

2016-18 Executive Progress Report

Commonwealth of Virginia
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
Department of Veterans Services

At A Glance

To serve Virginia's veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard, Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves, and their family members, by ensuring they receive timely transition, employment and education assistance, benefits, health care and long-term care and recognition they have earned through service to our country and Commonwealth.

Staffing 691 Salaried Employees, 0 Contracted Employees, 761 Authorized, and 42 Wage Employees.

Financials Budget FY 2017, \$77.64 million, 21.85% from the General Fund.

Trends Legend ↑ Increase, ↓ Decrease, → Steady

Key Perf Areas

- ↑ Number of homeless veterans in Virginia
- ↑ Number of veterans hired by V3 companies
- ↑ Number of visitors to the Virginia War Memorial

Productivity Legend ↑ Improving, ↓ Worsening, → Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to www.vaperforms.virginia.gov

Background and History

Agency Background Statement

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) serves Virginia's nearly 800,000 veterans and their eligible beneficiaries by ensuring they receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

DVS is organized into six service delivery sections: Veterans Benefits Services; Veterans Education, Training, and Employment Services; Veterans Care Center Services; Veterans Cemetery Services; the Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program; and the Virginia War Memorial. Four boards work closely with the agency to support the effective delivery of services to Virginia's veterans: the Board of Veterans Services, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations, the Veterans Services Foundation, and the Virginia War Memorial Board.

Title 2.2, Chapter 20 provides for the establishment of a Department of Veterans Services and the appointment of a Commissioner of Veterans Services. It sets forth the responsibilities of the department and the powers and duties of the Commissioner.

Major Products and Services

Veterans Benefit Services: Provides free assistance to Virginia veterans and eligible dependents in accessing federal and state veterans benefits. DVS operates 28 benefits field offices, and will have 30 offices by end of 2018.

Veterans Care Center Services: Delivers skilled nursing, domiciliary, and Alzheimer's care to Virginia's veterans, predominantly those 65 and older, at veterans care centers in Richmond (Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, 200 beds) and Roanoke (Virginia Veterans Care Center, 240 beds). New care centers are planned for Virginia Beach in Hampton Roads and Fauquier County in Northern Virginia, with construction scheduled to begin in Fall 2017, and both VCCs opening in late 2019.

Veterans Cemetery Services: Serves the memorial needs of Virginia veterans and eligible dependents at state veterans cemeteries in Amelia (Virginia Veterans Cemetery), Dublin (Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery), and Suffolk (Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery).

Veterans Education, Training, and Employment Services: Ensures access to higher education opportunities for Virginia veterans and eligible dependents by certifying that programs of instruction at post-secondary education institutions in Virginia meet federal requirements, enabling Virginia veterans and eligible dependents to use their G.I. Bill education benefits. Audits education programs to ensure compliance with federal regulations. Supports the creation of employment opportunities through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program. Assists veterans to transition from military service to employment, education/training, or entrepreneurship through the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP). Leads DVS activities in support of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). Oversees the Military Medic & Corpsmen (MMAC) pilot program which provides service members with specialized medical training an opportunity for employment at six Virginia health care systems, a pathway to licensure and long-term medical careers, and a solution to acute health care staffing shortages in Virginia's health care industry. Through VTAP, oversees the SkillBridge program, also referred to as JTEST-AI (Jobs Training Employment Skills Training-Apprenticeships & Internships).

Virginia Veteran and Family Support program: In cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), monitors and coordinates behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services and support through an integrated, comprehensive and responsive system of public and private partnerships. VVFS provides these services to Virginia veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and their families affected by stress related conditions or traumatic brain injuries resulting from military service. VVFS oversees the **Housing Development Team**, which continues to provide statewide coordination and leadership with our community housing and support services partners for the Governor's goal and Commonwealth's efforts to ensure veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. In 2015, VVFS became an **Operation Family Caregiver** (OFC) grantee, funded by the Rosalynn Carter Institute (RCI) for Caregiving and Johnson & Johnson. The three year grant provides the VVFS team with caregiver coaches, who teach problem solving skills, facilitate care coordination, and provide support to those family members and individuals who are assisting and providing daily care to Virginia's veterans.

