

Agency Purpose

The Department of Veterans Affairs' mission and purpose is to serve the veterans of Minnesota as well as their dependents and survivors in securing all benefits and services afforded by state and federal law.

Since its creation in 1943 (M.S. Chapter 196), the department accomplishes its mission by focusing on the needs of veterans and functioning as a single, comprehensive provider of seamless service to the men and women who have served in the military.

Core Functions

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides overall leadership and direction to the veteran community through collaboration with public and private service providers. The core functions of the Department of Veterans Affairs are to:

- ◆ promote self-sufficiency and personal responsibility through a temporary safety net of benefits and services;
- ◆ supply representation to clients pursuing claims for federal veterans benefits;
- ◆ ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life;
- ◆ provide dignified and compassionate committal services at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery;
- ◆ revise and build upon proven business practices to ensure the most timely, cost-effective delivery of benefits and services; and
- ◆ manage all budgets, accounts, financial transactions, information technology, and human resources to meet departmental needs.

Operations

The department serves over 460,000 Minnesota veterans as well as their dependents and survivors with assistance from 87 County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) and representatives of Minnesota's Congressionally chartered veterans' organizations. The department is comprised of three divisions: benefits, services, and departmental operations.

Benefits – The Benefits Program provides financial assistance through the State Soldiers Assistance Program, Veteran's Preference Act enforcement, and rehabilitation services to Minnesota veterans in need. Also included within this program area are veterans' and war orphans' educational benefits and the homeless veterans' initiative.

Services – The Services Program provides claims representation in collaboration with the 87 CVSOs.

Departmental Operations – This function includes the commissioner's office (which is responsible for the overall management of the agency), oversight of the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery, Veterans' Outreach Services, the Minnesota State Approving Agency, Information Technology, Higher Education Veterans Assistance Offices on Campus, Recently Separated Veterans Program, Support Our Troops License Plates, Grants to Counties, Disable American Veterans (DAV), Military Order of Purple Heart (MOPH), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Vietnam Veterans Association(VVA).

At A Glance

- ◆ In FY 2006, Minnesota veterans received more than \$162 million in federal veterans' benefits as a direct result of the department's claims and outreach offices.
- ◆ Over 2,000 veterans and their families receive State Soldiers Assistance Benefits annually.
- ◆ Veterans Assistance Offices on Campus are operational and assisted 593 veterans at Minnesota's higher education institutions in FY 2007.
- ◆ A centralized one-stop web site portal has been created to provide information on veterans' benefits and services offered by state and federal government.
- ◆ Support Our Troops license plates have generated more than \$450,000 for veterans' programs.
- ◆ The Recently Separated Veterans Program (RSVP) sends Welcome Home letters containing useful transitional information to all returning veterans.
- ◆ The WWII veterans' memorial is being constructed near the State Capitol and will be completed in spring 2007.
- ◆ Outreach offices have served approximately 1,500 veterans since 2004.

Budget

FY 2006-07 agency activities are funded primarily through General Fund appropriations, which account for 86.1% of total funding. Additional funding comes from departmental earnings and other revenue, 10.4%; and federal funds, 3.5%. The department staff totals approximately 35 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Contact

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Service Building
20 West 12th Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

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

Office of the Commissioner
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Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2008-09
	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	4,744	7,345	7,345	7,345	14,690
Forecast Base	4,744	7,345	7,265	7,265	14,530
Change		0	(80)	(80)	(160)
% Biennial Change from 2006-07					20.2%
Misc Special Revenue					
Current Appropriation	337	855	855	855	1,710
Forecast Base	337	855	855	855	1,710
Change		0	0	0	0
% Biennial Change from 2006-07					43.5%
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	4,059	8,426	7,437	7,451	14,888
Statutory Appropriations					
Misc Special Revenue	139	608	396	403	799
Federal	307	400	400	400	800
Miscellaneous Agency	2,370	437	0	0	0
Gift	1	4	11	14	25
Total	6,876	9,875	8,244	8,268	16,512
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	2,286	3,555	3,593	3,765	7,358
Other Operating Expenses	503	1,328	787	756	1,543
Payments To Individuals	3,156	3,663	3,180	3,058	6,238
Local Assistance	931	1,329	684	689	1,373
Total	6,876	9,875	8,244	8,268	16,512
<u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Benefits	1,915	4,058	3,970	3,890	7,860
Services	2,995	2,123	1,429	1,478	2,907
Departmental Operations	1,638	3,269	2,420	2,475	4,895
State Approving Agency	328	425	425	425	850
Total	6,876	9,875	8,244	8,268	16,512
Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)	38.2	55.9	55.9	55.9	

Program Description

The Veterans Benefits Program provides assistance through the State Soldiers Assistance Program, Veteran's Preference Act enforcement, and rehabilitation services to Minnesota veterans in need. Also included within this program area are veterans' and war orphans' educational benefits and the homeless veterans' initiative.

