who showed up for the once-a-month event—the first Saturday of each month.



Everyone worked to clear weeds, pick up trash, and spread mulch throughout the 17.5-acre cemetery, which was Albuquerque's first city-managed cemetery when it opened in 1881. More than 500 military veterans are buried at this cemetery—including veterans of our nation's Civil War. The cemetery's non-profit management team believes many more may be buried in unmarked graves. Click [here](#) to watch a short video shot and produced by DVS showing this cleanup effort.



Bataan Remembrance Day Commemorated in Santa Fe Then -DVS Secretary Sonya Smith had the honor of reading the official Bataan Remembrance Day Proclamation issued by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham at the April 9 Bataan Remembrance Day Ceremony at the Bataan Memorial Building in Santa Fe (*left photo*).

The annual ceremony hosted by the New Mexico National Guard honors those who defended the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines at the onset of World War II. The ceremony shines the spotlight on the 1,800 men of the New Mexico National

Guard, who were in the country for a training exercise—and were suddenly thrust into combat immediately after the attack. They were part of the 75,000 American and Filipino soldiers forced to endure the “Bataan Death March” towards imprisonment.

Also attending the ceremony was Ann Overmier (*upper right photo/seated at far left*), whose husband Bill was among the surviving New Mexico National Guardsmen. He had been an annual attendee of the ceremony before passing away last August at the age of 101. She received a standing ovation upon her introduction.



DVS Participated in Las Vegas (NM) CBOC Town Hall Meeting Hosted by U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Lujan

DVS took part in a VA community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) closure panel discussion hosted by U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-New Mexico) on April 20 at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas (NM).

Senator Lujan was joined by then-DVS Secretary Sonya Smith, *(top of photo, standing behind table)* and newly appointed New Mexico VA Health Care System Director Robert McKenrick to answer questions from veterans concerned about the possible closure of the Las Vegas community-based outpatient clinic CBOC.



The Senator promised to work with DVS and New Mexico's VA to continue to strongly voice their collective opposition to the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs proposal to close 174 CBOCs nationwide—which in addition to the Las Vegas location also targeted the CBOCs in Española, Gallup, and Raton—and the PTSD program at the Albuquerque Raymond G. Murphy VA Hospital. Senator Lujan, DVS, and New Mexico's VA pledged to continue hosting town hall meetings throughout the state. *(Note: The VA plan was eventually killed by a U.S. Senate committee on June 27 when a bipartisan group of 12 influential U.S. senators announced it would not support the plan and would not further it in the senate)*



DVS Hosts 2022 Southern NM Honor Guard Conference

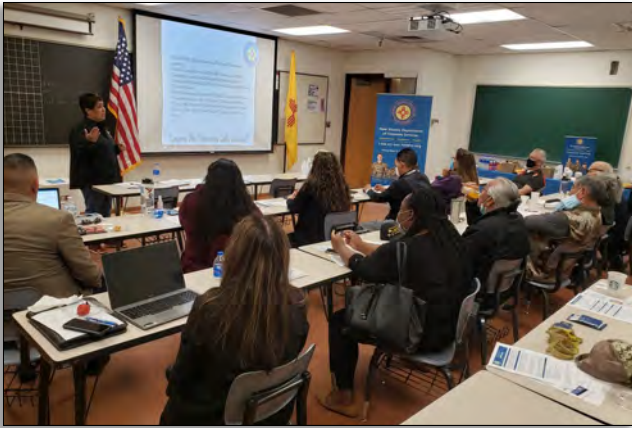
DVS presented the first ever Southern New Mexico Honor Guard Conference on April 21 in Las Cruces at the Sonoma Ranch Golf Course.

The conference, presented along with the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP New Mexico, provided instruction and coaching for the state's all-volunteer honor guards—those who render military honors at the majority of funerals of veterans in New Mexico.

The three host agencies present an annual late-summer conference in Albuquerque. But this year, DVS decided to host a second conference in Las Cruces to make it easier for southern-based honor guards to receive the valuable training and coaching provided by the National Guard Honor Guard.

Click [here](#) to watch a short video shot and produced by DVS showing highlights of this unique training conference.





DVS Hosts Native American Veterans Collaboration at Santa Fe Community College

Representatives from northern New Mexico's Native American communities were invited by DVS to its latest Native American Veterans Collaboration meeting on May 5 at Santa Fe Community College.

As with the inaugural series of monthly meetings that began a month earlier, DVS Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley (*far left in photo, standing next to American flag*) outlined ways DVS can help tribal nations. Key points

raised were the agency's role as the "point agency" for helping veterans and their families not only with filing VA claims, but also with any other issues through its strong partnerships/referral links to numerous federal, state, local, and Native American agencies.

Another point also brought up by someone in attendance was the lack of On the Job (OJT) Training and Apprenticeships programs on tribal lands and through Native American-owned businesses available for veterans to use their GI Bill® federal education benefit. State Approving Agency Directory Kathy Snyder and Ms. Charley assured attendees that the agency's is increasing efforts to find and then certify businesses and trade schools that would take in Native American veterans using their GI Bill education benefit.

2nd Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery Cleanup

DVS brought the heavy equipment once again for the latest volunteer cleanup day at the Historic Albuquerque Fairview Cemetery on May 7.