Virginia War Memorial: The Virginia War Memorial is the Commonwealth of Virginia's monument to honor the memory of Virginia's men and women who demonstrated a willingness to serve and fight to defend our way of life from World War II to the present. Through its Education Center, the Memorial serves as the Center of Excellence for the Commonwealth in education of Virginian's experience of war from the birth of our nation to the present. Construction will begin in 2017 on a 25,000 square foot addition, which will include an expansion of the Shrine of Memory, new education and exhibit space, and an underground parking garage.

Customers

Customer Summary

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) serves Virginia's nearly 800,000 veterans and their eligible beneficiaries by ensuring they receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Veterans Benefit Services: Customers for the Benefit Services section are those veterans and eligible dependents requiring assistance in accessing federal, state, or local veterans benefits. The primary focus is on the development and submission of disability compensation and pension claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

Veterans Care Center Services: The care centers' primary customer base is Virginia veterans age 65 and older, though younger veterans do receive care, especially for short-term rehabilitation at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond. The number of veterans served annually by the care centers is a function of the number of beds: 200 at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond and 240 beds at the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke. Potential capacity is measured in terms of a "patient day" - or one veteran occupying a care center bed for one day.

Veterans Cemetery Services: conducts interments of veterans and eligible family members at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk), Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia), and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin).

Veterans Education, Training, and Employment Services: Virginia veterans and eligible dependents may use their G.I. Bill education benefits at over 1,000 programs of post-secondary instruction in Virginia. Additional programs may be certified upon request of a veteran or institution. Over 25,000 veterans have been hired to date by Virginia Values Veterans (V3) certified companies.

Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program: coordinates behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services for veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and family members.

Virginia War Memorial: almost 65,000 people a year visit the Virginia War Memorial. Through its education programs, the Memorial's customers also include Virginia middle and high school students and their teachers.

Customer Table

Predefined Group	User Defined Group	Number Served Annually	Potential Number of Annual Customers	Projected Customer Trend
Resident	Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial (includes all visitors, some of whom are not Virginia residents)	64,693	100,000	Increase
Veteran	Veterans hired through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program	7,649	8,000	Stable
Veteran	Veterans/family members using their G.I. Bill benefits at approved post-secondary educational and training institutions	60,230	61,000	Stable
Higher Education Institutions	Approved post-secondary educational and training institutions	1,067	1,100	Stable
Veteran	Behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services provided to veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and family members	6,763	7,000	Increase
Veteran	Patient Days of Assisted Living (Domiciliary) care provided to care center residents	14,929	21,900	Decrease
Veteran	Patient Days of Skilled Nursing care provided to care center residents	128,936	138,700	Increase
Veteran	Number of interments at state veterans cemeteries (veterans and family members)	1,778	2,000	Increase
Veteran	Veterans and family members for whom DVS has filed a disability or pension claim with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	28,464	30,000	Increase

Finance and Performance Management

Finance

Financial Summary

The department's funding comes from a variety of general and nongeneral fund sources:

General Fund:

- Operations for the Veterans Benefit Services section, the Virginia War Memorial, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP), and the Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) program. Note: V3, VTAP, and MMAC are aligned under the Veterans Education, Training, and Employment (VETE) section of DVS;
- The majority of operations for the Virginia Veteran and Family Support, the Veterans Cemetery Services section, and the Administrative Services section.

Non-general Fund Federal Trust:

- G.I. Bill program certification and audit operations of the VETE section;
- Part of the operation of the Veterans Care Center Services section, the Veterans Cemetery Services section, and the Administrative Services section.

Nongeneral Fund Special:

- Medicaid and Medicare (Part A and B) reimbursement covers a portion of the operating cost of the Veterans Care Center Services section.
- A portion of the Veterans Care Center Services and the Veterans Cemetery Services sections' operating budgets comes from private funds (fee for service).

Nongeneral Fund Dedicated Special Revenue:

- Private donations supplement the funding for the Veterans Care Center Services, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, the Veterans Cemetery Services sections, and the Virginia Veteran and Family Support.

Fund Sources

Fund Code	Fund Name	FY 2017	FY 2018
0100	General Fund	\$16,964,655	\$19,700,803
0200	Special	\$34,151,883	\$34,162,776
0941	Veterans Services Fund	\$735,000	\$795,000
1000	Federal Trust	\$25,783,848	\$25,783,848

Revenue Summary

Department of Veterans Services (DVS) special fund revenues are received as reimbursement for services provided. Almost all of the revenue collected is a result of direct patient care provided at Virginia's two veterans care centers. This revenue comes from Medicaid, Medicare, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) per diem, and private pay. The remaining revenue collected is a result of burials performed at Virginia's three veterans cemeteries, and comes from two sources – USDVA burial reimbursement and the fee charged for spouse/dependent burials.

