



Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

2011 Annual Report

“Dedicated to serving Minnesota Veterans and their families”



Leadership:

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Commissioner

Gil Acevedo
*Deputy
Commissioner,
Veterans Health
Care*

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Mission:

Dedicated to serving Minnesota Veterans and their families

Vision:

Fulfilling the needs of Minnesota Veterans and their families by providing proven and innovative programs and services to maximize quality of life.

Who we are

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is a cabinet-level state agency serving Minnesota Veterans and their families. MDVA was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1943. The original service program offered by the Department was the State Soldier Assistance Program (SSAP), which is still in existence today. Since then, MDVA has enhanced the lives of Minnesota heroes through the development and implementation of new Veteran-focused services. The services have been tailored to meet the current and ongoing needs of Veterans, service members, and their families.

What we do

- Promote self-sufficiency and personal responsibility through a safety net of benefits and services
- Supply representation to clients pursuing claims for federal Veterans benefits
- Ensure a smooth transition for Veterans from military service to civilian life
- Provide the highest quality programs for housing, health care and supportive services to Residents of the five Minnesota Veterans Homes
- Ensure the most timely, cost-effective delivery of benefits and services
- Provide dignified and compassionate burial services at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery
- Provide leadership and direction to the Veterans community by collaborating with public and private service providers



2011 Financial Summary

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) collected \$45.5 million in revenue in fiscal year 2011 from VA per diem, Veterans Homes maintenance charges, federal grants for construction projects, reimbursement for the State Approving Agency operations, gifts and donations, cemetery fees for eligible spouses/dependents, and federal reimbursements for Veteran burials at the Little Falls Cemetery. This revenue is in addition to the state general fund appropriation of \$58,568,000 and \$1,394,000 from the MN GI Bill general fund open appropriation.

The Department has two core program areas – Veterans Services and Veterans Health Care. The Veterans Services fiscal year 2011 expenditures totaled \$14.9 million or 15 percent of the Department’s budget. The Veterans Service program activities are funded through state general fund appropriations; other revenue generated by State Cemetery burial fees and license plate fees; State Approving Agency federal program funds; and donations. Veterans Services also transferred \$1,494,000 to the Office of Higher Education to administer the MN GI Bill education benefit program.

The Veterans Health Care program expenditures for fiscal year 2011 totaled \$83.3 million or 85 percent of the Department’s budget. The Veterans Health Care activities are funded through state general fund appropriations, departmental earnings generated by Resident maintenance charges, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs per diems and donations. The revenue from the per diem payments and Resident maintenance charges, when combined with the general fund appropriation, finance the operations of the program’s five state Veterans Homes.



The Minnesota Veterans Homes

The Minnesota Veterans Homes provide a continuum of long-term care for Residents with a strong emphasis on remembering and recognizing the service and sacrifices of all Veterans. There are five Veterans Homes operating in Minnesota, located in Minneapolis, Hastings, Silver Bay, Luverne, and Fergus Falls. These five Homes provide a combination of skilled nursing care, domiciliary programs and Alzheimer's units.





Resident Profile:

Total – 331

Type of Care

Domiciliary 49
Skilled Nursing 195
Skilled Special Care
unit 87

Gender

Male 299
Female 32

Resident Makeup

Veteran 301
Spouse 30

Era of Service

WWII 116
Korean War 68
Vietnam War 60
Gulf War 2
Peacetime 55

Minnesota Veterans Home-Minneapolis established in 1887, this Home was once known as the Old Soldiers Home and served needy Veterans of the Civil War. Founders of the Home intended for it to be a peaceful, beautiful and comfortable community for Minnesota Veterans who required care during their “golden years.” The Home sits on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River near picturesque Minnehaha Falls.

The Minneapolis campus provides skilled nursing care and domiciliary care. The Home provides 24 hour skilled nursing care to include wound care, diabetes and cardiac care, Alzheimer’s and dementia care, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy, as well as other clinical services such as nutritional services, psychology and social services to Veterans and their spouses.





Minnesota Veterans Home – Hastings in 1978, the State Hospital in Hastings was converted into a domiciliary residence (board and lodge) for Veterans. The Home is located 21 miles southeast of St. Paul on 128 beautiful wooded acres along the Vermillion River. Today, the Veterans Home has 200 licensed domiciliary beds and provides person-centered care to Veterans needing medical, psychological and vocational rehabilitation support services. The Home has successfully piloted an illness, management, and recovery therapeutic care model for individual and group therapy. Pet therapy has also been introduced providing a facility therapy dog which provides psychological support for Veterans.