The focus for this month's cleanup was spreading mulch on previously-cleared gravesites to inhibit the growth of unwanted plants in the coming spring and summer.



The public is invited to these monthly cleanup efforts, which take place the first Saturday of each month. Volunteers are encouraged to bring your own shovels/rakes/hoes, weed whackers, wheelbarrows, water, a hat, sturdy work gloves, sunglasses or goggles/protective eyewear, and sunscreen. Pickup trucks or towed utility trailers would also be appreciated to help spread mulch and haul gathered debris to an on-site dumpster. For more information, please contact Gail Rubin at (505) 363-7514.

DVS Hosts Veterans Community Briefing in Gallup

DVS presented its latest local veterans community briefing in May—this time, in Gallup on May 13--to present information about a VA proposal to close 170 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) nationwide—including the Gallup CBOC.

The latest information was the lack of progress for the formation of a required nine-member VA committee to hear input from affected communities throughout the nation. Additionally, several prominent members in Congress—from both political parties—have let the VA know they would block any attempt by VA to close CBOCs. All five members of New Mexico's congressional delegation also strongly voiced their opposition.



DVS was joined by representatives from the New Mexico VA Health Care System at this briefing. Both agencies promised to continue to host meetings throughout the state in an effort to rally statewide support against the VA plan. *(Note: The VA plan was eventually killed by the U.S. Senate committee on June 27 when a bipartisan group of 12 influential U.S. senators announced it would support the plan and would not further it in the senate.)*



Wildfire Forces Cancellation of the DVS Memorial Day Ceremony in Angel Fire

DVS cancelled its scheduled Memorial Day ceremony on May 30 at its Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

The decision was made out of concerns over the Calf Canyon/ Hermits Peak wildfire in northern New Mexico, which started April 6 in nearby San Miguel County and continued to burn in the direction of Angel Fire and the Moreno Valley area—which is less than 15-miles away. More than 311,000 acres had been burned, and containment was only at 40%, prompting the cancellation of the ceremony.

State fire officials urged people in the area near the Memorial to remain on high alert and to monitor news about road closures and evacuation notices—and to immediately evacuate when given the order.

DVS Provides Assistance to Displaced Veterans Affected by the Northern New Mexico Wildfire

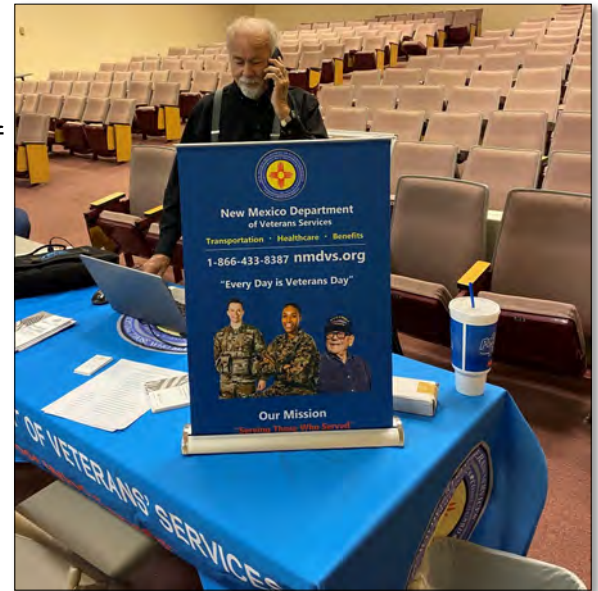
DVS staff began offering the use of agency laptop computers to veterans and their families displaced by the Hermits Peak or Calf Canyon wildfires.



DVS Veterans Service Officers Martín Márquez (*right photo*) and Arturo Marlow provided this service at an evacuation center in the nearby town of Las Vegas, where both VSOs are based.

The two VSOs helped veterans file FEMA claims, or seek assistance from other federal, state, and local agencies. The VSOs also helped veterans file for state veterans benefits or VA claims.

Marlow (*left photo*), who is also a member of the Mora County Volunteer Fire Department, also helped deliver water to many of the 3,000 firefighters on the scene.



DVS Staff Greets Veterans Returning on Northern New Mexico Honor Flight

Then-DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith (*right photo, hugging an unidentified veteran*) and Rio Rancho-based Veterans Service Officer Dustin Newsome were among the hundreds of people welcoming 25 veterans (two from World War II, 11 Korean War, and 12 Vietnam War veterans) to the Albuquerque International Sunport on June 3.

The veterans and their chaperones returned from Washington, D.C., on the 2022 Northern New Mexico Honor Flight organized by Honor Flight of Northern New Mexico.



The non-profit agency is part of the national Honor Flight Network that provides free two-day, all-expenses-paid visits to our nation's capital for veterans to visit the national memorials dedicated to their wars of service. Priority is given to veterans of World War II, the Korean War, and terminally ill veterans from other wars.

Click [here](#) to watch a short video produced by DVS of this hero's welcome for these returning veterans.

Zuni Pueblo Veterans Park Dedication

DVS Gallup-based Veterans Service Officer John Livingston (*photo, in dark shirt*) represented the agency and provided veterans benefits outreach at the June 10 grand opening of Zuni Pueblo's Veterans Memorial Park.