Performance

Performance Highlights

In FY16, the Department of Veterans Services:

- Filed **28,462** disability compensation claims on behalf of Virginia veterans and families, contributing to **\$2.77 Billion** in federal compensation and disability payments to our veterans in FY16.
- Virginia Veterans & Family Services (VVFS) delivered **6,763** individual supportive services to veterans and their families, and served **126** veterans and family members at their weekend retreats.
- Virginia veterans received more than **\$890 Million** in G.I. Bill benefits in FY15.
- Announced the new **Puller Veterans Care Center** will be built in Vint Hill, Fauquier County and the new **Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center** will be built in the City of Virginia Beach.
- Performed 1,778 burials at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries.
- Hosted 64,693 visitors at the Virginia War Memorial.
- Created a *Virginia Veterans Resource Guide* www.dvs.virginia.gov/vetresourceguide.

Selected Measures

Measure ID	Measure	Alternative Name	Estimated Trend
912.0005	Number of homeless veterans in Virginia (point-in-time count).	Number of homeless veterans in Virginia	Improving
912.0002	Number of veterans hired annually by Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program-certified companies.	Number of veterans hired by V3 companies	Improving
91250203.001.002	Number of visitors to the Virginia War Memorial.	Number of visitors to the Virginia War Memorial	Improving
912.0007	Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program - state General Fund cost per veteran hired	V3 program cost/veteran hired	Maintaining

Key Risk Factors

Benefit Services funding and staffing (hiring/retention): DVS operates 28 benefits offices, with two additional offices scheduled to open in FY18. In the past, staff turnover and funding constraints impacted the section's ability to keep all offices fully staffed and operational. This is especially significant because it takes approximately one to two years for a new Veterans Service Representative (claims agent) to become fully trained and proficient. While state human resource (HR) policies provide agencies with HR tools to help agencies recruit and retain qualified staff, funding constraints limited the section's ability to offer competitive salary/benefits packages to attract, train, and retain claims agents. Increased funding in fiscal years 2016, 2017, and 2018, coupled with the authorization to hire additional staff, new equipment, and myriad other changes, have largely remedied turnover and training issues. The Agency will closely monitor resource levels to ensure that recent successes are sustained into the next decade.

Virginia War Memorial (funding and staffing to support the increased number of visitors, expanded education mission, and new wing): With the opening of the Paul & Phyllis Galanti Education Center in 2010, the number of annual visitors to the Virginia War Memorial has increased significantly to 64,693 in 2016. This has been accompanied by a significant expansion of the Memorial's education mission, with its broad focus on all Virginians and more specific focus on middle and high school students and their teachers. The Virginia War Memorial will break ground on a 25,000 square foot expansion in 2017, with the new wing and parking deck complete by 2019. With the increased staff and exhibition space, to the number of visitors could grow to 100,000 a year by 2024, and along with it our ability to reach even more Virginians with all our exceptional

educational programs and events. With the opening of the expansion will come increased operating, maintenance, and security costs in FY20.

Cemetery Services (staffing/resource levels, building/grounds maintenance, and equipment replacement): funding and staffing levels at the state veterans cemeteries are sufficient to meet current burial and building/grounds maintenance requirements and to operate a phase replacement plan for cemetery equipment. Close attention must be paid to ensure continued alignment of cemetery resources with the increasing number of burials, and to ensure that critical maintenance reserve and equipment replacement requirements continue to be addressed. Cemetery staffing must also be closely monitored to ensure adequate manpower to perform an increasing number of interment services and to maintain the cemetery grounds to national shrine standards. The Agency must also continue to plan at least 3-5 years in the future to ensure federal grant funding is available to support phase expansion of in-ground and above-ground burial capacity at each cemetery.

Department succession planning and continuity: Like all state agencies, DVS faces challenges in the area of succession planning and continuity due to an aging workforce. DVS will continue to take such steps as resources permit to prepare for the retirement of key leaders, but additional resources will be necessary to ensure an effective transition.

