

## 2018-20 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** 767 Salaried Employees, 7 Contracted Employees, 1098 Authorized, and 163 Wage Employees.

**Financials** Budget FY 2019, \$85.08 million, 24.28% from the General Fund.

**Trends Legend** ↑ Increase, ↓ Decrease, → Steady

**Key Perf Areas**

- ↑ Number of veterans hired by V3 companies
- ↑ Number of disability claims submitted to USDVA
- ↑ % of homeless veterans connected to housing/shelter

**Productivity Legend** ↑ Improving, ↓ Worsening, → Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to [www.vaperforms.virginia.gov](http://www.vaperforms.virginia.gov)

### Background and History

#### Agency Background Statement

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) serves Virginia's over 700,000 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 seven service lines: Benefits Services; Education Services; Transition and Employment Services; Veterans Care Center Services; Veterans Cemetery Services; the Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program; and the Virginia War Memorial. Two boards work closely with the agency to support the effective delivery of services to Virginia's veterans: the Board of Veterans Services and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations.

As of July 1, 2017 the Veterans Services Foundation is a separate agency, reporting to the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs. DVS and VSF continue to maintain strong ties and work together to fund DVS programs and services for Virginia veterans.

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 Benefits:** Provides free assistance to Virginia veterans and eligible dependents in accessing federal and state veterans benefits. DVS operates 34 benefit services offices.

**Veterans Care Centers:** Delivers skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's/memory care, and short-term rehabilitative 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, 224 beds). New 128-bed care centers are being built in Virginia Beach (Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center), and Fauquier County (Puller Veterans Care Center), with both new VCCs opening in 2022.

**Veterans Cemeteries:** 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 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. Leads DVS activities in support of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP).

**Transition and Employment Services:** 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). Oversees the Military Medic & Corpsmen (MMAC) program, which provides service members with specialized medical training an opportunity for employment at partner Virginia health care providers, a pathway to licensure and long-term medical careers, and a solution to health care staffing shortages in Virginia's health care industry.

**Virginia Veteran and Family Support:** In cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), VVFS works to help Virginia's most vulnerable veterans and family members by providing timely assessment, treatment, and support through an extensive network of federal, state, and local partnerships, to promote recovery and resilience. VVFS serves veterans of any era who are Virginia residents, members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and family members of those veterans and service members. VVFS serves our most vulnerable veterans, including justice-involved veterans, incarcerated veterans, and those at risk for, or experiencing homelessness. VVFS specializes in closing service gaps and enhancing response systems for all veterans in the Commonwealth and their families, by referring them to mental health, physical rehabilitation, and other services as needed.

**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. The expansion of the Shrine of Memory and the construction of neww education and exhibit space, and an underground parking garage, was completed in February 2020.

## Customers

### Customer Summary

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) serves Virginia's over 700,000 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. 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 224 beds at the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke. Potential capacity is measured in terms of a "patient day" which is 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 Services:** Virginia veterans and eligible dependents may use their G.I. Bill education benefits at over 900 programs of post-secondary instruction in Virginia. Additional programs may be certified upon request of a veteran or institution.

**Veterans Transition and Employment Services:** Governor Northam has set a goal of 35,000 veteran hired by V3 companies by the end of his term.

**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:** over 40,000 people visited the Virginia War Memorial in FY19, but that number will rise with the completion of the expansion project. 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
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Veteran	Veterans/family members using their G.I. Bill benefits at approved post-secondary educational and training institutions	52,435	61,000	Stable
Higher Education Institutions	Approved post-secondary educational and training institutions	969	1,100	Stable
Veteran	Patient Days of Skilled Nursing care provided to care center residents	132,291	138,700	Increase
Veteran	Patient Days of Assisted Living (Domiciliary) care	12,498	21,900	Decrease
Veteran	Number of interments at state veterans cemeteries (veterans and family members)	1,915	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	18,419	20,000	Increase
Resident	Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial (includes all visitors, some of whom are not Virginia residents)	41,134	100,000	Increase
Veteran	Veterans hired through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program	13,121	15,000	Stable

