

Agency Purpose

The mission and purpose of the Department of Veterans Affairs is to serve the veterans of Minnesota, their dependents and survivors, in securing all benefits and services provided by federal and state law. The department fulfills this mission by providing leadership and direction to the veteran community, while exercising responsible management of available resources.

Key service strategies of the department are to:

- ◆ provide assistance to all eligible veterans, their dependents, and survivors;
- ◆ collaborate with service providers whose efforts are coordinated by the department; and
- ◆ continually review, revise, and build upon proven business practices to ensure the most timely, cost effective delivery of benefits and services.

Core Functions

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides overall leadership and direction, as well as benefits and services to Minnesota's veteran community, its dependents and survivors. The core functions provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs are to:

- ◆ promote self-sufficiency and personal responsibility by providing a temporary safety net of benefits and services to Minnesota's veterans, their dependents and survivors;
- ◆ provide representation to clients pursuing claims for federal veterans benefits;
- ◆ provide professional, compassionate financial management of resources of persons under guardianship to the department;
- ◆ prudently manage all budgets, accounts, financial transactions, information technology, and human resources programs to meet department needs; and
- ◆ provide dignified and compassionate committal services at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery.

Operations

The department serves over 464,968 veterans of Minnesota, their dependents and survivors, with the assistance of the 105 men and women who comprise the corps of County Veterans Service Officers and representatives of Minnesota's congressionally chartered veterans' organizations.

The **State Soldier's Assistance Programs** homeless initiative assists veterans and their families in their attempt to regain self-sufficiency and self-respect by providing incentives for desirable behavior and by assisting them in taking personal responsibility for their lives. In addition, this program provides assistance with rent/mortgage payments, utilities, dental and optical benefits, education, clothing needs, and cash grants.

The **Guardianship program** provides financial case management services to incompetent veterans, their dependents, and survivors who may be vulnerable to exploitation by others or by their own inability to manage their funds. The goal is to assist the agency's guardianship clientele in maintaining a life style as independent as possible.

At A Glance

Minnesota Veteran Population: 464,968*

- ◆ In FY 2004, 13,100 claims were represented before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ◆ In FY 2004, Minnesotans received in excess of \$180.5 million in federal veteran's benefits as a direct result of the efforts of department's claims offices.
- ◆ More than 2,000 Minnesotans received assistance through the agency's State Soldiers Assistance Program in FY 2004, with a total dollar value of \$1.4 million.
- ◆ 61 Veterans' and their dependents' finances are overseen under the auspice of the departments' guardianship program with \$2.6 million in cash assets and \$1.3 million in annual income.
- ◆ The department certifies and partners with 105 Minnesota County Veterans Service officers and assistants.
- ◆ As a result of the department's collaborative efforts with the corps of county veterans service officers as well as the various veterans service organizations, Minnesota veterans, their dependents, and survivors received a total of over \$1 billion in federal benefits in FY 2003.
- ◆ An Executive Reorganization Order transferred statutory powers, responsibilities, and duties of the Minnesota State Approving Agency to Veterans Affairs effective 11-23-03.

*Source: United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Population as of 9-30-03

The department's **Claims Offices** assist and represent veterans, their dependent and survivors with applications for federal veteran's benefits, such as compensation and pension benefits, home loans, educational benefits and medical treatment.

The **Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery** provides dignified burial services to Minnesota Veterans and their eligible dependents and survivors. The cemetery was nearing completion of a \$3.6 million renovation, including the construction of a new chapel/administrative building. A grant for the work was awarded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Memorial Affairs.

The **Minnesota State Approving Agency** provides the administrative oversight of the G.I. Bill's Minnesota Education and Training Programs on behalf of our veterans and other eligible persons.

The **Commissioner's Office**, and associated staff, provides leadership and direction in all matters affecting Minnesota's veteran community, as well as overall management of agency financial matters, purchasing, human resources, information technology, receipt of donated funds, and processing of financial transactions.

Budget

The departments total operating budget is directly appropriated from the General Fund. Expenditures for direct payments to eligible veterans, their dependants and survivors represent 63% of those funds. A federal contract is utilized for the funding of the Minnesota State Approving Agency.