Agency Statistics

Statistics Summary

Almost 800,000 veterans reside in the Commonwealth of Virginia. One in every 10 Virginians is a veteran. Virginia ranks #7 in the nation in overall veterans population. **In FY16, the Department of Veterans Services:**

- Filed **28,462** disability compensation claims on behalf of Virginia veterans and families, contributing to **\$2.77 Billion** in federal compensation and disability payments to our veterans in FY16.
- Virginia Veterans & Family Services (VVFS) delivered **6,763** individual supportive services to veterans and their families, and served **126** veterans and family members at their weekend retreats.
- Virginia veterans received more than **\$890 Million** in G.I. Bill benefits in FY15.
- Announced the new **Puller Veterans Care Center** will be built in Vint Hill, Fauquier County and the new **Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center** will be built in the City of Virginia Beach.
- Performed 1,778 burials at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries.
- Hosted 64,693 visitors at the Virginia War Memorial.

Statistics Table

Description	Value
Claims submitted by DVS to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY 2016	28,462
Individual services delivered by the Virginia Veteran and Family Support program in FY 2016	6,763
Interments conducted at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries in FY 2016	1,778
Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial in FY 2016	64,693

Management Discussion

General Information About Ongoing Status of Agency

Compact with Virginia's Veterans: Making Virginia America's most veteran friendly state.

The Code of Virginia requires the Commissioner of Veterans Services to: *"Establish and implement a compact with Virginia's veterans, which shall have a goal of making Virginia America's most veteran friendly state. The compact shall be established in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services and supported by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations and shall: (i) include specific provisions for technology advances, workforce development, outreach, quality of life enhancement, and other services for veterans and (ii) provide service standards and goals to be attained for each specific provision in clause (i). The provisions of the compact shall be reviewed and updated annually. The Commissioner shall include in the annual report required by this section the progress of veterans services established in the compact."*

In support of the Compact, the Department of Veterans Services (DVS), in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) established the following long-range goals:

1. Ensure Virginia veterans and eligible family members receive timely assistance in filing for federal and state disability benefits.
2. Deliver long-term skilled nursing and domiciliary care, assisted living (domiciliary) care, and short term rehabilitation services to Virginia veterans.
3. Connect veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and their family members to a network of community-based services designed to help them overcome the challenges of stress related and traumatic brain injuries and rehabilitative needs that result from military service.
4. Provide Virginia's veterans and their spouses a final resting place at state veterans cemeteries that meet national shrine standards.
5. Ensure veterans and their dependents have approved educational programs through which they may receive their educational benefits.

6. Reduce the number of homeless veterans.
7. In conjunction with other state agencies, create employment opportunities for Virginia veterans in state government and the private sector.
8. Honor patriotic Virginians who rendered faithful service and sacrifice in the cause of freedom and liberty for the Commonwealth and the nation in time of war and honor all of Virginia's veterans by preserving their history, educating the public, and inspiring patriotism in all Virginians.
9. Coordinate with other state agencies to afford Virginia's veterans business, employment, transportation, and other appropriate opportunities through technology advances, workforce development, outreach, quality of life enhancement, and other services for veterans and their families.

DVS established the following goals and objectives for the 2016-2018 biennium in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC), and Virginia War Memorial Board (VWMB):

Goal #1: Increase affordable housing opportunities and veterans support programs in order to eliminate veterans homelessness by the end of 2015. (QUALITY OF LIFE ENHANCEMENT)

- **Objective in support of Goal #1:** Continue to ensure that Virginia has the systems, capacity, and coordination to ensure veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-reoccurring.

Goal #2: Augment the New Virginia Economy with mission-ready, relevantly-skilled veterans, especially post-9/11 veterans, by creating seamless transitions for veterans with high-quality education and workforce services that accelerate career opportunities. (WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT)

- **Objectives in support of Goal #2:**

1. Help Post-9/11 veterans achieve success in the areas of employment, education, and entrepreneurship;
2. Create pathways to career success for transitioning medics and corpsmen;
3. Achieve even greater results in making Post-9/11 veterans a linchpin of the New Virginia Economy;
4. Incentivize more small- and medium-sized companies to hire and retain veterans;
5. Open doorways to higher education for the survivors/dependents of KIA and disabled veterans; and
6. Ensure G.I. Bill Program access for veterans/families.