## 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 (VVFS) program, 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 2019	FY 2020
01000	General Fund	\$20,661,608	\$21,496,312
02912	Dvs Special Revenue Fund	\$34,312,776	\$46,309,402
09410	Veterans Services Fund	\$796,500	\$796,500
10000	Federal Trust	\$29,313,669	\$30,114,150

#### 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 FY19, the Department of Veterans Services:**

- Filed **18,419** disability compensation claims on behalf of Virginia veterans and families (**79,876 total submissions**), contributing to **\$3.2 Billion** in federal compensation and disability payments to Virginia veterans.
- **Opened two new offices** to better serve veterans closer to their homes: on Fort Lee and just outside NAS Oceana, bringing the total number of offices to **33** (office 34 – on Fort Belvoir – opened in October 2019).
- Virginia Veterans & Family Services (VVFS) delivered **3,196** individual supportive services to veterans and their families. VVFS worked with partners statewide to **assist 950 homeless veterans** and their families with obtaining secure housing and 292 veterans with receiving financial assistance.
- Provided higher education access through over 900 programs approved for GI Bill use. Virginia veterans received more than **\$800 Million** in G.I. Bill benefits.
- Performed 1,915 burials at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries.
- Hosted 41,134 visitors at the Virginia War Memorial.
- Had **over 79,000 contacts with transitioning service members and spouses** through outreach conducted by Virginia Transition Assistance Program.
- Helped **30 MMAC-qualified medics and corpsmen** secure high-demand healthcare positions.

**Selected Measures**

Measure ID	Measure	Alternative Name	Estimated Trend
912.0002	Number of veterans hired annually by Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program-certified companies.	Number of veterans hired by V3 companies	Improving
912.0008	Number of disability compensation and pension claims submitted by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).	Number of disability claims submitted to USDVA	Improving
912.0012	80% of VVFS clients experiencing literal homelessness will be connected to a shelter/housing resource	% of homeless veterans connected to housing/shelter	Improving

**Key Risk Factors**

**Benefit Services funding and staffing (hiring/retention):** DVS operates 34 benefits services offices. 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 partially 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 increased significantly to 64,693 in 2016. The number dropped to 41,134 in FY19 due to the ongoing expansion project, but due to the increased program and exhibition space in the new C. Kenneth Wright Pavilion, the number of visitors could grow to 100,000 a year by 2024. The past decade has seen 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 new Wright Pavilion will allow the Memorial to reach even more Virginians. The opening of the expansion will increase operating, maintenance, and security costs in FY20 and beyond.

**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.

**Agency Statistics**

**Statistics Summary**

Over 700,000 veterans reside in the Commonwealth of Virginia. One in every 12 Virginians is a veteran. Virginia ranks #8 in the nation in overall veterans population. **In FY19, the Department of Veterans Services:**

- Filed **18,419** disability compensation claims on behalf of Virginia veterans and families (**79,876 total submissions**), contributing to **\$3.2 Billion** in federal compensation and disability payments to Virginia veterans.
- **Opened two new offices** to better serve veterans closer to their homes: on Fort Lee and just outside NAS Oceana, bringing the total number of offices to **33** (office 34 – on Fort Belvoir – opened in October 2019).
- Virginia Veterans & Family Services (VVFS) delivered **3,196** individual supportive services to veterans and their families. VVFS worked with partners statewide to **assist 950 homeless veterans** and their families with obtaining secure housing and 292 veterans with receiving financial assistance.
- Provided higher education access through over 900 programs approved for GI Bill use. Virginia veterans received more than **\$800 Million** in G.I. Bill benefits.
- Performed 1,915 burials at Virginia’s three state veterans cemeteries.
- Hosted 41,134 visitors at the Virginia War Memorial.
- Had **over 79,000 contacts with transitioning service members and spouses** through outreach conducted by Virginia Transition Assistance Program.
- Helped **30 MMAC-qualified medics and corpsmen** secure high-demand healthcare positions.