Located off Highway 58 near the entrance to the pueblo, the park features metal shade structures, concrete walls and pathways, and stone masonry art from local artists.



There are also small monuments dedicated to our nation's war eras, and four flag poles—all set against a beautiful rugged scenic backdrop.

Main Speaker Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham called the memorial “a beautiful, fitting tribute to the sacrifice and history of service of veterans from the pueblo.”



DVS Presents The 2023 Women Veterans Conference

One hundred two women veterans attended the 2022 New Mexico Women Veterans Conference presented by DVS on June 11 in Albuquerque at the Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Workforce Training Center.

Attendees were able to learn about veterans benefits, including many specifically for women veterans, from DVS, the Albuquerque VA Health Care System (NMVAHCS), the Albuquerque VA Regional Office, and twenty other agencies that had information tables.



The message stressed by guest speakers was the need for women veterans to recognize that they are veterans, and that being a veteran doesn't apply only to those who deployed for combat, served at least 20-years, are only for officers—or worse yet, only for men.

Then-DVS Women Veterans Program Manager Robin Wilson reminded women to make sure they are not only registered for their VA benefits, but to make sure that other women veterans are aware that they too should also register.

“The official VA data says there are 16,000 women veterans in New Mexico,” said Wilson, who finished her 19-year Air Force service as a captain. “But I think this number is low. I know there are more of us out there, so I challenge you all here to go out and find these women, and reach out to them.”

DVS Presents Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery Briefing

DVS hosted a briefing on July 21 in Carlsbad at American Legion Bryan Mudgett-TJ Treviño Post 7 to give an update on the status of the Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery.

DVS cemetery division staff told the crowd that plans are moving forward for construction of the ten acre, \$6 million project that, when completed, will have 435 in-ground crypts for caskets and urns. *(lower-right photo shows the ten acre site)*

Funding for the cemetery is through VA's state cemetery grants program. It will be built on land just north of the existing Sunset Memorial Gardens cemetery. DVS expects to get VA grant funding for the project in the spring of 2023. Architectural and engineering surveys would then begin, and an 18-month timeframe is projected to complete the project.



DVS Cemeteries & Monuments Program Manager David Walker briefs veterans at the July 21 Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery Town Hall Meeting.



Zuni Native American Veterans Quarterly Briefing

The latest quarterly DVS Native American Veterans Briefing was hosted by the Pueblo of Zuni on July 14 at its Wellness Center.

In addition to providing updates on agency and veterans news, DVS Pueblo and Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley invited Native American leaders and service organization representatives to provide updates from their community or group.

Attending a briefing for the first time were representatives from *Honor Flight of Northern New Mexico*, the state's chapter of the national non-profit Honor Flight Network that provides free all-expenses-paid two-day visits to Washington D.C. for older veterans to visit the national war monuments. Chapter President Adeline Herrera and Director of Operations Brandy Smotts urged attendees to spread the word about its annual early summer flights from Albuquerque—informing that very few Native American veterans nationwide take the honor flights.



AFSFA Honors DVS For Supporting Legislation Eliminating Military Pension Taxation

DVS was honored at a July 19 chapter meeting of the Air Force Security Forces Association/Pete Magwood Chapter 1 at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque.



Chapter Chairman Dave Coulie presented then-DVS Secretary Sonya Smith with its 377th Fallen Heroes Coin in recognition of her and the agency's work on behalf of New Mexico's veterans and their families (*right photo*). He thanked DVS for keeping alive a years-long effort to get legislation passed providing a tax exemption on military retiree pension income, an issue Mr. Coulie had been active working on over the past decade rallying support in the veteran community. State legislators finally passed a military pension tax exemption law in the 2022 Legislature earlier in the year. DVS was also lauded for educating veterans about the possibility of VA closing five of its health care facilities here in New Mexico.



DVS Takes Part in Multi-Agency Online Senior Veterans Forum

DVS Healthcare Coordination Division Director Diane Mourning Brown participated in a multi-state agency senior veterans online public forum hosted by the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department on July 27.

Director Mourning Brown discussed DVS' commitment to helping veterans file for state and VA benefits—especially those benefits that help address homelessness, PTSD/behavioral health counseling, small business help, and what

she said is an issue especially important to rural-area veterans: transportation to and from their health care appointments.

She brought up the DVS-managed Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program. Paid for through a VA grant, the program offers veterans free round trip rides to and from a veterans home and their VA medical appointments.

However, she said the program, which is funded through a VA grant, can only serve fifteen counties in New Mexico designated as "highly rural" by VA—counties with no more than seven residents per square mile. (*see page 21 for more information about the program*)

Director Mourning Brown said DVS is moving to develop a plan to expand the program to the remaining 18 counties, because DVS considers the entire state as rural —"even Bernalillo County, which the state's largest city...Albuquerque...has very rural areas," she said during her presentation.



DVS Joins Nationwide Veterans Suicide Prevention Collaboration

DVS joined the nationwide *Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families*.

The program, more commonly known as The Governor's Challenge, was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)—a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—to enlist states with helping spread awareness about and developing strategies to stop suicides among our nation's military members and veterans.