Goal #3: Improve outcomes for veterans and their families in the areas of behavioral health, rehabilitative services, supportive services, health, and financial stability. (QUALITY OF LIFE ENHANCEMENT)

- **Objectives in support of Goal #3:**

1. Ensure that more of Virginia's veterans and families receive the federal disability and pension benefits they have earned through effective advocacy and representation in the development and filing of federal disability claims. In support of this objective, the Governor and General Assembly have approved increases in staffing and funding that have enabled DVS to open new offices, upgrade existing offices with new equipment and furniture to create a professional service environment for DVS customers and employees, revamp the training program and standards, and institute a career development plan for all Benefits section employees;
2. Strengthen service delivery capacity and achieve lasting outcomes for veterans/ families in the areas of behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive service through VVFS by amending and re-enacting the Code of Virginia related to the VVFS program and purpose and by converting the VVFS service-delivery model from a contract-based to a state-employee based model;
3. Work with the Virginia Supreme Court to develop and promulgate guidelines for courts to establish "problem-solving dockets" which will include veterans dockets; partner with law enforcement agencies, the Judicial system, and jails and prisons on multiple criminal justice issues related to veterans; and;
4. Expand and strengthen long-term care for Virginia veterans through our state system of veterans care centers by constructing new 120-bed veterans care centers in Hampton Roads (Virginia Beach) and Northern Virginia (Fauquier County).

Goal #4: Honor our veterans and military, and their families, for their service and sacrifice. (OUTREACH and OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS)

- **Objectives in support of Goal #4:**

1. Construct a 25,000 square foot addition to the Virginia War Memorial that will feature an expansion to the Shrine of Memory, new education and exhibit space, and a new underground parking deck to handle the expected increase in visitation that will result from the expansion. Approve additional staff resources to plan for and open the new addition;
2. Ensure that the Agency has the resources (people and funding) to handle increasing burial numbers and expanding grounds maintenance requirements at state veterans cemeteries.

3. Expand the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) to provide additional in-ground and above-ground burial spaces.
Expand the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) to provide additional in-ground burial spaces.

Goal #5: Inform veterans of the services provided by DVS; manage public resources efficiently and effectively. (OUTREACH and OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS)

● **Objectives in support of Goal #5:**

1. Inform Virginia veterans and family members of the services and programs provided by the Commonwealth; and
2. Provide 24/7 telephonic information and referrals to veterans and families through a partnership with 2-1-1 Virginia; and
3. Address shortfalls in agency infrastructure, management, and employee professional development.

Information Technology

Overview of the current state of IT in the agency:

The current state of information technology for the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is very good. The DVS IT Department continues to achieve full compliance/top score ratings for all COV and VITA/NG mandates (Continuity Plan Assessment, IT Security Program, Agency Preparedness Assessment, etc.).

Our IT Security Program continues to protect our agency data by:

1. Creating and enforcing DVS IT security policies to ensure compliance with all COV and VITA/NG security requirements;
2. Educating all DVS staff on IT security best practices for safe data management and communications;
3. Utilizing VITA/NG security services at our DVS locations in order to provide a secure computing environment for our agency networks and devices; and
4. Continuing to achieve full compliance/clean evaluations from the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) and Department of Accounts (DOA) on our IT systems and security audits.

Although our IT staff is few in number, we continue to provide timely and effective IT services and excellent customer service to our agency employees and customers. All DVS employees are currently receiving the necessary technology tools (newer computers with current operating systems, updated office productivity software, new/upgraded business systems applications/ services, email/device encryption services, etc.) to conduct general business functions as required by our agency mission statement. Several of our business applications and functions, used for daily operations, have been upgraded to utilize web/cloud based technology and now have the ability to interface with other systems when they come online.

Within DVS there are three mission-critical business applications:

1. The Cardinal financial application system ;
2. The Point Click Care Clinical Accounts Receivable (AR) and Financial System (PCCS); and
3. The BeneVets claims development system.

The Cardinal financial application has been recently installed for use by COV agencies to replace the Mitchell Humphries Financial Management System II (FMSII). Cardinal is an enterprise and fully automated financial system created to reduce audit problems relating to internal controls and financial reporting and to minimize delays with producing financial information and management reports.

The PCCS AR and Financial applications are utilized at both DVS veterans care centers: Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) in Roanoke and Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) in Richmond. It is used to track medical and financial information for all veterans admitted into both care centers.

BeneVets is the web-based, hosted claims processing system in use since January 2013 at DVS to process claims for veterans. BeneVets is in use at all of our DVS Benefit Services offices located around the Commonwealth for performing veteran's claims development, tracking, and reporting.