Contact

Department of Veterans Affairs
Jeffrey Olson, Commissioner
Veterans Service Building
20 West 12th Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155
Phone: (651) 296-2345
Fax: (651) 296-3954

Web site: <http://mdva.state.mn.us>

Department Results Page:
www.departmentresults.state.mn.us/vets/index.html

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2006-07
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	4,188	4,138	4,138	4,138	8,276
Forecast Base	4,188	4,138	3,988	3,988	7,976
Change		0	(150)	(150)	(300)
% Biennial Change from 2004-05					-4.2%
 <u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Carry Forward					
General	0	0	10	10	20
Direct Appropriations					
General	3,808	4,871	3,988	3,988	7,976
Statutory Appropriations					
Special Revenue	89	296	283	220	503
Federal	169	494	400	400	800
Miscellaneous Agency	1,115	1,750	1,750	1,750	3,500
Gift	7	19	15	12	27
Total	5,188	7,430	6,446	6,380	12,826
 <u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	2,083	2,924	2,666	2,642	5,308
Other Operating Expenses	486	971	519	507	1,026
Capital Outlay & Real Property	54	50	50	20	70
Payments To Individuals	1,896	2,860	2,751	2,751	5,502
Local Assistance	669	625	460	460	920
Total	5,188	7,430	6,446	6,380	12,826
 <u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Benefits	1,755	2,243	1,782	1,782	3,564
Services	1,961	2,769	2,623	2,623	5,246
Departmental Operations	1,300	1,889	1,601	1,550	3,151
Vets Gulf Bonus	0	10	10	10	20
State Approving Agency	172	519	430	415	845
Total	5,188	7,430	6,446	6,380	12,826
Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)	33.3	34.2	34.2	34.2	

Program Description

The Veterans Benefits Program provides financial assistance through the State Soldiers Assistance Program, County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) Operational Improvement Grants and Certification, Veteran's Preference Enforcement, and rehabilitation services to all Minnesota veterans in need. Also included within these main program areas are the veterans' and war orphans' educational benefits, and our homeless veterans' initiative.

Program at a Glance

- ◆ Over 2,000 Veteran families receiving State Soldiers Assistance Benefits annually
- ◆ 116 Certified CVSO's and assistants
- ◆ Expansion of Homeless Initiative
- ◆ Rehabilitation Services provided through Vinland Center and the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans

Population Served

State Soldiers Assistance Program (SSAP) provides benefits to more than 2,000 veterans and family members. A total of 105 County Veterans Service Officers and their assistants receive certification annually. All counties are eligible to apply annually for a CVSO Operational Improvement Grant. Our homeless initiative has now expanded outside the metro area to provide services to the out state communities.

Services Provided

The **SSAP** provides direct, emergency financial assistance to veterans, their dependents and survivors. Provisions are for shelter and utilities, optical and dental benefits, and cash grants for food and personal needs. From within this activity, our homeless veterans' initiative and our rehabilitation services assist veterans and their families in their attempts to regain self-sufficiency by providing incentives for desirable behavior and by assisting them in taking personal responsibility for their lives. Educational benefits are provided in the form of a one-time grant to veterans who have exhausted their federal benefits, and to war orphans of veterans who died as a result of a service connected injury or disease.

This area is responsible for the coordination of the **certification program for County Veterans Service Officers**. The department annually certifies each CVSO, which the Service Officer achieves through attending training and educational classes and by passing an annual certification test. Certification of the officers is required before a county is allowed to apply to the department for a CVSO Operational Improvement Grant, with the grant funding processed through our Operations Program.

The department also provides direct **enforcement of the Veterans Preference Act**. We represent veterans in pursuing relief when their veterans' preference rights have been violated. In addition, we provide educational direction to political subdivisions to prevent future veterans' preference claims.

This agency has a **partnership with the Vinland Center** in an attempt to prepare veterans with disabilities/work injuries and other vocational obstacles to secure and maintain competitive employment.

Program Funding

The program is funded by a direct appropriation from the General Fund.

Contact

For further information, contact Jeffrey Olson, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Service Building, 20 West 12th Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155 or call (651) 296-2345 or Fax (651) 296-3954.