DVS has formed partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies throughout the state to develop best practices to prevent veteran and military suicides. educating the public, and seeking out and helping at-risk veterans, service members, and their families. According to SAMHSA, there is a 52% higher suicide rate among military veterans than non-veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 17 veterans take their own lives every day in the United States

August

DVS VBOC Presents a *Boots to Business: Reboot*™ Class at Holloman AFB

New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Director Rich Coffel and VBOC Business Counselor Johnny Martinez (*standing at upper-right in photo*) presented a *Boots to Business: Reboot* class on August 4 at Holloman Air Force Base in Clovis.



The VBOC is the business development division of DVS. The class at Holloman AFB was among 28 presented in 2022 by the VBOC duo at military bases in New Mexico and Colorado for service members who are nearing completion of their service and are interested in starting their own business.

As in one-on-one counseling provided by the VBOC during in-office visits, Director Coffel and Advisor Martinez presented information about the many resources available for entrepreneurial-minded transitioning service members, veterans and their spouses to start or grow a business—including free counseling to help with every step along the way. (*For more information about the VBOC, please go to page 25*)



Kathy Snyder
SAA Director

DVS State Approving Agency Director Honored at National SAA Conference

DVS State Approving Agency (SAA) Director Kathy Snyder was honored by her peers at the 2022 National Association of State Approving Agencies summer conference August 22-25 in San Antonio, TX.

Each state has an SAA to provide approval, oversight, training, outreach, and liaison activities to ensure the quality and integrity of programs of education and proper administration of GI Bill® benefits. The SAA also provides oversight of programs such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships, vocational flight, licensure & certification, and correspondence for individuals using their GI Bill benefits.

Kathy was one of only two recipients this year of an NASAA Certificate of Appreciation. She was also one of seven recipients of an NASAA *Star Performer Award*. The honors are in recognition her:

- knowledge of and willingness to answer questions related to the certification of flight schools/programs for GI Bill® education benefit use by veterans
- work the past 12 months as secretary of the NASAA's executive board
- willingness to serve in a new role as west region vice president, effective immediately, to focus on increasing NASAA membership.

This is third time Kathy has been presented with the group's prestigious star performer award. The previous two were awarded when she was Florida's SAA director.

DVS Briefs San Felipe Pueblo Veterans & Tribal Leadership

DVS Pueblo & Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley gave an agency briefing to veterans and leadership at San Felipe Pueblo on August 26 at the pueblo's administrative complex.

The group—which included Pueblo Governor Carl Valencia and Lt. Governor Joseph Trancosa, was eager to hear about the programs and VA/state veterans benefits available for veterans.



The briefing concluded with an agreement by Beverly and Governor Valencia for him to formally contact DVS about drafting a formal Memorandum of Understanding for DVS to provide training for a pueblo-based veterans service officer.

The governor and those in attendance said such a position would greatly address the problem of many veterans not being able to access help in filing benefits claims—citing a lack of transportation, lack of phones and mobile phones, and lack of internet access for many pueblo residents. The group also said, that, as in many pueblos and tribal lands, many pueblo residents—especially widows of veterans—feel more comfortable working with someone with a similar cultural background.



Photo courtesy of the David Westphall Foundation

2023 Annual Bricklaying at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire

More than 500 veterans memorial bricks were placed on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire on September 3 during an annual Labor Day weekend Bricklaying ceremony.

The red bricks were purchased by anyone wanting to honor a military service member or veteran—living or deceased. Each brick bears the name of the veteran or service member, his or her branch of service, and the years served.

More than two hundred volunteers placed the bricks along the sidewalks of the memorial grounds. Most volunteers were members of the Run For The Wall Foundation—a veterans service group that supports active-duty service members, while also honoring the memory of those killed in action, and calling for a full accounting of those still missing in action. The group hosts an annual springtime motorcycle ride that begins in Southern California and ends at the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Memorial Day weekend.

The annual bricklaying event at the Angel Fire memorial, which since 2017 has been managed by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), serves as a reunion for the riders. For more information about purchasing memorial bricks for next year, please contact the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at (575) 377-2293.



Veterans, Active Service Members Honored at the NM State Fair

United States military veterans and active service members were admitted free to the 2022 New Mexico State Fair in Albuquerque on September 13 on Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair.

The annual day at the fair is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and the State Fair to honor and thank the men and women who have served or are currently serving our country in the U.S. military.



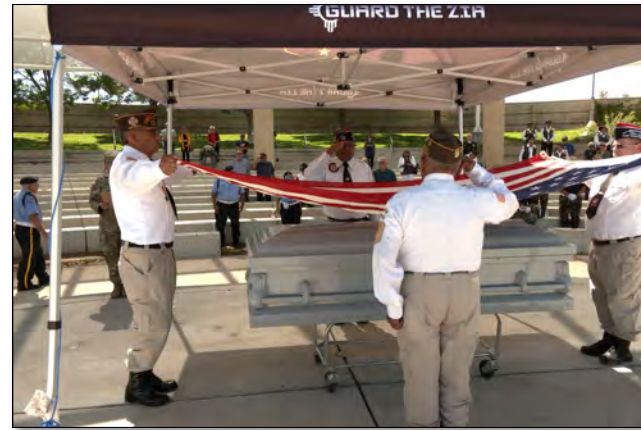
Throughout the day, DVS along with more than three dozen veterans and community service organizations had tables along the fairgrounds' "Main Street" to dispense information about services available for veterans and their families.

Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair also coincided with Albuquerque Navy Week. The city is one of 13 non-traditional "Navy cities" across the country that the U.S. Navy brings sailors and officers to educate the public about its responsibilities.

DVS Presents the 2022 Northern New Mexico Honor Guard Conference

The 2022 Northern New Mexico Honor Guard Conference was held on September 15 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque.

This annual training conference is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP New Mexico for the benefit of northern New Mexico's all-volunteer honor guards. (A similar southern New Mexico conference was held in the spring)



The conferences provide training and coaching for the volunteer units by honor guards from the NM National Guard. These volunteer honor guards render military honors at the majority of veterans' funerals in New Mexico. DVS has produced [a video](#) highlighting the conference—showing the training and coaching provided by the Guard...along with the ensuing performing of simulated funerals by the volunteer units.



The 2022 Forgotten Heroes Funeral

Unclaimed cremated remains of 28 deceased veterans were laid to rest on September 29 at the 2022 Forgotten Heroes Funeral at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

The 26 men and three women were interred courtesy of the state's Forgotten Heroes Burial Program established in 2009 by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the New Mexico National Guard, and Bernalillo County to provide a military funeral for any honorably discharged deceased veteran who, upon their death, is unclaimed by family or friends. Veterans and members of the public attending the funeral serve as "family." The program now

includes participation from all 33 counties in the state.

New Mexico is the only state in the nation that has a state sponsored, regularly scheduled funeral for Honorably discharged veterans who are unclaimed upon death.

Since its 2009 launch, the Forgotten Heroes Funeral Program has provided a dignified military funeral for 198 unclaimed deceased veterans.

[DVS has produced a short video](#) highlighting the 2022 Forgotten Heroes Funeral.





DVS Staff Assist Homeless/Low Income Veterans at Four “Stand Downs” in October

DVS was among the many state, federal, local, and tribal/ Native American agencies providing assistance at “stand downs” for homeless and low-income veterans in the following four communities in October. Gallup (Oct. 7), Farmington (Oct. 14), Albuquerque (Oct. 20), and Las Cruces (Oct. 21).

DVS veterans service officers were on hand to help veterans file VA claims and apply for state veterans benefits. The veterans were also able to meet with the other agencies for help with health care, counseling, housing, employment, and many other services and programs. Free clothing, shoes/boots, back packs, sleeping bags, toiletries, and hot meals were also available for the veterans. [DVS has produced a brief video](#) highlighting the Albuquerque stand down.



DVS, Bernalillo County Sign a \$350K MOA For Fairview Cemetery Restoration

The Bernalillo County Commission, on a 4-0 vote, approved a one-time \$350,000 appropriation to DVS at its monthly meeting on October 14 for overseeing the restoration and help support the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery.

The cemetery, located at 700 Yale Blvd SE, is the final resting place for an estimated 500 veterans—including some who served in our nation’s Civil War. The city’s first public cemetery has fallen into a severe state of disrepair since it was closed

10 years ago. To facilitate the transfer of funds, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed between the county, DVS, and the Historic Fairview Cemetery non-profit group which owns the 17-acre site.

Under the MOA, DVS will oversee the restoration effort, which had been done by the non-profit group and volunteer members of the public. DVS will build an 18-inch block wall around designated veterans burial areas, finish the clearing of debris and weeds/overgrown vegetation, install xeriscape landscaping, restore and align grave markers for veteran gravesites, restore the existing “Unknown Dead” monument, and other restoration projects as needed. DVS is targeting completion for later this year.





DVS, NMVAHCS, and VA Regional Office Host PACT Act Town Hall Meeting in Albuquerque

DVS, the Albuquerque VA Regional Office (VARO), and the New Mexico VA Health Care System (NMVAHCS) presented a PACT Act town hall meeting on October 6 in Albuquerque to answer questions from an in-person and online/virtual audience.

The PACT Act is a landmark veterans health care law signed by President Joe Biden that opens the door for eligible veterans suffering from toxic exposure-related medical is-

sues, dating back to the Vietnam War, to file VA health care claims.

[DVS videotaped the meeting](#) featuring then-DVS Secretary Sonya Smith, DVS Field Services Division Director Robin Wilson, NMVAHCS Director Robert McKenrick, and VARO Director Cesar Romero explaining more in detail what the PACT Act means for eligible veterans, and how to go about filing a claim for VA health care. The three agencies also presented similar town hall meetings in Gallup on November 9, and Las Vegas (NM) on December 9. A fourth meeting is scheduled for January 18 in Silver City.

DVS Provides Assistance at Clovis Veterans Benefits Fair

On October 25 in Clovis, DVS Clovis-based Veterans Service Officer Matt Barela (*right photo, in red*) and DVS Women Veterans Program Manager Theresa Figueroa (*bottom left photo*) provided VA and state veterans benefits assistance at an all-day veterans benefits fair hosted by American Legion Post 25....