Population Served

The State Soldiers Assistance Program provides benefits to more than 2,000 veterans and their family members. 105 County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) 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 communities in greater Minnesota.

Program at a Glance

- ◆ Over 2,000 veterans and their families receive State Soldiers Assistance Benefits annually.
- ◆ 105 Certified CVSO's and assistants.
- ◆ Expansion of Homeless Initiative.
- ◆ Rehabilitation Services are provided through the Vinland Center and the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans.

Services Provided

The **State Soldiers Assistance Program (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. Within this activity, the homeless veterans' initiative and rehabilitation services assist veterans and their families in 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 one-time grants 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.

Additionally, this area is responsible for coordination of the **certification program for County Veterans Service Officers**. The department annually certifies each CVSO, which is achieved 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.

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.

The department has a **partnership with the Vinland Center**, which attempts 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 Office of the Commissioner, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Service Building, 20 West 12th Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155 or call (651) 296-2562 or Fax (651) 296-3954.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPT

Program: BENEFITS

Program Summary

<i>Dollars in Thousands</i>					
	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium
	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	2008-09
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	1,915	4,058	3,970	3,890	7,860
Total	1,915	4,058	3,970	3,890	7,860
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	444	462	474	516	990
Other Operating Expenses	22	75	21	21	42
Payments To Individuals	786	3,226	3,180	3,058	6,238
Local Assistance	663	295	295	295	590
Total	1,915	4,058	3,970	3,890	7,860
<u>Expenditures by Activity</u>					
Veterans Benefits	307	316	249	169	418
Veterans Services	82	295	295	295	590
Dedicated Accounts	1,405	3,447	3,426	3,426	6,852
Vinland Grants	121	0	0	0	0
Total	1,915	4,058	3,970	3,890	7,860
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	6.9	9.0	9.0	9.0	

Program Description

The Services Program provides claims representation to veterans as well as their dependents and survivors. This activity helps these individuals secure federal veterans' benefits, such as compensation and pension benefits, home loans, educational benefits, and medical treatment. The program also engages in outreach to find and help veterans from underserved populations (minorities, women, homeless).

Population Served

The claims offices serve all Minnesota veterans, their dependents and survivors. The outreach offices concentrate their efforts on homeless, minority, women, and other underserved veterans in the state of Minnesota. In addition, the claims and outreach officers work in collaboration with all 87 County Veterans Service Offices.

Services Provided

The claims and outreach offices, located at Fort Snelling and Fargo/Moorhead, provide direct claims representation before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Board of Veterans Appeals to help Minnesota veterans and their families obtain federal benefits and services. The claims office at Fort Snelling also provides environmental hazards information and assistance. Claims office services are free of charge.

The claims and outreach staff represent veterans and their family members by acting as their advocate in matters pertaining to VA benefits and entitlements. As a veteran's representative, the claims and outreach offices help identify what evidence is needed to support the claim, monitor the progress of the claim through the adjudication process, intercede on the claimant's behalf if problems arise, and explain and clarify VA procedures and regulations that apply to the claim.

The claims and outreach offices work closely with County Veterans Service Officers to facilitate important services, such as the following:

- ◆ disability compensation – payments to veterans who are disabled by injury or disease incurred or aggravated during military service;
- ◆ pension – assist veterans with pension benefits;
- ◆ vocational rehabilitation – employment assistance, training and education for veterans with service-connected disabilities who have an employment handicap due to their service-connected disability;
- ◆ health-care benefits – medical treatment and hospital care for veterans with service-connected disabilities and others who meet VA eligibility criteria;
- ◆ education benefits – Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits for former active-duty service members and eligible members of the reserve components; and
- ◆ burial benefits – burial in state or federal veterans cemeteries. Headstones and markers may be provided for burials in private cemeteries. Burial allowances may help pay for burial services and a burial plot.