You may also visit the department's website at <http://mdva.state.mn.us> and our Department Results page at www.departmentresults.state.mn.us/vets/index.html

VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPT

Program: BENEFITS

Program Summary

<i>Dollars in Thousands</i>					
	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	2006-07
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	1,755	2,243	1,782	1,782	3,564
Total	1,755	2,243	1,782	1,782	3,564
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	260	336	334	334	668
Other Operating Expenses	60	192	2	2	4
Payments To Individuals	781	1,110	1,001	1,001	2,002
Local Assistance	654	605	445	445	890
Total	1,755	2,243	1,782	1,782	3,564
<u>Expenditures by Activity</u>					
Veterans Benefits	260	263	261	261	522
Veterans Services	89	205	95	95	190
Dedicated Accounts	1,226	1,625	1,426	1,426	2,852
Vinland Grants	180	150	0	0	0
Total	1,755	2,243	1,782	1,782	3,564
Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)	5.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	

Program Description

The Services Program provides claims representation and fiduciary guardianship services.

Population Served

The staff within the guardianship program currently serves 61 clients, while our claims offices serves all Minnesota veterans, their dependents and survivors. In addition, the claims officers work in a collaborative effort with all 87 County Veterans Service Offices.

Services Provided

The **claims offices**, located at Fort Snelling and Fargo/Moorhead, provide direct claims representation before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Board of Veterans Appeals to maximize the amount of benefits and services received by Minnesota veterans, their dependents and survivors. The claims office at Fort Snelling also provides environmental hazards information and assistance.

Program at a Glance

- ◆ 61 Guardianship Clients.
- ◆ This program manages \$3.9 million combined income and assets for Guardianship Clients.
- ◆ In federal FY 2004, Minnesotans received in excess of \$181 million in federal veterans' benefits as a direct result of the efforts of our department's claims offices.
- ◆ In FY 2004, department claims representatives were successful in obtaining over \$16 million in retroactive monetary awards.
- ◆ In FY 2004, our claims offices represented 13,100 claims before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our **Guardianship Program** provides financial case management services to incompetent veterans, their dependents, and survivors who may be vulnerable to exploitation by others or by their own inability to manage their funds. The goal is to assist the guardianship clientele in maintaining a life style as independent as possible. The guardianship clients' annual income of \$1.3 million and cash assets of \$2.6 million, are overseen under the auspice of this departments' guardianship program.

Program Funding

Twenty-five percent of the funding for this program is financed by a direct appropriation from the General Fund. The remainder consists of client funds received and paid out in trust for our guardianship clients.

Contact

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VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPT

Program: SERVICES

Program Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	2006-07
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	846	1,019	873	873	1,746
Statutory Appropriations					
Miscellaneous Agency	1,115	1,750	1,750	1,750	3,500
Total	1,961	2,769	2,623	2,623	5,246
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	803	964	846	846	1,692
Other Operating Expenses	43	55	27	27	54
Payments To Individuals	1,115	1,750	1,750	1,750	3,500
Total	1,961	2,769	2,623	2,623	5,246
<u>Expenditures by Activity</u>					
Guardianship Administration	90	94	94	94	188
Claims-Fargo Administration	269	278	261	261	522
Claims-Fort Snelling Admin	487	647	518	518	1,036
Guardianship Client Accts	1,115	1,750	1,750	1,750	3,500
Total	1,961	2,769	2,623	2,623	5,246
Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)	13.5	13.4	13.4	13.4	

Program Description

The core functions within the Operations Program include the commissioner’s office which is responsible for the overall management of the agency. These functions include the oversight of the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery, our Veterans’ Outreach Services, Information Technology unit, and the Minnesota State Approving Agency.

Population Served

Through the commissioner’s office the Operations program offers services to all Minnesota veterans. Our Veterans State Cemetery in Little Falls, Minnesota, serves veterans, eligible dependents, and veterans’ survivors. Our Information Technology unit serves an undetermined number of veterans throughout the world by providing web access to benefits and services provided to Minnesota veterans’ and their families. The Minnesota State Approving Agency oversees the G.I. Bill’s Minnesota Education and Training Programs.