The Home also provides a supportive housing program. This transitional opportunity is designed to support Veterans being discharged from the Home. The five bedroom home located in a residential Hastings neighborhood has a large family room, two spacious living room areas and laundry and garage facilities. The program offers Veterans independence and support by connecting Veterans to community based psychological, vocational, and recreation services, as needed.

Resident Profile:

Total – 56

Type of Care

Domiciliary
Supportive
Housing

Gender

Male 54
Female 2

Resident Makeup

Veteran 56
Spouse 0

Era of Service

WWII 4
Korean War 3
Vietnam War 17
Gulf War 5
Peacetime 27



Resident Profile:

Total – 80

Type of Care

Skilled Nursing 40

Skilled Special Care
unit 43

Gender

Male 68

Female 12

Resident Makeup

Veteran 68

Spouse 12

Era of Service

WWII 30

Korean War 21

Vietnam War 7

Peacetime 10

Minnesota Veterans Home – Silver Bay is located on the scenic North Shore overlooking Lake Superior. The Silver Bay Veterans Home was opened in 1991 after being converted from a school building to a skilled care facility. The Home is licensed for 83 skilled nursing care beds and has two special care households for Residents requiring memory support.

Silver Bay has a town center with a barber shop, café, post office, Resident exercise gym, game room/pool hall, Resident craft room, four season porch and a great room.

The Home also has four households that focus in Resident directed care. Each household has an independently staffed kitchen with open dining hours, a living room, household dining room, and a private family gathering room.



Resident Profile:

Total - 83

Type of Care

Skilled Care Nursing
Skilled Special Care
Unit

Gender

Male 71
Female 12

Resident Makeup

Veteran 71
Spouse 12

Era of Service

WWII 34
Korean War 19
Vietnam War 12
Peacetime 6

Minnesota Veterans Home – Luverne was opened in 1994 and provides skilled nursing care for 85 Residents in a friendly small town environment in southwest Minnesota. The staff at Luverne follows the Eden Philosophy social model of care to help provide spontaneity and make life worth living for Residents in their care. The Home has a 42 bed cognitive loss care wing with 17 beds designated to care for Residents with dementia. Staffing is based on a primary care model with focus on person-centered care. Local community groups from churches, schools, and local businesses play an integral part in the activities and programs that are provided for Residents living at the Home.



Resident Profile:

Total –106

Type of Care
Skilled Nursing

Gender
Male 105
Female 14

Resident Makeup
Veterans 106
Spouses 13

Era of Service
WWII 62
Korean War 24
Vietnam War 11
Peacetime 9

Minnesota Veterans Home – Fergus Falls is a skilled nursing care facility opened in 1998. The Home has special features that portray a main street of a small town. These features include a barber shop, general store, library, family inn and clinical exam rooms.

Unique to the facility is its U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC). The clinic is maintained under a shared use agreement with the VA and is the first nurse practitioner nursing home-based clinic in the nation. The CBOC provides on-site medical care for eligible Veterans and access to care within the VA system. The Home has also introduced a new concept of nursing care with the innovative universal worker position. This approach increases the accountability of nursing personnel and expands their influence over the care of the Residents.



Providing Innovative Programs and Services

Programs and Services Division: Creates and administers nation-leading programs to address Veterans' needs including: the State Soldiers Assistance Program, Grants to Counties, Operational Improvement Grants, MDVA surviving spouse/dependent education benefit, LinkVet, Minnesota GI Bill, The Higher Education Veterans Program, Tribal Veterans Service Officers, outreach, a women Veterans coordinator, funding to Veterans Service Organizations and Support Our Troops license plates.

The Claims Division represents Veterans and their dependents who seek benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) with regards to compensation, non-service connected pension, vocational rehabilitation, and educational benefits. The division also participates in hundreds of community events each year, educating Veterans about the benefits they have earned.

The Division has offices located in the St. Paul VA Regional Office (VARO) in the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, and at the Fargo VA Regional Office in North Dakota.

The Outreach Division educates and assists underserved Veterans on how to access federal and state benefits, and provides referrals to other agencies for additional services.

Tribal Veterans Service Officers (TVSO) provide community outreach to locate and serve as a Veterans advocate to traditionally underserved Native American Veterans and their dependents.

The total numbers for all the divisions:

-New Clients: 9,751

-Submitted Claims: 17,907

-Rating Decisions: 9,330

-Walk-in Clients: 3,814



The Minnesota Veterans Preference Act (VPA) grants most Veterans a limited preference over non-Veterans in hiring and promotion for most Minnesota public employment positions. VPA also provides protection against unfair dismissals. The Department helps Veterans pursue relief when their Veteran’s preference rights have been violated and/or denied. In fiscal year 2011, the Department closed 18 VPA cases, with 5 active, ongoing cases and 9 cases still pending.