The focus of the outreach office is to be a visible presence in communities throughout the state. This is done through attendance at veteran specific gatherings such as the annual homeless veterans stand-down events in Minneapolis and St. Cloud. Outreach also hosts town-hall meetings throughout the state and was critical to the success of the 2006 Minnesota Veterans Summit.

Additional outreach efforts are aimed at reintegration of newly returning veterans to inform them of their eligibility for benefits, programs, and services. The program also provides leadership and coordination for community-based efforts that support these new veterans and encourage them to become fully integrated into their communities upon return from active military service.

Program at a Glance

- ◆ In FY 2006, Minnesotans received more than \$162 million in federal veterans' benefits as a direct result of the department's claims and outreach offices.
- ◆ In FY 2006, claims representatives were successful in obtaining \$16 million in retroactive monetary awards.
- ◆ In FY 2006, claims offices represented 14,836 claims before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ◆ Outreach offices have served approximately 1500 veterans since 2004.

Program Funding

Claims and outreach functions are funded primarily by appropriations from the General Fund. Outreach is also partially supported by revenue generated by Support Our Troops license plates.

Contact

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VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPT

Program: SERVICES

Program Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2008-09
	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	550	1,214	1,091	1,140	2,231
Statutory Appropriations					
Misc Special Revenue	75	472	338	338	676
Miscellaneous Agency	2,370	437	0	0	0
Total	2,995	2,123	1,429	1,478	2,907
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	529	974	993	1,054	2,047
Other Operating Expenses	21	240	98	86	184
Payments To Individuals	2,370	437	0	0	0
Local Assistance	75	472	338	338	676
Total	2,995	2,123	1,429	1,478	2,907
<u>Expenditures by Activity</u>					
Guardianship Administration	34	0	0	0	0
Claims-Fargo Administration	82	165	124	147	271
Claims-Fort Snelling Admin	434	799	717	743	1,460
Guardianship Client Accts	2,370	437	0	0	0
Veterans Outreach Program	0	250	250	250	500
Support Our Troops	75	472	338	338	676
Total	2,995	2,123	1,429	1,478	2,907
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	12.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	

Program Description

The core functions within the Departmental Operations Program include the commissioner's office, which is responsible for the overall management of the agency, as well as oversight of the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery, Veterans' Outreach Services, the Minnesota State Approving Agency, Information Technology, Higher Education Veterans Assistance Offices on Campus, Grants to Counties, Support Our Troops License Plates, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA).

Population Served

Through the commissioner's office the Departmental Operations program offers services to all 460,000 Minnesota veterans plus their dependents and 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 Montgomery G.I. Bill's Minnesota Education and Training Programs. Our outreach offices serve homeless veterans, women, minorities as well as other underserved veterans. The Veterans Assistance Offices on Campus serve veterans enrolled at public higher educational institutions in Minnesota. Our Veterans State Cemetery in Little Falls provides dignified burials for veterans, veterans' survivors, and eligible dependents.

Services Provided

The commissioner's office provides **overall leadership and direction** for all Minnesota veterans, their dependents and survivors, and congressionally chartered veterans organizations through the Commanders Task Force. The commissioner's office continues to send letters to various categories of veterans alerting them to changes in federal laws allowing for additional financial and medical benefits for those suffering from a variety of disabilities and illnesses.

In collaboration with the Department of Economic Security, the department operates the **Recently Separated Veterans Program (RSVP)**. When veterans separate from active duty, if they identify Minnesota as their home of record, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will receive their discharge papers (DD214). Within seven working days, a "Welcome Home" letter and relevant transitional information is mailed. In addition to thanking these men and women for their dedicated service to our nation and welcoming them home to Minnesota, the department provides them with helpful information on veteran's benefits and services, as well as Department of Economic Security programs and services. Additionally, the letter directs them to their local County Veteran's Service Officer (CVSO), where they can obtain information on available additional services.

The **Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery** in Little Falls provides dignified burial services to Minnesota veterans as well as their eligible dependents and survivors. The cemetery has recently completed a \$3.6 million dollar renovation. The renovation 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.