Services Provided

The commissioner’s office provides **overall leadership and direction** to all Minnesota veterans, their dependents and survivors, and congressionally chartered veterans organizations through the Commanders Task Force. This year the commissioner’s office continues sending letters to various categories of veterans letting them know that federal laws had changed, allowing additional financial and medical benefits for those suffering from a variety of disabilities and illnesses.

We continue with our collaborative effort with the Department of Economic Security called the **Recently Separated Veterans Program (RSVP)**. When veterans separate from active duty, if they identify Minnesota as is sent their home of record, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will receive their discharge papers (DD214). Information including a “Welcome Home” letter and relevant transitional information within seven working days. Besides thanking these young men and woman for their service to our nation, and welcoming them home to Minnesota, we will be providing them with information on veteran’s benefits and services, and Department of Economic Security programs and services. This letter also directs them to their local County Veteran’s Service Officer (CVSO), where they can receive additional services.

The **Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery** in Little Falls, Minnesota, provides burial services to Minnesota veterans and their eligible dependents and survivors. In November of 2003 the cemetery completed a \$3.6 million renovation, which included construction of a new chapel/administrative building, roadways, and landscaping. The money for the renovation came in the form of a 100%, non-state matching grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Memorial Affairs.

Information technology, including internal and external web applications, is provided by staff in this area. We continue with Strategic Information Resource Management Plan (SIRMP) planning. The department has a strategic planning committee that meets at least monthly. This past year, we were able to allow the CVSO electronic access to veterans’ DD214’s (discharge papers), that are utilized to receive veterans benefits. This is accomplished on our secured website.

The **Minnesota State Approving Agency’s** mission is to provide the administrative oversight of the G.I. Bill’s Minnesota Education and Training Programs on behalf of our veterans and other eligible persons.

Program at a Glance

- ◆ The Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Little Falls received a \$3.6 million dollar federal grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Memorial Services.
- ◆ 1,700 individuals are at rest in the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery.
- ◆ World War II (WWII) Veterans Memorial private donations received to date - \$500,000.
- ◆ Over 100,000 letters were sent to Vietnam Veterans, updating them on health concerns and new benefits related to Hepatitis C and Type 2 Diabetes. Welcome Home letters containing relevant transitional information are sent to all returning veterans.
- ◆ Initiated a Recently Separated Veterans Program (RSVP) letter to all honorably separated Minnesota veterans.
- ◆ An Executive Reorganization Order transferred statutory powers, responsibilities, and duties of the Minnesota State Approving Agency to Veterans Affairs effective 11-23-03.

County Veterans Service Officers' grants are provided for operational improvements. Before receiving a CVSO grant the CVSO must go through a certification process and continuing education courses that ensure that they are trained and proficient in their duties. Officers must complete a minimum of seven credits of approved continuing education courses each year. New officers must complete a probationary period, attend a basic training course and serve as a CVSO for one year. Additionally, the department requires each officer to complete and pass an annual certification test. The objective of the certification process is better service to Minnesota veterans and their dependents.

All budgeting, financial transactions, human resource management, affirmative action, and MAPS and SEMA4 transactions are processes within this program. WWII memorial donations are collected, deposited, and recorded according to generally accepted accounting principles.

Program Funding

Except for a federal grant awarded for the cemetery and the Social Security Administration (SAA) federal contract, the program is primarily funded by a direct appropriation from the General Fund.

Contact

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VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPT

Program: DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

Program Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2006-07
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	1,207	1,599	1,333	1,333	2,666
Statutory Appropriations					
Special Revenue	86	271	253	205	458
Gift	7	19	15	12	27
Total	1,300	1,889	1,601	1,550	3,151
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	879	1,174	1,081	1,072	2,153
Other Operating Expenses	352	645	455	443	898
Capital Outlay & Real Property	54	50	50	20	70
Local Assistance	15	20	15	15	30
Total	1,300	1,889	1,601	1,550	3,151
<u>Expenditures by Activity</u>					
Operations	7	19	15	12	27
Administrative Services	1,030	1,342	1,133	1,133	2,266
Cemetery Dev & Maint Acct	86	271	253	205	458
Cemetery Operations State	177	257	200	200	400
Total	1,300	1,889	1,601	1,550	3,151
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	