The Department provides enforcement of the Minnesota Veteran’s Preference in Hiring Act (VPA). In 2011, the Department provided information and assistance to 83 Veterans who received a “notice of intent to terminate” and were offered a local VPA hearing. In addition, MDVA provided information to over 58 public employers regarding their role in the termination hearing process.

MDVA ensures that service providers, employers, and Veterans are aware of Veteran employment rights and protections through outreach and educational activities. This year, MDVA provided 4 VPA educational and informational presentations.



The State Soldiers Assistance program (SSAP) provides financial assistance to Veterans, their dependents and survivors. Assistance is provided for shelter, utilities, cash grants, optical and dental benefits including extractions and dentures, once-per-lifetime special needs grant for assistance during a time of hardship, surviving spouse/dependents and Veteran education benefits, the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), and flood assistance.

During 2011, the program allocated over \$4.4 million in funds to needy Veterans and their dependents.

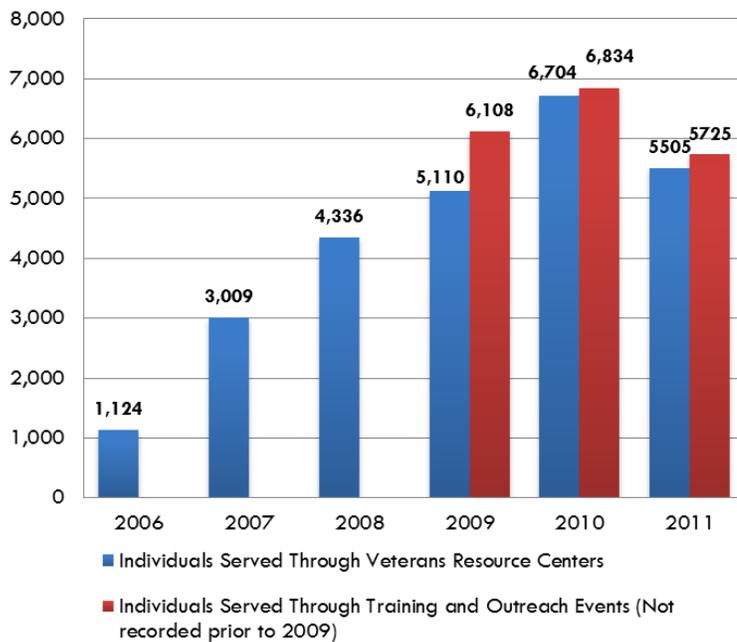
	NUMBER OF PAYMENTS	DOLLAR AMOUNT
DENTAL		
REGULAR	2774	\$1,042,100
EXTRACTIONS		
REGULAR	280	\$222,715
DENTURES		
REGULAR	364	\$658,990
OPTICAL		
REGULAR	1593	\$503,261
SHELTER		
REGULAR	490	\$246,403
SPECIAL NEEDS	489	\$747,301
GARBAGE		
REGULAR	24	\$1,372
SPECIAL NEEDS	20	\$1,945
FUEL		
REGULAR	63	\$10,478
SPECIAL NEEDS	76	\$41,164
EDUCATION		
REGULAR	120	\$47,835
SPECIAL NEEDS		



ELECTRIC		
REGULAR	261	\$24,410
SPECIAL NEEDS	163	\$77,004
WATER & SEWER		
REGULAR	45	\$4,314
SPECIAL NEEDS	54	\$18,049
MISC		
REGULAR	19	\$8,007
SPECIAL NEEDS	557	\$579,493
CASH GRANTS		
REGULAR	577	\$180,735
TOTALS	7969	\$4,415,576



The Minnesota Higher Education Veterans Program is a nation-leading program that provides assistance to Veterans at all public and private higher educational institutions in Minnesota. The program has twelve regional coordinators who work with educational institutions to support the success of Veterans, current military members and their families by providing on-campus Veterans Resource Centers, information about benefits and resources as well as creating institutional readiness in support of the unique needs of these students. In 2011 the Higher Education Veterans Program had 6,704 new visitors and a total of 57,627 contacts.



The Minnesota State Approving Agency (SAA) is responsible for the approval of education and training programs, ensuring that each program meets the requirements of Title 38 of the United States Code. For Veterans to receive GI Bill education benefit payments, the education or training program in which they are enrolled must be first approved by the SAA.

