

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2017-2018

Lt. Col. Glenn W. Sutphin Jr., U.S. Army (Retired), Executive Director



Honoring Those Who Served U.S.

FDVA

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

www.FloridaVets.org

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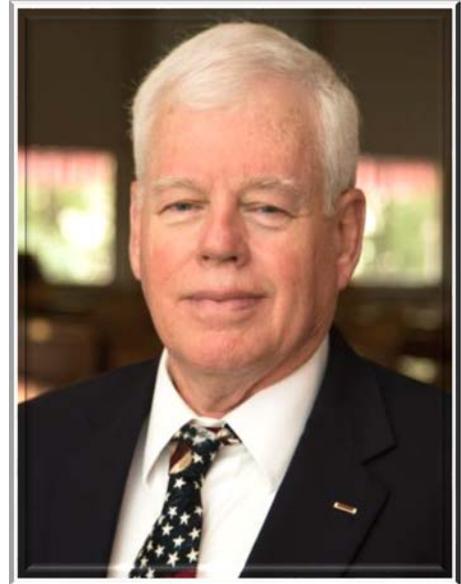


December 19, 2018

To: The Governor of the State of Florida, Members of the Cabinet, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

I am very honored to submit the 2018 annual report for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. Watching over and advocating for our state's veterans and their families are the more than 1,100 men and women of FDVA. Their story of patriotism, dedication and commitment is showcased in this report.

At the end of World War II, the State of Florida recognized the need to provide services to returning service members and created a division within state government to connect veterans with their earned federal and state benefits. To better serve veterans and their families, Florida voters in 1988 overwhelmingly approved a Constitutional Amendment to create a Cabinet Agency to "Honor Those Who Served U.S."



Today, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is the premier point of entry for Florida veterans to access earned services, benefits and support. We serve the nation's third largest veterans' population with more than 1.5 million veterans residing in the Sunshine State.

FDVA plays a major role in the direct infusion of more than \$18.4 billion annually for veterans into Florida's economy through federal compensation, education and pension benefits, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' medical services and military retired pay.

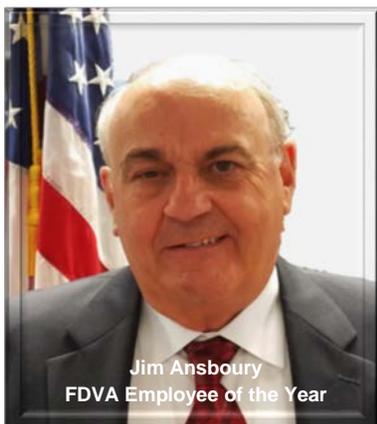
Florida offers unique benefits such as in-state tuition rates for veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill®, several layers of property tax exemptions, expanded veterans' preference, and extensive benefits, licensure and fee waivers for many activities and occupations. We also offer high quality care at our network of state veterans' homes, with two additional homes in development in Port St. Lucie and Orlando.

We are also partnering with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on veteran suicide prevention, expanding veteran access opportunities for adult day health care and connecting aging veterans with earned benefits to increase their quality of life.

We honor the service of our veterans. Let us never forget them and their families, through whose selfless service and sacrifice we today enjoy freedom and liberty.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Glenn W. Sutphin Jr." in a cursive script.

Glenn W. Sutphin Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)
Executive Director, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs



Jim Ansboury
FDVA Employee of the Year

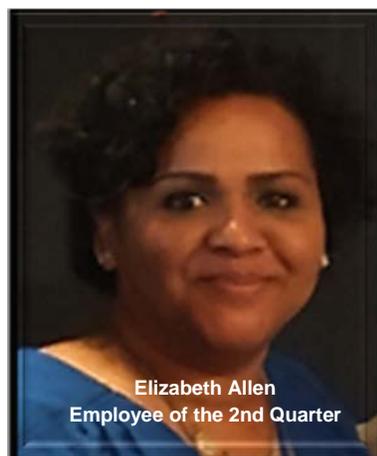
Mr. Jim Ansboury works as the Bureau Chief, Division of Benefits and Assistance, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. Mr. Ansboury has excelled in his performance as Chief of the Claims Bureau, exhibiting a constant diligence and true compassion for veterans and their families. He collaborated with County Veteran Service Officers to provide data analytical support, and consulted with VA partners to gather information/evidence in support of veterans benefit claims. Fielding calls from all counties, legislative Staff, and the Executive Office of the Governor, Jim has proven to be the guru or problem solver of VA issues and related veteran matters. Simultaneously, Jim served as the contract manager for the F.I.V.E Star Grant, Crisis Action Center 2-1-1 hotline, and as backup for the K9s for Warriors grant ensuring they were executed in accordance with legislative guidance. Mr. Ansboury

was awarded with a cash award from the Prudential Productivity Award for supporting Veterans Preference.

Ms. Mary Jo Balog works as the Food Service Director at the Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home. Ms. Balog has implemented a new efficient menu system that included production sheets, menus, recipes, nutritional labels, food preparation sheets and pull sheets. The new system improved coordination in food production. Furthermore, her emergency response coordination for providing food to residents, staff and family members during Hurricane Irma was exceptional.



Mary Jo Balog
Employee of the 1st Quarter



Elizabeth Allen
Employee of the 2nd Quarter

Mrs. Elizabeth Allen works as the Administrative Assistant, Largo Office, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. Mrs. Allen reorganized and modernized the Agency's Public Records Request Program, responded to more than 60 requests with the majority of those acted upon within 24 hours. Her tireless support to the Department with other activities is noble.