...while Veterans Business Outreach Center Director (VBOC) Rich Coffel (*lower right photo*) provided help for veterans interested in opening their own business, or expanding an existing operation.





DVS Resumes 15-County Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program

After a three-month break, DVS resumed its *Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program* offering free round-trip rides to veterans to and from their home and any VA or VA-approved medical appointments.

The free round-trip rides are available to any veteran living in the following 15 New Mexico counties that VA categorizes as “highly rural”—counties with no more than seven people per square mile: Catron, Cibola, Colfax, De Baca,

Guadalupe, Harding, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Union.

Veterans must make a reservation by calling a special reservation number: (505) 429-5906

Monday- Friday from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Reservations must be made at least three days before a scheduled appointment at a VA or VA pre-approved medical facility.

For any non-reservation-related questions about the DVS Highly Rural Veterans Transportation program, contact DVS Health Care Coordination Division Social Worker Connie Vargas at connie.vargas@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 372-8804. (for more information about the *Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program*—including a map of the 15 counties served, please see page 21)

DVS Staff Commemorate Veterans Day at Events Throughout NM

DVS division directors and other staff marked Veterans Day on November 11 by attending the 2022 Southwest Native American Veterans Health & Wellness Symposium at the Isleta Casino and Resort.

The event was presented by Isleta Pueblo, the Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Association, the new Mexico VA Health Care System, and AARP New Mexico. DVS was among several agencies presenting information about benefits and services available for veterans—and in particular, Native American veterans.



Other staff attended benefits fairs and events throughout the state. Staff at the DVS-managed state veterans cemeteries in Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup placed American flags at all headstones.

At the DVS-managed Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire, Site Manager DB Herbst (at left, standing behind podium) served as master of ceremonies for a Veterans Day ceremony at the memorial/s museum. It was moved indoors due to the cold weather.



Beverly Charley
DVS Pueblo &
Tribal Liaison

DVS Pueblo & Tribal Liaison Recognized one of Eleven “New Mexico True Heroes”
DVS Pueblo & Tribal Liason Beverly Charley has been recognized by New Mexico Magazine as one of eleven recipients of its 2022 *New Mexico True Heroes Award* on November 16..

“Our true heroes are eleven exceptional individuals who have distinguished themselves as community leaders, creators, and activators who are building a better New Mexico for all of us,” said New Mexico Department of Tourism Secretary Jen Schroer, whose agency created the project. “The designation as a New Mexico True Hero recognizes New Mexicans who work hard every day to uplift others, and support causes beyond themselves.”

Beverley was honored for her work helping veterans in her hometown of Farmington and the Four Corners area—especially homeless and low-income veterans. She was instrumental in organizing the area’s annual San Juan County Homeless Veterans Stand Down ten years ago that brought together dozens of veterans and community service agencies to provide services, health care referrals, employment and housing assistance, clothing, and food for area homeless veterans.

DVS News & Events in December

Operation Holiday Cheer Results in Thousands of Christmas Holiday Cards for State Veterans Homes

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and the Department of Health launched *Operation Holiday Cheer* 2022 on December 1. DVS created the program three years ago to ask New Mexicans to send Christmas holiday season cards to bring holiday greetings and cheer to residents and staff of the state veterans homes in Truth or Consequences and Fort Bayard.

Many of the resident veterans have little or no contact with family—not only during the holiday season, but throughout the year. Some residents do not any surviving family members. Additionally, many of the home’s staff work through the holiday season to provide year-round, round-the-clock care for the residents. Cards should be sent directly to the homes.

The result: More than 3,000 cards were sent to the two facilities. The cards were addressed with “Dear Veteran/Hero”—or “Dear Frontline Hero” for cards meant for staff--along with a short message of appreciation for the veteran’s military service, or appreciation to staff for providing care for the home’s residents.





DVS Hosts the 2023 State Of Rural New Mexico Veterans Transportation Conference

DVS presented the 2022 State of Rural Veterans Transportation Conference on December 9 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque.

Representatives from transportation agencies, veterans service organizations, and community service groups were invited to discuss the lack of transportation options for many rural-area veterans—which many cite as a reason why veterans health care is neglected.

DVS staff cited the need for agencies to work together. “No single agency can do it alone,” said DVS Secretary-Designate Donnie Quintana. DVS also outlined its Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program (*see page 21 for details of this program*), and other agencies outlined what they currently offer for veterans. DVS videotaped and has [produced an edited version of the conference](#) showing each presentation, along with the results of the breakout session.

National Wreaths Across America Day

DVS cemetery staff placed wreaths at the Angel Fire (*right & Middle photos*), Fort Stanton, and Gallup (*lower-right photo*) State Veterans cemeteries on National Wreaths Across America Day on December 17.

The three DVS-managed state veterans cemeteries were among the more than 3,500 cemeteries nationwide that were beneficiaries wreaths donated for this day by *Wreaths Across America*.

This year, the non-profit organization provided more than 2.7 million wreaths for placement on the gravesites of veterans across the country. The wreaths were sponsored/donated by anyone wishing to honor deceased veterans during the Christmas holiday season. Cemetery staff or any members of the public can come to participating cemeteries on National Wreaths Across America Day to lay the wreaths on the gravesites. More information about Wreaths Across America can be found at <https://www.wreathsafteramerica.org/>.