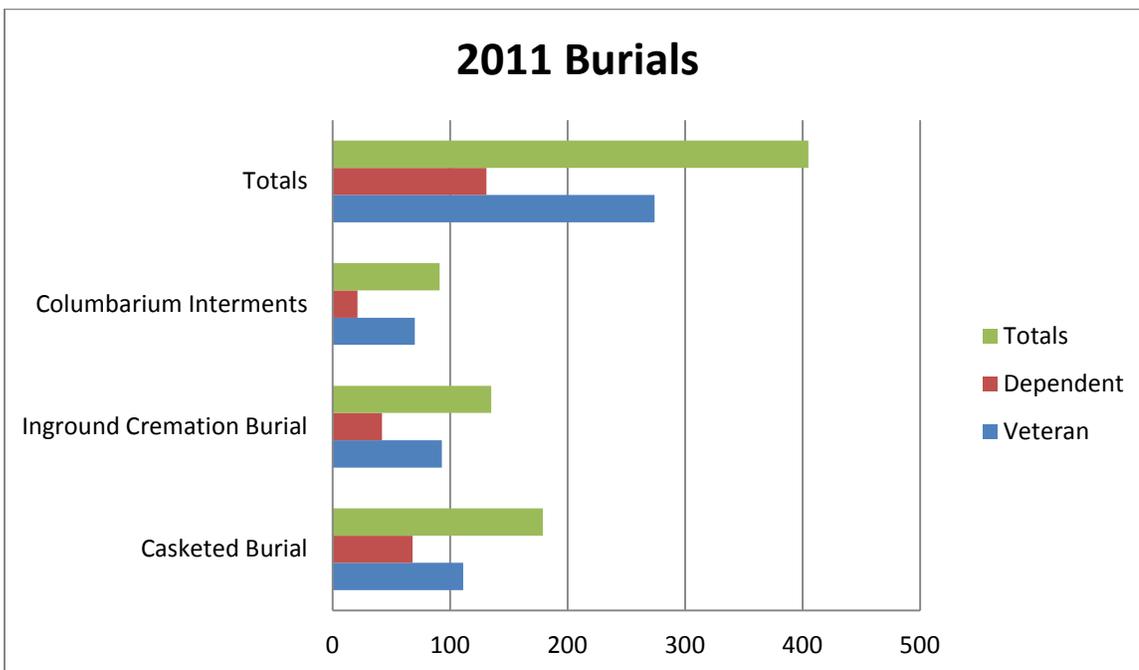
SAA approved 362 institutions and 5,612 (college degree, non-college degree, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, flight training programs and license and certification programs) programs during fiscal year 2011, assisting 16,574 students.



Final Honors for Heroes

Burial in the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery is open to all Veterans discharged from active military service under conditions other than dishonorable. Their spouses, minor children, and under certain conditions, unmarried adult children are eligible for burial. Eligible spouses may be buried, even if they predecease the Veteran. Also eligible for burial are members of the reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces, the U.S. Army, National Guard and the Reserve Officer Training Corps who die while on active duty for training or performing service, or who have 20 years of service in reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces creditable for retired pay.

The Cemetery is located in Little Falls, Minn., adjacent to Camp Ripley. This year the cemetery laid 274 Veterans and 131 dependents to rest.





Minnesota CORE

Through a partnership with Lutheran Social Service (LSS) of Minnesota, MDVA launched Minnesota CORE (Case Management, Outreach, Referral, and Education) in 2008. This program is designed to bring essential, community-based services directly to Veterans, military members and families at no cost to them.

In response to a long-standing need identified by MDVA and County Veterans Service Officers, the program was developed to provide counseling and case management services to Veterans and family members.

Due to its unique structure this program also provides resources to previously underserved rural areas around the state. By working with LSS, Minnesota C.O.R.E. provides comprehensive assistance through an existing statewide network of resources. In fiscal year 2011, a total of 1046 clients were served by the Minnesota C.O.R.E. program.

Services Provided:

- Individual and family counseling
- Financial counseling
- Debt management
- Addiction counseling
- Disability services
- In-home counseling

LSS case staff are based in field offices located strategically throughout the state, including the Twin Cities, Alexandria, Brainerd, Detroit Lakes, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Mankato, Moorhead, St. Cloud, and Willmar.



Minnesota “Month of the Military Child”

Children of service members deal with many issues unique to their situation. Some move frequently, worry about a loved one in harm’s way or just feel the stress of being separated from a parent for extended periods of time. All of these issues can make normal childhood activities, such as going to school, watching TV, and playing with friends more difficult. It is estimated that over 15,000 children in Minnesota have been affected by a parent’s deployment.