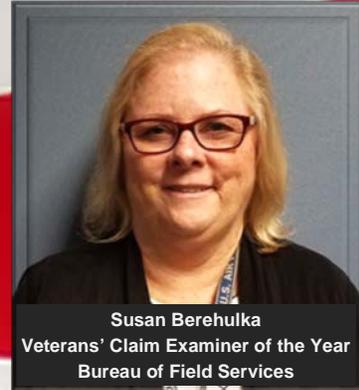
Mr. Thomas Scoleri works as a Veterans' Claims Examiner, VA Medical Clinic, Lake Nona (Orlando), Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. During the 3rd quarter, he filed 76 issue resolutions for veterans with a federal dollar value of \$491,145 and filed 762 disability claims. Mr. Scoleri attended nine outreach events, advised 360 veterans for their state and federal benefits, and provided methodology guidance to obtain those benefits. Worthwhile, Mr. Scoleri received six "Thank You Cards" signed by Governor Rick Scott for his support of Governor Veterans' Service award presentations.



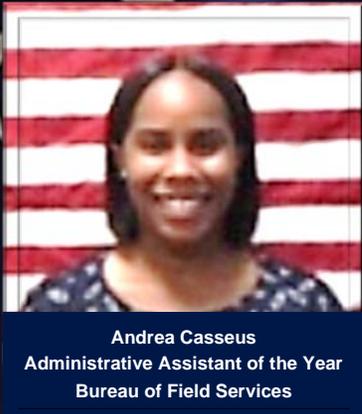
Thomas Scoleri
Employee of the 3rd Quarter



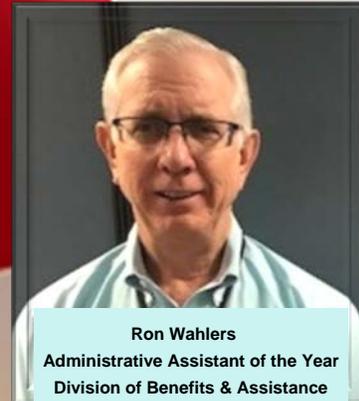
David Austin
Supervisor of the Year
Bureau of Field Services



Susan Berehulka
Veterans' Claim Examiner of the Year
Bureau of Field Services



Andrea Casseus
Administrative Assistant of the Year
Bureau of Field Services



Ron Wahlers
Administrative Assistant of the Year
Division of Benefits & Assistance