The **Minnesota State Approving Agency's (SAA)** mission is to provide administrative oversight of the G.I. Bill's Minnesota Education and Training Programs on behalf of our veterans and other eligible persons. The SAA is responsible for the approval of education and training programs to ensure that each program meets the

Program at a Glance

- ◆ A centralized one-stop web site portal has been created to provide information on benefits and services available to Veterans offered by all levels of government and private organizations.
- ◆ 2,318 veterans and their dependants are laid at rest in the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Little Falls.
- ◆ WWII veterans' memorial is being constructed near the State Capitol and will be completed in spring 2007.
- ◆ The Recently Separated Veterans Program (RSVP) sends Welcome Home letters containing relevant transitional information to all returning Minnesota veterans who were honorably separated.
- ◆ Veterans Assistance Offices on Campus are operational and assisted 593 veterans in Minnesota's higher educational institutions in FY 2007.
- ◆ CVSO and Service Enhancement Grants encourage regional collaboration among organizations to enhance service, benefits and programs for veterans.
- ◆ Support Our Troops license plates have generated more than \$450,000 to support veterans' programs.

necessary requirements prescribed in federal law. For veterans to receive payments for their G.I. Bill's Education benefits, the education or training program in which they intend to enroll must be pre-approved by the SAA.

Information technology, including internal and external web applications, is provided by staff in this area. CVSOs are able to access veterans' DD214's (discharge papers) online, which are utilized to secure veterans benefits. Additionally, a web site has been established creating a centralized, one-stop point of information for Minnesota veterans. The web site provides a directory of all available public and private veteran programs, benefits and/or services offered by all levels of government or private organizations.

County Veterans Service Officers grants are provided for operational improvements. Before receiving a 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 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.

Beginning in 2007, County Veterans Service Officers will be able to submit a request for proposal and compete for Service Enhancement Grants. The new funds will be for grants to enhance benefits and services to veterans, giving priority to outreach, reintegration of combat veterans into society, and reducing homelessness among veterans. All eighty-seven CVSOs, Vinland Center, and Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans are eligible to apply for these grants.

Veterans Assistance Offices on Higher Education Campuses have been established to provide assistance to veterans' at all public and private higher educational institutions in Minnesota. The six regional campus offices serve as referral points for all state college or university services, federal veterans' benefits and community resources.

Support Our Troops license plates feature a bald eagle in the foreground against the American flag as a backdrop. The proceeds from the plate sales are split between the Department of Military Affairs for financial support of military families and the Department of Veterans Affairs for three purposes: veterans services provided by Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA); grants for services to veterans by Vinland Center and Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans; and outreach and assistance initiative programs for underserved veterans.

State funding for **Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA)** is provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

All **budgeting, financial transactions, human resource management, affirmative action, and MAPS and SEMA4** transactions are processed within the Departmental Operations program.

Program Funding

The Departmental Operations 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 2008-09
	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	1,594	3,154	2,376	2,421	4,797
Statutory Appropriations					
Misc Special Revenue	43	111	33	40	73
Gift	1	4	11	14	25
Total	1,638	3,269	2,420	2,475	4,895
<u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	1,042	1,733	1,740	1,809	3,549
Other Operating Expenses	403	974	629	610	1,239
Local Assistance	193	562	51	56	107
Total	1,638	3,269	2,420	2,475	4,895
<u>Expenditures by Activity</u>					
Operations	1	4	11	14	25
Administrative Services	1,321	2,127	1,304	1,335	2,639
Cemetery Dev & Maint Acct	43	111	33	40	73
Cemetery Operations State	273	327	372	386	758
Web Development	0	100	100	100	200
Higher Education Assist	0	600	600	600	1,200
Total	1,638	3,269	2,420	2,475	4,895
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	15.3	24.9	24.9	24.9	

VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPT

Agency Revenue Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Actual FY2006	Budgeted FY2007	Current Law		Biennium 2008-09
			FY2008	FY2009	
<u>Non Dedicated Revenue:</u>					
Departmental Earnings:					
General	19	15	0	0	0
Other Revenues:					
General	0	2	2	2	4
Total Non-Dedicated Receipts	19	17	2	2	4
<u>Dedicated Receipts:</u>					
Departmental Earnings:					
Misc Special Revenue	41	46	46	46	92
Grants:					
Misc Special Revenue	84	130	130	130	260
Federal	233	400	400	400	800
Other Revenues:					
Misc Special Revenue	19	30	30	30	60
Miscellaneous Agency	49	9	1	1	2
Gift	11	23	13	14	27
Other Sources:					
Miscellaneous Agency	588	125	0	0	0
Total Dedicated Receipts	1,025	763	620	621	1,241
Agency Total Revenue	1,044	780	622	623	1,245