In partnership with the Governor's Council on Faith and Community Service Initiatives, MDVA takes time each April to recognize the Month of the Military Child, which emphasizes the important role military children play while a parent or important adult is serving. In 2011 Governor Mark Dayton sent military children a letter of gratitude in honor of their service and sacrifice. MDVA also offers an extensive list of resources to those caring for military families.



Partnerships

Working to Strengthen the Support Network for Veterans and their Families

MDVA works with many organizations in order to best serve the state's Veterans. Through collaboration, MDVA works to strengthen the support network available to Minnesota Veterans. The goal is to offer the most complete support, care and advocacy network as possible. Here are a few of MDVA's close partner organizations:

Office of the Governor: As a cabinet level agency, the Commissioner has a direct and consistent line of communication with the Governor's office. The Governor's office provides support through initiative and policy development. The Commissioner provides the Governor's office with the timely and relevant updates on Veteran-related issues at the state and federal level.

Minnesota National Guard: The Minnesota National Guard is the largest source of Veterans in the state. MDVA works closely with the Minnesota National Guard in reintegration, raising awareness on Veteran-related issues, legislation relating to Veterans, service members and their families, promotion of the Minnesota C.O.R.E. program and various marketing and communication projects. MDVA also partners with the National Guard on Veterans events, forums and roundtables.

Minnesota State and Federal Elected Officials: MDVA works closely with state and federal elected officials on legislation to better the lives of Minnesota's Veterans and their families. The Department works with elected officials to raise awareness of Veteran-related issues in their communities. Upon request, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs attends in-district Veterans events, town-hall meetings, forums and roundtables.

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV): Is a non-profit organization that serves Veterans and their families affected by homelessness. This valued partner provides and coordinates clean, safe, drug-free supportive housing; transitional homes for use during extended medical care; job skills training; assistance in finding permanent housing, food resources and health care; mortgage assistance; chemical dependency treatment and sobriety aftercare; and counseling and legal assistance.

Veterans Service Organizations: The Commanders' Task Force is comprised of the nine congressionally-chartered Veterans organizations, including: the Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Vietnam Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans, American Ex-Prisoners of War, Marine Corps League and the American Veterans (AM-VETS). During the



legislative session, the group acts as a strong lobbying force for Veterans issues. In addition, the group collaborates with the Department to cosponsor the state's annual Veterans Day program.

Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans (V4V) Trust Fund Board of Trustees: The Big Island Veterans Camp of Minnetonka Board of Governors, comprised of representatives from several state-wide Veterans organizations, sold the Big Island Veterans Camp on Lake Minnetonka to the city of Orono in January 2006. The \$5 million proceeds from the sale were placed in a trust fund to be used for grants to address the needs of Veterans across the state.

MDVA works closely with the V4V Trust Fund Board of Trustees, comprised of appointed representatives from the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. The trust provides grants to help Minnesota Veterans integrate into society and lead healthier, independent lives by funding recreational, employment, health, education and social programs for Veterans, their families and caregivers. The MDVA Commissioner is involved in the approval of these grants.

County Veterans Service Officers: County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) are a vital part of the overall success of MDVA's mission to serve Veterans. The Department partners with them on many programs and events, including reintegration, outreach events and initiatives to heighten awareness of programs and services available within the Veterans community. CVSOs are the first stop for Veterans in their community for services and benefits.



Assisting Minnesota Counties

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) administers two grant programs to counties.

The Operational Improvement Grant awards counties a set dollar amount- triennially – based on Veteran population. The grant's purpose is to assist the County Veterans Service Officers with costs of purchasing office equipment that will improve the delivery of services to their county Veterans. In fiscal year 2011, \$89,600 was available to the Cycle 2 counties, of which 25 counties applied for and received \$74,200.

The Enhancement Grant is an annual, open, competitive grant process for which all 87 counties are eligible to apply. The Enhancement Grants are an opportunity for County Veterans Service Offices to augment the benefits, programs and services provided to Veterans. Counties may apply under one or all of the following categories:

- Outreach to Veterans
- Reintegration of combat Veterans
- Collaboration with social service agencies, educational institutions and other relevant community resources
- Reduction of homelessness among Veterans
- Digital Records Management
- Transportation program
- Marketing/advertising
- Staff management and training
- Provides measurable outcomes

During the 2011 cycle, the Department received 120 applications from 62 individual counties totaling \$1.6 million in requests. MDVA was able to award 68 grants with the \$756,654.99 allocated to the grant program.



In the Community

Throughout the year MDVA hosts and participates in community events in order to honor, celebrate and educate Veterans and the Minnesota community about the accomplishments of those who have served this country and the issues they and their families face. Below are a few events in which MDVA participated.



Hill Day



MACV Standdown



Veterans Day

July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011