Christina Johnson
Winner of Nursing Student Loan
Forgiveness Program

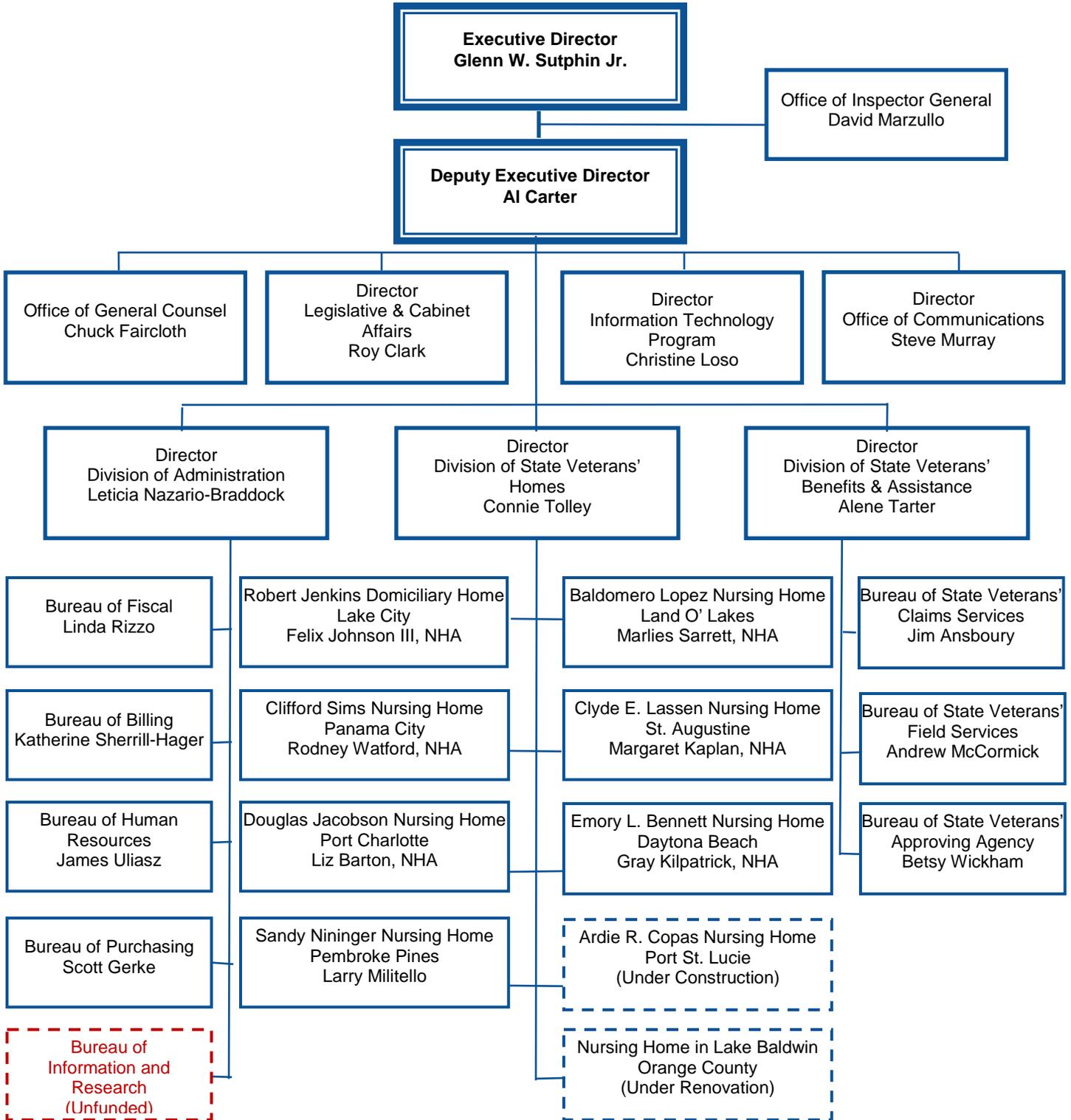


Robin Coker
Winner of Honorable Mentions
FHCA (C.N.A) Essay

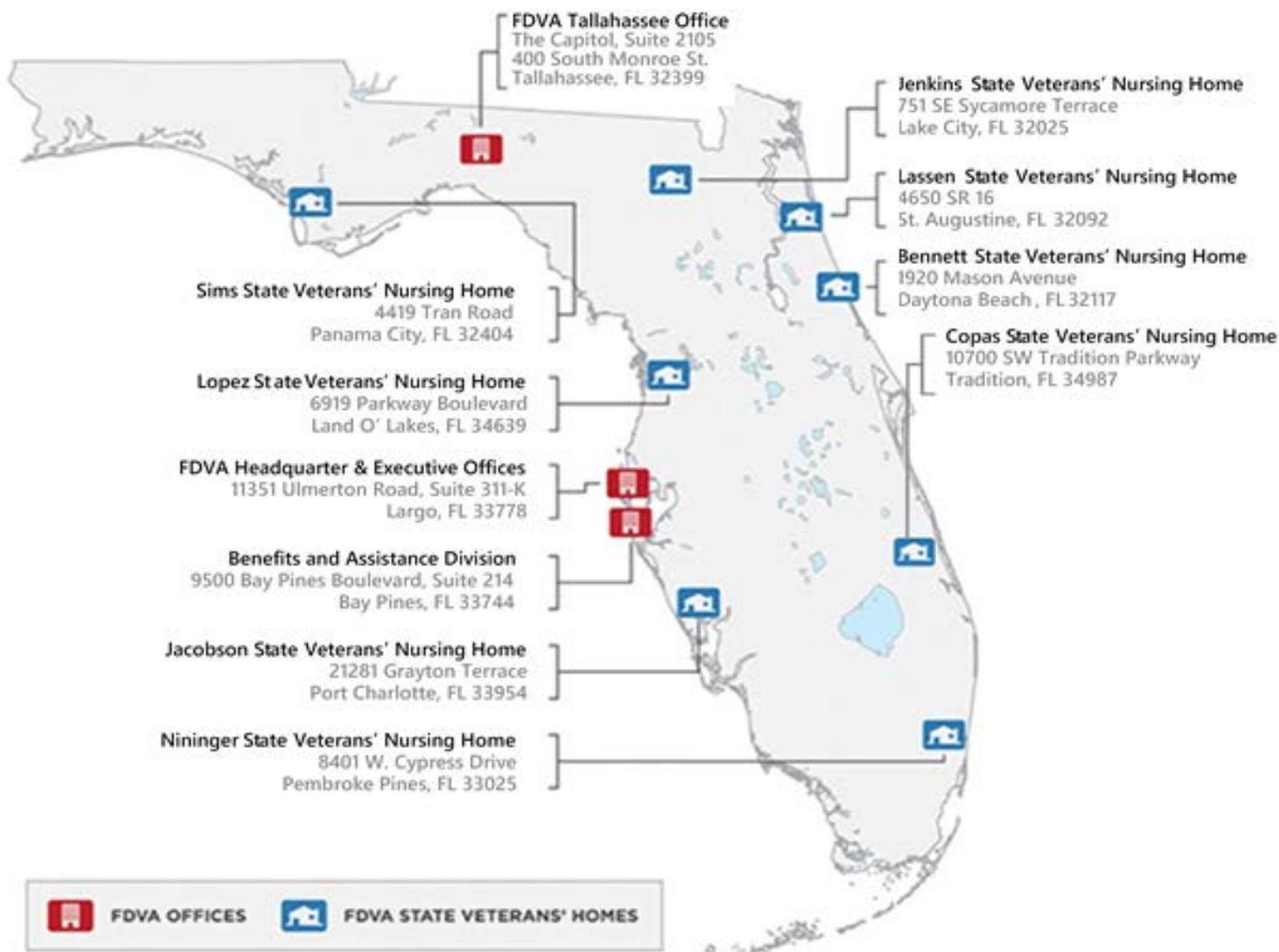


Who We Are

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs



Our Mission: To advocate with purpose and passion for Florida veterans and link them to superior services, benefits and support.

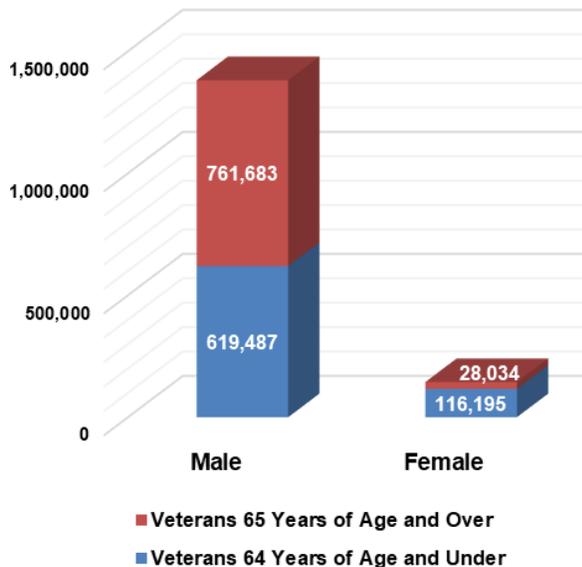


The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) is a Cabinet agency responsible for assisting Florida veterans, their families and survivors in improving their health and economic well-being through quality benefit information, advocacy, education and long-term health care.