**Statistics Table**

Description	Value
Claims submitted by DVS to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY19	18,419
Individual services delivered by the Virginia Veteran and Family Support program in FY19	3,196
Interments conducted at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries in FY19	1,915
Visitors to the Virginia War Memorial in FY19	41,134

**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 overarching 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 care, assisted-living (domiciliary) care, Alzheimer's/ memory care, and short-term rehabilitation services to Virginia veterans at Virginia’s Veterans Care Centers.
3. Connect veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and their family members to a network of 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, their spouses, and other eligible family members an honored 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. Ensure that veteran homelessness is a rare, brief, and nonrecurring experience.
7. In conjunction with other state agencies, create employment opportunities for Virginia veterans in state government and the private sector.
8. Honor Virginians who served and sacrificed 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 our youth, 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 2018-2020 biennium in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC):**

**DVS Goal #1:** Augment the new Virginia economy with mission-ready, relevantly-skilled veterans by creating seamless transitions for veterans with high quality education and workforce services that accelerate career opportunities. (WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT)

**DVS Objectives in support of Goal #1:**

1. Provide widest access to G.I. Bill-approved education and training opportunities for Virginia veterans and their dependents;
2. Continue to expand veterans transition and employment programs statewide, with emphasis on Central and Southwestern Virginia;
3. Continue to work toward Governor Ralph Northam's goal of 65,000 total V3 (Virginia Values Veterans Program) hires by the end of his administration;
4. Veteran Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Coordinator to build strategic partnerships with state, federal, nonprofit and other organizations and agencies working with, or providing resources to, veteran entrepreneurs;
5. Women Veterans Program Manager to build strategic focus on women veterans, and a continued focus on the annual Virginia Women Veterans Summit; and
6. Continue to create pathways to career success for transitioning medics and corpsmen.

**DVS Goal #2:** 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)

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

1. Provide expert assistance in the development and submission of service-connected disability and pension claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and in accessing other federal, state and local veterans programs and services;
2. Continue to meet demand for DVS services across Virginia;
3. Continue to build programs and interagency support for justice-involved veterans, including veteran treatment dockets and post-incarceration support networks;
4. Strengthen local communities and local/state/federal partnerships to create safe, permanent supportive housing for veterans and their families; and
5. Strengthen local communities and local/state/federal partnerships to address veteran suicide mitigation and prevention in Virginia.

**DVS Goal #3:** Honor our veterans and military, and their families, for their service and sacrifice. (OUTREACH and OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS)

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

1. Complete expansion of the Virginia War Memorial in FY20;
2. Commence construction of new Veterans Care Centers in FY20 and open in FY22: the Puller Veterans Care Center in Vint Hill, Fauquier County and the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center in Virginia Beach; and
3. Expand the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) and the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) to provide additional in-ground burial spaces. Conduct outreach and manage the resulting increased burials and expanded grounds maintenance requirements for perpetual care at the state veterans cemeteries.

**DVS Goal #4:** Manage public resources efficiently and effectively. (OUTREACH and OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS)

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

1. Work with Executive and Legislative branches to address service requirements/shortfalls created by increased demands for DVS services;
2. Find solutions to address employee recruitment and retention issues, especially in Northern Virginia;
3. Address critical shortfalls in agency infrastructure, management, and employee training and professional development;
4. Continue strong partnerships with the General Assembly, the JLC, and the BVS to effectively advocate for Virginia's veterans, National Guard and Reserves and their families; and
5. Inform veterans of the services provided by DVS through targeted media campaigns and engagement with media resources around Virginia. Continue statewide outreach, presentations and attendance at events around Virginia by DVS staff and Service Line Directors to share resources and information about all the services and programs available to veterans and family members.

**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 Vetraspec claims development system.

The Cardinal financial application 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.

Vetraspec is the web-based, hosted claims processing system in use at DVS Benefits Services offices to process claims for veterans.

Vetraspec is in use at all 34 DVS Benefit Services offices located around the Commonwealth for performing veteran's claims development, tracking, and reporting.

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 two classified positions and five contract 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. IT Supervisor/Lead IT Engineer; and
3. Five IT Program Specialists (contract).

These seven positions support all of DVS, which includes over 930 employees 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 and that additional full-time positions be assigned to each new veterans care center prior to opening.

**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); and
- Cemetery Services staffing (must keep pace with increased number of burials and workload).

**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 program; 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 the highest standards. Virginia's veterans care centers are held as model facilities for the delivery of skilled nursing, Alzheimer's/memory, 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, General Assembly, and Department of General Services. Operating, maintaining, and improving the DVS physical plant will continue to be a top priority of the Department.

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