DVS also works closely with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to serve Virginia's veterans. A primary IT modernization goal of DVS was to improve service to veterans by utilizing information technology to enhance the claims process and to be able to share data within all DVS offices, other Commonwealth agencies, and the VBA. This has been accomplished.

Other operational initiatives that the DVS IT Division must manage are: VITA/NG Partnership program requests and projects, DVS information security and data integrity, and DVS systems and applications support; all of which are critical to the agency being able to meet its mission and objectives.

Factors impacting agency IT:

The DVS IT Department currently has four classified positions:

1. One Chief Information Officer (CIO), who serves as:

- The DVS IT Director / Lead System Support Engineer;
- The Agency Information Technology Resource (AITR) for COV and VITA/NG IT coordination and management; and
- The Emergency Coordination Officer (ECO) for the Governor and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) disaster recovery and continuity of operations coordination and management.

2. Two IT System Support Engineers; and

3. One IT Program Assistant (P14).

These four positions support all of DVS, which includes over 750 authorized FTEs spread across business units located around the Commonwealth. Due to this low support to staff ratio, DVS IT has limited ability to provide internal applications development or IT audit functions to meet DVS' growing business needs. As a result, these services must be handled and prioritized by the DVS CIO and either outsourced or utilize other COV agency services where needed and is possible.

Simultaneously, the management of VITA projects and IT activities, equipment procurements, and VITA/NG infrastructure and billing issues continue to impact the DVS IT staff's ability to always effectively serve internal and external customers due to the multiple requests for information and tasks these efforts require on a daily basis. Increasing VITA/NG charges continue to have a financial impact on DVS operations and the ability to obtain and afford all required/beneficial IT systems and services to keep DVS operations going smoothly and at low operating costs. Many VITA/NG solutions and technologies, such as the VITA/NG wireless network solutions, new voice/telephony systems, MPLS Internet/data transfer circuits and devices, etc. may be too costly for our agency to justify these expenditures and usually cannot afford to implement at all/any locations. We are in need of these technologies and have new expansions and projects that will require these capabilities, but really need VITA/NG to make them affordable in order for us to implement and utilize them in order to better serve our customers. DVS hopes to interact with more veterans/outside entities using web-based and other automated systems. Since these transactions would require DVS to purchase the necessary hardware and software to implement these solutions, this will cause an increase to agency expenditures and possibly necessitate the hiring of additional qualified DVS IT staff to support these solutions.

Anticipated or desired changes to agency IT:

Due to only minor increases in financial capital for IT projects and possible increased VITA billing rates for the current and upcoming budget cycles, no major IT Projects are anticipated in the near future. IT recommends that one additional IT fulltime position be added to the IT section to serve as a system support engineer. This position will be especially critical when additional facilities (new care centers, cemeteries, etc.) are opened.

Workforce Development

As noted in the "Key Risk Factors" section, the Department of Veterans Services faces several challenges in the area of workforce development, including:

- Benefit Services section funding and staffing (hiring/training/retention);
- Virginia Veteran and Family Support funding and staffing (increased service demands/service delivery);
- Virginia War Memorial funding and staffing (increased number of visitors and expanded education mission, opening of new wing);
- Cemetery Services staffing (must keep pace with increased number of burials and workload);
- Department succession planning and continuity.

Physical Plant

The DVS Physical Plant (agency owned/operated) consists of two veterans care centers, three veterans cemeteries, and the Virginia War Memorial. The Benefit Services section, Education, Training, and Employment Services section, Virginia Veteran and Family Support, and Administrative Services section operate from state-owned or leased offices, or from space provided by community partners.

The veterans of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and, indeed, all of its citizens, hold DVS facilities to the highest standard. The Virginia War Memorial is the Commonwealth of Virginia's monument to honor the memory of Virginia's men and women who demonstrated a willingness to serve and fight to defend our way of life from World War II to the present. Virginia state veterans cemeteries are held to "national shrine" status. Virginia's veterans care centers are held as model facilities for the delivery of long-term, assisted living, Alzheimer's, and short-term rehabilitative care.

The Department's physical plant is excellent, due to the exceptional work and dedication of all DVS employees and to the continued support of the Governor and General Assembly. Operating, maintaining, and improving the DVS physical plant will continue to be a top priority of the Department.