FDVA's main administrative office is in Largo with a Capitol office in Tallahassee. Its two primary program areas are located throughout the state:

- **The Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance** provides professional assistance to Florida veterans and their dependents in obtaining financial benefits and health care treatments from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **The State Veterans' Homes Program** provides comprehensive, high-quality health care to eligible veterans in need of long-term skilled or assisted living care.

Fiscal Year 2017 (Federal Year: 10/1/2016-9/30/2017) demographic information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Population Projection Model 2016 (VetPop2016). Florida has the third largest veteran population in the nation. There are 1,525,400 veterans in the State of Florida.



Post-9/11 Veterans

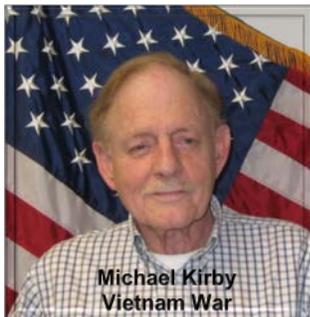
There are 177,494 post-9/11 veterans in Florida. Our returning veterans, much like the Greatest Generation of World War II, are seeking employment, housing and education opportunities for themselves, their spouses and families. Research suggests that 10% to 18% of these service members are likely to have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after they return.

Gulf War (1990 to 9/11)

There are 188,024 Gulf War era veterans in Florida, from Gulf War 1990 to 9/11. Urban warfare has changed not only the face of war, but also what our veterans face after the war. With advances in technology and medicine, more service members are surviving injuries incurred in war that would have killed them in previous eras.

Peacetime

There are 352,600 Peacetime veterans in Florida, who served on active duty from 1976 to 1980. Almost a quarter of Florida's veteran population served honorably during a unique and relatively conflict-free time in our history. Many of these veterans do not seek benefits, mistakenly believing that if they did not serve in combat, then they must not qualify for veteran benefits and programs.



Vietnam War

There are 519,843 Vietnam era veterans in Florida, who served during 1961 to 1975. FDVA has seen an increase in disability claims filed on behalf of Vietnam veterans due to triggered responses to the current wars and the manifestation of acute diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange.

Korean War

There are 139,129 Korean War era veterans in Florida, who served during 1950 to 1955. As these veterans have aged, benefits and services that address a variety of issues unique to their demographic, including changing health risks and long-neglected mental health needs, financial challenges and long-term care needs are being implemented.

World War II

There are 61,646 World War II veterans in Florida. World War II veterans were among the nation's first to participate in modern warfare. Their service also coincided with major advances in modern medicine, resulting in a then extraordinary survival rate.



Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance

Provide information and advocacy to Florida veterans, their families and survivors, and assist them in obtaining all federal and state benefits due to them.

Measure	Actual FY 2016-17	Actual FY 2017-18	Standard FY 2017-18
1. Value of cost avoidance because of retroactive compensation.	\$317,642,636	\$126,958,225	\$90,195,094
2. Value of cost avoidance because of issue resolution.	\$69,072,422	\$81,737,100	\$21,673,357
3. Number of veterans served.	98,876	107,381	97,163
4. Number of claims processed.	35,999	38,910	22,242
5. Number of services to veterans.	711,647	684,451	483,903

Division of State Veterans' Homes

Provide quality long-term health care services to eligible Florida veterans.

Measure	Actual FY 2016-17	Actual FY 2017-18	Standard FY 2017-18
1. Occupancy rate for homes in operation 2 years or longer.	98.1%	97.9%	90%
2. Percent of state veterans' homes in compliance with quality of care health care regulations.	100%	100%	100%
3. Number of state veterans' homes beds available.	870	870	870

Division of Executive Direction and Support Services

Provide effective and responsive management to support the divisions and programs serving veterans.

Measure	Actual FY 2016-17	Actual FY 2017-18	Standard FY 2017-18
1. Administration costs as a percent of total agency costs.	3.8%	3.8%	6.8%
2. Administrative positions as a percent of total agency positions.	2.5%	2.6%	4.4%

The Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance provides professional assistance to Florida's veterans and their dependents in an effort to obtain financial benefits and health care treatment from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Success is measured by the number of veterans the department assists and the number of issues resolved for those veterans. "Assistance" is seen in a variety of components, including medical treatment, prescriptions, prosthetic devices, benefit checks, school program approval, veterans' preference investigations and determinations, voter registration and disseminating veteran data to general public.



FDVA Benefits and Assistance staff pose with Gov. Rick Scott after receiving the Governor's Veterans Service Award in Pinellas Park.

The Division is comprised of a Division Director, support staff and three Bureaus:

- Bureau of Veterans' Claims and Assistance (§ 292.05 (1) F.S.)
- Bureau of Field Services (§ 292.05 (1) F.S.)
- Bureau of State Approving Agency (§ 292.05 (4) F.S.)
- Bureau of Veterans' Claims is Veterans' Preference (§ 295.11 F.S.)

Veterans' Claims Examiners (VCEs) are trained to resolve the myriad of issues facing veterans who served in World War II through today's conflicts, with each era having unique issues and challenges. Each day finds VCEs offering assistance and guidance at Transition Assistance Program briefings for separating service members, congressional veterans' appreciation days, Homeless Veteran Stand-Downs, and Veteran Service Organization gatherings. However, FDVA employees remain proactive in providing services to Florida's veterans, of the 1.5 million veterans in Florida; fewer than 354,000 currently receive VA service-connected compensation and pension benefits (not to be confused with military retirement benefits). Efforts to reach these veterans, counsel them regarding benefits they may have earned, and assist



Gov. Rick Scott and FDVA Benefits and Assistance Director Alene Tarter in Deland at a Governor's Veterans Service Award ceremony.

them in garnering those benefits are expanding. For every state dollar expended for this division, more than \$94 in federal monies are brought into Florida.