Hiroshi Miyamura

Oct. 6, 1925-Nov. 29, 2022

World War II Medal of Honor Recipient Hiroshi Miyamura Passes Away

Medal of Honor recipient Hiroshi Miyamura was laid to rest with military honors on December 10 at Sunset Memorial Park in his hometown of Gallup.

The World War II and Korean War former Army sergeant had passed away November 29 in Phoenix, AZ, where he had been living with his daughter's family for the past few years. He was 97 years old.

DVS Acting Secretary Donnie Quintana presented a New Mexico state flag to family members. It was flown earlier in the week on the grounds of the state Capitol by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in his honor. *(right photo)*

The son of Japanese immigrants who settled in Gallup, Mr. Miyamura was awarded the Medal of Honor—our nation's highest combat award—for his actions during the Korean War, on April 24-25, 1951, near Taejon-ni, when then-Army Corporal Miyamura fought off a large Chinese force that had attacked and killed or injured most of his fellow squad members. He was credited with eliminating more than 50 enemy soldiers—allowing his squad to safely retreat and take cover— before he himself was wounded, captured, and held prisoner for 28-months.

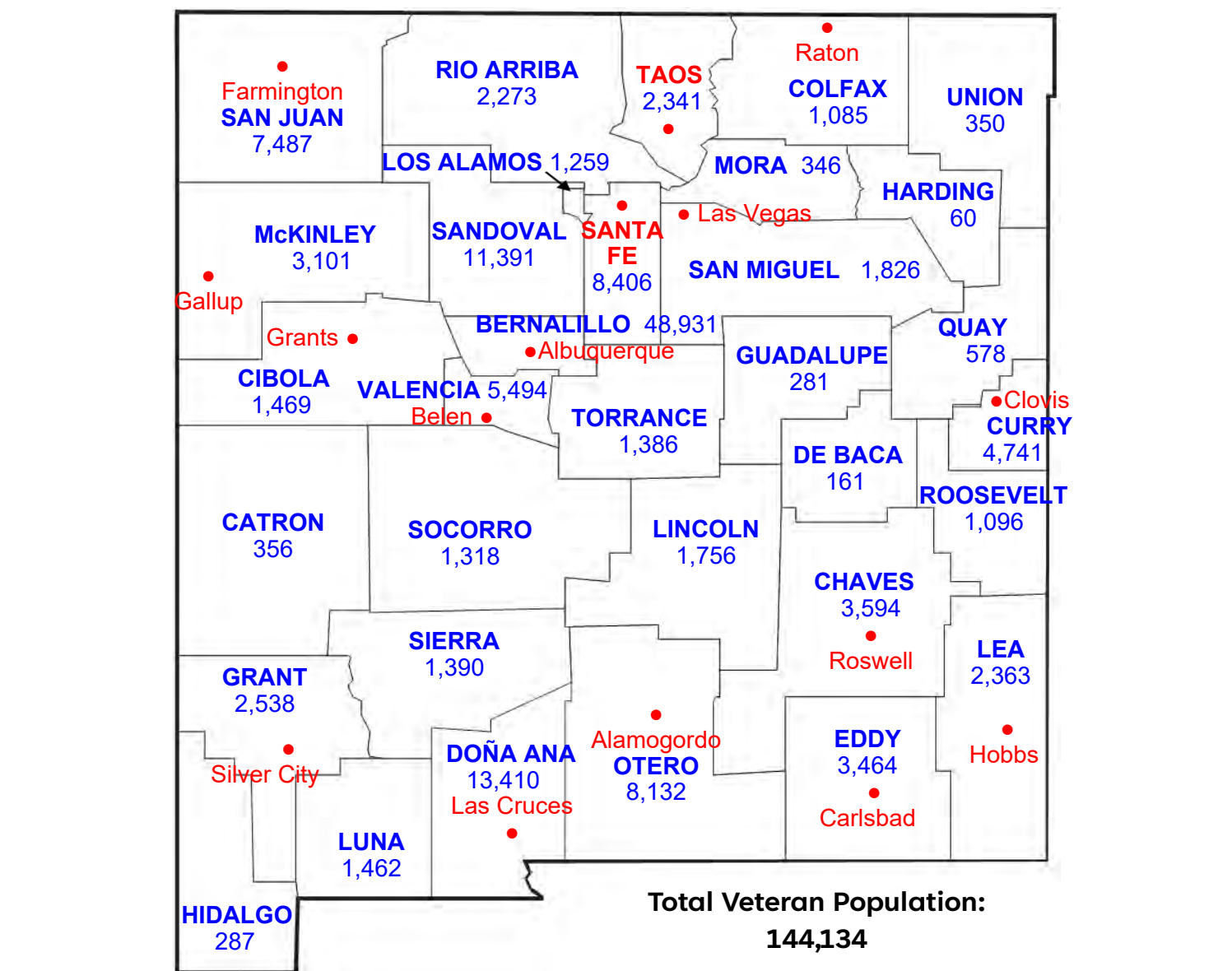


New Mexico's Veteran Population

The Numbers

New Mexico's Veteran Population

- DVS field offices



The population data in this section is based on VA's actuarial projection models developed by VA's Office of the Actuary, and may differ from U.S. Census data.