The Bureau of Veterans' Claims Services provides counseling and assistance to veterans, their dependents and survivors, with the preparation, submission and prosecution of claims and appeals for state and federal benefits as well as applications to correct military records. The bureau also supports the VA's initiatives of Homeless Outreach, Women Veterans' Integration, and 'Fully Developed Claims' program.

The Bureau's primary responsibility is to work directly with the decision resources in the VA Regional Office to expedite claims and to influence, through proactive advocacy, the most positive outcome. To this end, Veterans' Claims Services provides a quality control function by reviewing completed VA benefits rating decisions and paralegal due process assistance in the prosecution of veterans' disagreements with and appeals of VA rating decisions and debt identification and relief.

The Bureau is also charged by statute to train and certify County Veteran Service Officers. To maintain proficiency with the rapid changes in veterans' programs, the bureau provides training twice a year during the counties' semi-annual conferences.

The Bureau of Veterans' Field Services provides benefits counseling services to inpatients and outpatients in 44 of the VA's medical facilities in Florida and State Veterans' Homes, as well as outreach activities for FDVA throughout the state. Field Services also assists in staffing the state's Disaster Recovery Centers when established by the Division of Emergency



Bureau of State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education and Training Staff

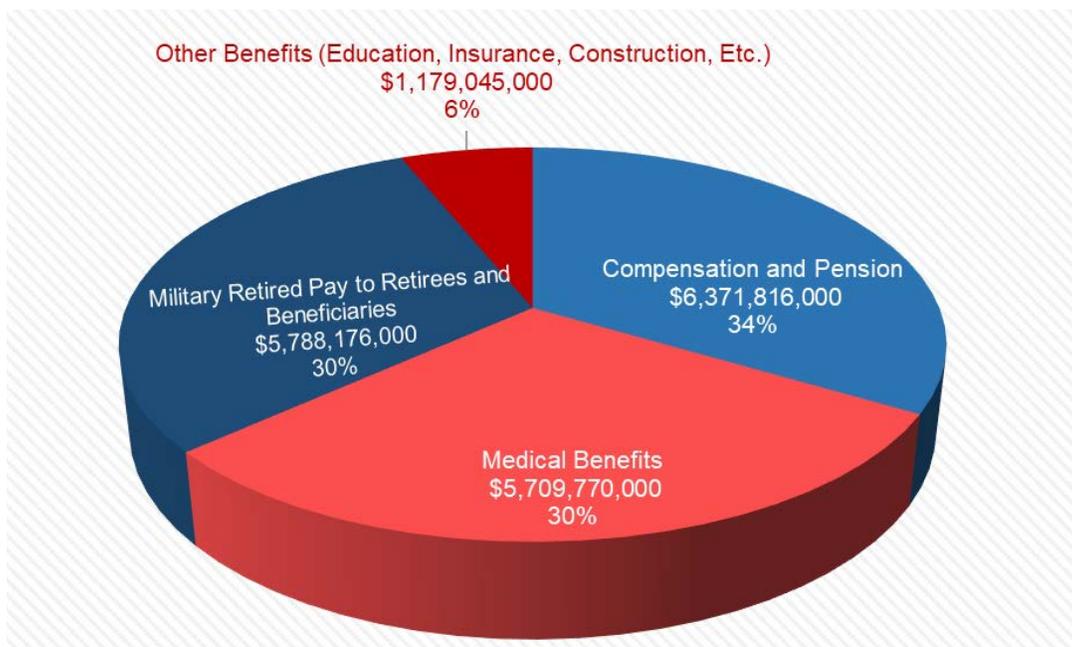
Management. The Bureau's primary responsibility is to help veterans initiate, develop, submit and prosecute claims and appeals for state and federal veteran benefits. The focus of Field Services is face-to-face contact with the client and the resolution of any number of issues related to the submission of claims for compensation, pension, or medical care.

The VCEs of the Bureau of Veterans' Field Services work closely with patient advocates in VA Medical Centers. They also perform extensive outreach and help veterans navigate the confusing and cumbersome process to obtain benefits from the VA. The services can result in monetary benefits, but often result in determining, verifying and obtaining eligibility for medical treatments, medications, wheelchairs, hearing aids, ambulance bill reimbursements, lost check replacements, prosthetics and other, non-monetary yet valuable benefits within the VA system. This service provides Florida veterans with significant economic value.

The Bureau of State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans' Education and Training is charged under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code and the federal contract entered into between FDVA and the VA and governed by Florida Statute 295.124. The Bureau is 100% federally funded. The Bureau reviews, evaluates and approves programs of veterans' education at Florida's institutions of higher learning and non-college degree schools for participation in VA Education Benefit programs. GI Bill® -eligible veteran flight training and employer On-the-Job and apprenticeship training also fall under the SAA's purview.

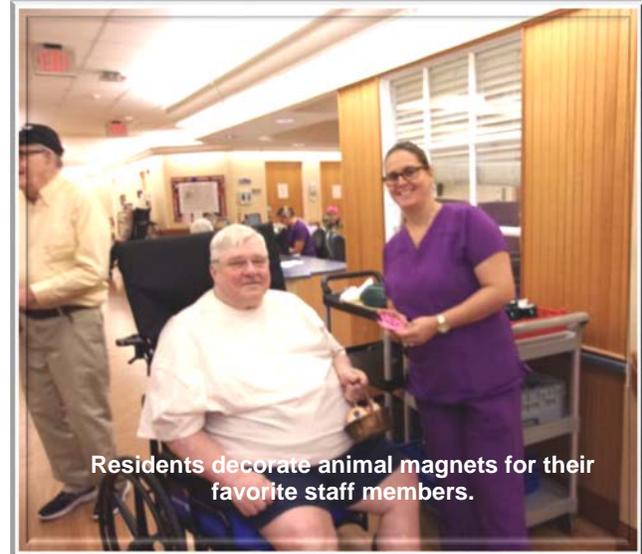
Education is one of the keys to the successful tool during transition from active-duty to veteran status. Certifying quality programs in the state, and encouraging the use of Post 9/11 GI Bill® benefits for those programs, emphasized in all FDVA outreach activities. Attracting and keeping a young, educated veteran population is beneficial for all Floridians.

About \$19,048,807,000 Federal dollar garnered in support of Florida veterans for Fiscal Year 2017 (Federal Year)



The State Veterans' Homes Program

Provides comprehensive, high-quality health care on a cost-effective basis to eligible veterans in need of either long-term skilled nursing care or assisted living services. Care is provided to veterans with qualifying war or peacetime service, who are residents of Florida preceding admission, and who require skilled care as certified by a VA physician. Admission criteria are based on the need to maintain a safe environment for all residents. The skilled nursing and assisted living homes only admit those persons whose needs can be met within the accommodations and services it provides with consideration for all residents.



Residents decorate animal magnets for their favorite staff members.

Assisted Living level care is provided at the Robert H. Jenkins State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City, and includes rehabilitative assistance and other therapeutic measures to eligible ambulatory veterans who are not in need of hospitalization or skilled nursing services. The focus of care in the Domiciliary Home is preparing veterans to function at their highest level of independence. A multidisciplinary approach is followed with the veterans participating in an established care plan.

Skilled nursing home care provides full-service, long-term residential nursing care to eligible veterans in six State Veterans' Nursing Homes. The homes are supervised 24-hours daily by registered and licensed nurses.

Five of the six skilled nursing facilities operated by FDVA have dementia-specific neighborhoods:

- Alexander "Sandy" Nininger State Veterans' Nursing Home, Pembroke Pines
- Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home, Land O' Lakes
- Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home, Panama City
- Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home, St. Augustine
- Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home, Port Charlotte

Comprehensive services and a deep concern for all veterans go hand in hand at our FDVA nursing homes. A full-time staff of Registered Nurses (RN), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) provides around-the-clock medical and nursing care to our veteran residents. Rehabilitative services, such as occupational and physical therapies, speech therapy and recreational activities are provided under the direct supervision of licensed therapists.

A variety of on- and off-site recreational and social activities are provided to encourage active minds, bodies and spirits, and slow the process of physical and mental decline. A wide range of other medical services is also offered. These include dental, podiatric and dermatological care. In spacious dining rooms, residents are provided with wholesome meals prepared under the



Resident Art Gray thanks fellow soldiers.

supervision of licensed dietitians. The State Veterans' Homes Program has a proud tradition of commitment to veterans. We remain at the forefront in ensuring that the level of care and services provided to our veterans meets or exceeds the highest standards in an environment that enhances the quality of life of each veteran.

State Veterans' Homes Program Occupancy Rates

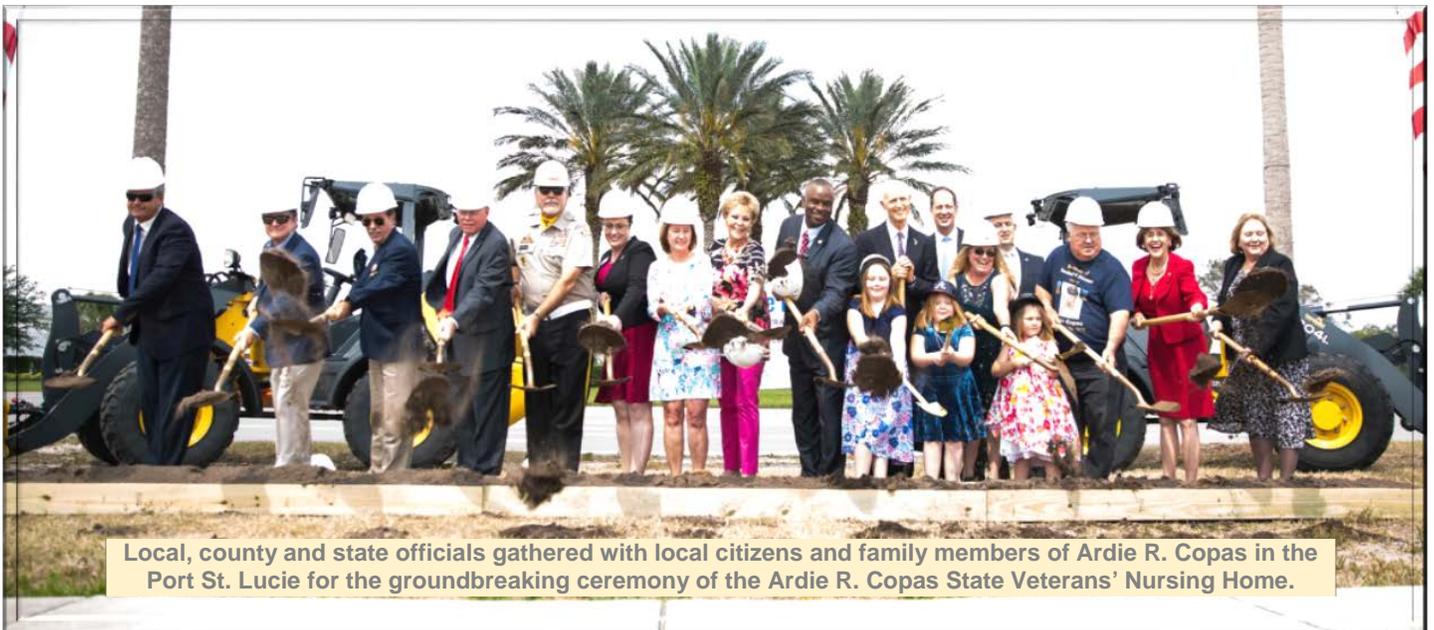
During Fiscal Year 2017-18, the average occupancy rate for State Veterans' Homes in operation two

years or longer was 97.9% and the average for all skilled nursing facilities was over 97.5%.