Using the best available veteran data, VA provides living veteran counts according to key demographic characteristics such as age, gender, period of service, and race/ethnicity. These projections are what VA uses in all of its business practices.

New Mexico's Veteran Population (by County)

<u>Rank</u>	<u>County</u>	
1	Bernalillo	48,931
2	Dona Ana	13,410
3	Sandoval	11,391
4	Santa Fe	8,406
5	Otero	8,132
6	San Juan	7,487
7	Valencia	5,494
8	Curry	4,741
9	Chaves	3,594
10	Eddy	3,464
11	McKinley	3,101
12	Grant	2,538
13	Lea	2,363
14	Taos	2,341
15	Rio Arriba	2,273
16	San Miguel	1,826
17	Lincoln	1,756
18	Cibola	1,469
19	Luna	1,462
20	Sierra	1,390
21	Los Alamos	1,259
22	Torrance	1,386
23	Roosevelt	1,096
24	Socorro	1,318
25	Colfax	1,085
26	Quay	578
27	Catron	356
28	Union	350
29	Mora	346
30	Hidalgo	287
31	Guadalupe	281
32	De Baca	161
33	Harding	60
	TOTAL	144,134

New Mexico's Veteran Population

Population of the United States of America **334,233,584**

(Source: U.S. Census...as of January 1, 2023)

National Veteran Population **18,592,000**

(Source: 2021 U.S. Census data)

National Veteran Percentage of Population **5.5%**

Population of New Mexico **2,113,344**

(Source: U.S. Census/July, 2022)

New Mexico's Veteran Population **144,134**

(Source: VA projection as of 9/20/2022)

Veteran Percentage of New Mexico's Population **6.9%**

Five Largest Veteran-Populated Counties in New Mexico

Bernalillo	48,931
Doña Ana	13,410
Sandoval	11,391
Santa Fe	8,406
Otero	8,132
Total	90,270

63% of New Mexico's veterans live in these five counties

Albuquerque Metro Area Veteran Population

Bernalillo	48,931
Sandoval	11,391
Santa Fe	8,401
Valencia	5,494
Total:	74,217

52% of New Mexico's veterans live in the four-county Albuquerque metro area

Wartime Veterans	115,234
Peacetime Veterans	28,900
WWII Era Veterans	1,131
WWII only	843
WWII & Korea	99
WWII, Korea, & Vietnam	189
Between WWII & Korean War Era	299
Korean War Era Veterans	6,704
(WWII & Korea)	(99)
(WWII, Korea, & Vietnam)	(189)
Korea Only	5,361
Korea & Vietnam	1,055
Between Korean War Era & Vietnam	8,752
Vietnam War Era Veterans	51,374
(WWII, Korea, & Vietnam)	(189)
(Korea & Vietnam)	(1,055)
Vietnam Only	45,990
Vietnam, & Gulf War	2,328
Vietnam, Gulf War, & Post-9/11	530
Vietnam, Post-9/11	282
Between Vietnam War & Gulf War Eras	19,849
Gulf War Era Veterans	36,180
(Vietnam & Gulf War)	(2,328)
Gulf War Only	22,016
Gulf War & Post 9/11	11,836
Post-9/11 Era Veterans	39,681
(Vietnam & Gulf War)	(2,328)
(Vietnam, Gulf War, & Post-9/11)	(530)
(Vietnam, Post-9/11)	(282)
(Gulf War & Post 9/11)	(11,836)
Post-9/11 Only	24,705

Age Breakdown of New Mexico's Veterans

<u>Age</u>	<u>Total</u>
18-19	57
<u>20-29</u>	<u>6,042</u>
20-24	1,638
25-29	4,404
<u>30-39</u>	<u>13,543</u>
30-34	6,232
35-39	7,311
<u>40-49</u>	<u>16,805</u>
40-44	8,814
45-49	7,991
<u>50-59</u>	<u>23,141</u>
50-54	10,857
55-59	12,284
<u>60-69</u>	<u>29,980</u>
60-64	15,129
65-69	14,851
<u>70-79</u>	<u>33,929</u>
70-74	17,092
75-79	16,837
80-84	10,668
85+	9,969
TOTAL	144,134

Racial Makeup of New Mexico's Veteran Population

<u>Race</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of Vet Population</u>
White	82,360	55%
Hispanic	44,385	31%
Native American	7,788	6%
African American	6,355	5%
Asian	818	<1%
Other	2,428	<1%
TOTAL	144,134	



New Mexico's Women Veteran Population

Number of U.S. Veterans	18,592,000
Number of Women Veterans in the USA:	2,045,384
Percentage of the USA's Veterans That Are Women	10.7%

Number of Veterans in New Mexico:	144,134
Number of Women Veterans in New Mexico:	16,825
Percentage of New Mexico's Veterans That Are Women	11.6%

Age Breakdown of New Mexico's Women Veterans

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Number</u>
18-19	16
20-29	1,160
30-39	2,598
40-49	3,078
50-59	3,367
60-69	4,210
70-79	1,660
80+	736