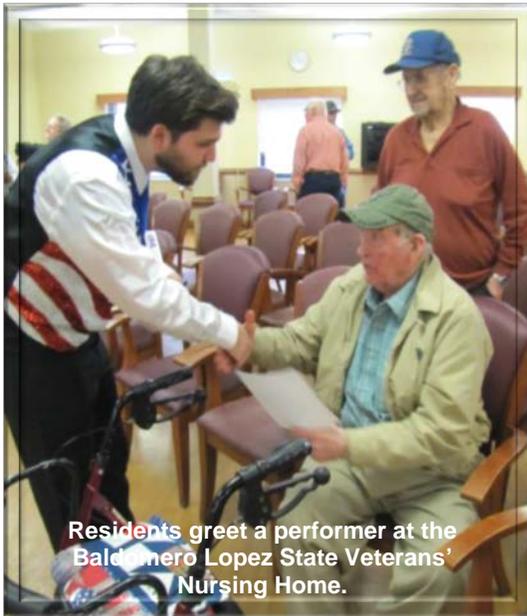
Assisted living facilities traditionally operate at a lower occupancy than skilled nursing facilities, and the department is proud to announce the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City had an occupancy rate far above the 90% performance measure goal for the year and achieved a 99.3% occupancy rate.

Quality of Care

The Snoezelen® has arrived at our Florida State Veterans' Nursing Homes. In 2017-18, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Homes Program launched an innovation initiative to bring fresh ideas to improve the lives of our Florida veteran residents. Constantly searching for and embracing new innovations in memory care is a key focus. All six skilled nursing homes launched a new program to help treat veterans suffering from dementia and related effects.



Local, county and state officials gathered with local citizens and family members of Ardie R. Copas in the Port St. Lucie for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home.



Residents greet a performer at the Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home.

Tucked away in a corner of each of the skilled nursing homes is a nondescript room with some special equipment and a funny name, Snoezelen®.

If you have never heard of the Dutch term Snoezelen® (pronounced “snuzelen”), formed by the words “sniff and doze,” you are probably not alone! Snoezelen® is a type of therapy originally founded in Holland for individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities.

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Homes Program has developed a room in each of the six skilled nursing homes that holds equipment that is an important part of the treatment regimen for patients with severe dementia, PTSD, anger, stress relief, pain management and agitation. Also called a Multi-Sensory Environment (MSE), equipment in the room is used to stimulate the patient's senses to

evoke a calming and therapeutic effect. These rooms can include lights, colors, sounds, soft objects, or aromas all within a safe environment that allows the veteran using it to explore and interact without risk.

Filled with soothing lights, sounds, scents, textures, and comfortable furniture, the relaxing atmosphere offers residents a respite from challenges, confusion, and agitation. This immersive experience provides an outlet for exploration and is an excellent way to recharge and relax. The environment is one that truly has to be seen and experienced in order to understand the amazing benefits.

Sensory therapy has proven effective in calming aggressive behavior and improving mood. It is believed that this non-threatening environment offers gentle stimulation that reduces tension, replenishes the spirit and allows recuperation. Snoezelen® is used as an effective “Sundowners” intervention and for treating other Alzheimer's manifestations.

All of the Snoezelen® equipment is portable so it can be taken to patients who cannot make it to the room themselves, and all is easily sanitized between patients. Many disciplines can use the equipment, and our goal has

been to train our certified nurse assistants, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses how to use the Snoezelen® equipment so that if somebody is having an issue they can bring them into the environment and try to help decrease the agitation and calm the veteran.



Nurse Aide Training at the Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home in St. Augustine.

One of the key benefits of this therapy is its ability to reduce an individual's fears and enhance their trust in the people closest to them. Snoezelen® can be specially adapted to meet the needs of the individual, delivering stimuli to seven of the senses (which include the vestibular for balance and proprioception for body part awareness). The environment facilitates better communication (both verbal and non-verbal) during and after therapy and is thought to deepen the relationship shared between caregivers and the veterans receiving care.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has embraced and effectively endorsed Snoezelen® Multi-Sensory Environments for veterans' facilities. There is one thing for sure: Wherever and whenever the Snoezelen® appears at our nursing homes, happiness and calmness abound. Our Florida veterans deserve nothing less.

FDVA First Certified Nursing Assistant Training Class

In October 2017, the Florida Department of Veterans' Homes Program embarked on an endeavor to train and certify a select group of caregivers for our Nations' Hero's. Since that first class at the St. Augustine facility, we have grown to obtaining Florida Board of Nursing certification for four of our six facilities. All four facilities have also been recertified to continue this training until December 2020. Twelve classes of nursing assistants have graduated and provided much needed support to our facilities, which experience recruitment and retention challenges common to the nursing home industry. We take pride in providing real-life experiences for our nursing assistant students which aid them in transitioning from dreamers to doers.

Our Nursing Assistant Training Instructors include Staff Educators: Nancy Dahl, RN (St. Augustine); Christine Sanders, RN (Panama City); Heather Hogan, RN (Land O' Lakes) and Naomi Alexandrou, RN at the Port Charlotte facility. Supporting these educators have been Jennifer Wilson, RN and Cynthia Holland, RN.

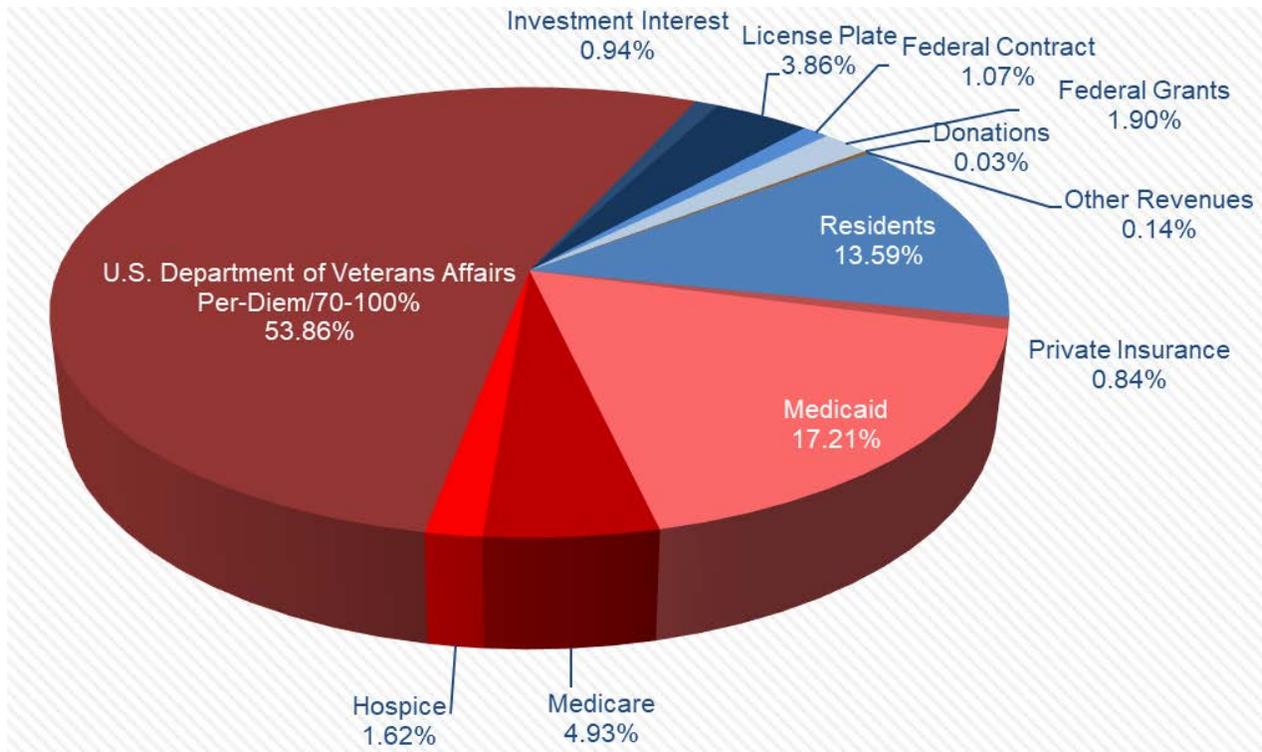


The Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home is proud to be the first FDVA facility approved by the State of Florida to conduct Nurse Aide Training classes.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Revenue Report
July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

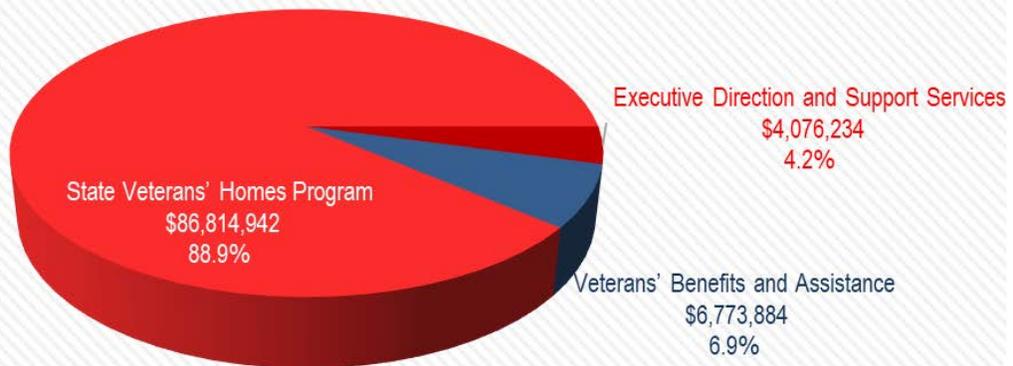
Revenues	State Veterans' Homes Program
Residents	\$ 13,334,158
Private Insurance	\$ 825,313
Medicaid	\$ 16,887,950
Medicare	\$ 4,835,149
Hospice	\$ 1,590,223
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Per-Diem/70-100%	\$ 52,847,523
Investment Interest	\$ 926,778
License Plates	\$ 3,789,662
Federal Contract	\$ 1,045,247
Federal Grants	\$ 1,866,733
Donations	\$ 33,651
Other Revenues	\$ 137,571
Total Revenues	\$ 98,119,958



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Expenditure Report July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

	State Veterans' Homes Program	Executive Direction and Support Services	Veterans' Benefits and Assistance
Operating Expenditures			
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 50,508,774	\$ 2,373,572	\$ 5,856,268
OPS	\$ 3,188,821	\$ 32,933	\$ 9,344
Expenses	\$ 15,057,212	\$ 1,142,212	\$ 304,817
Other Capital Outlay	\$ 1,019,901	\$ 108,442	\$ 18,467
Food Products	\$ 3,408,660	\$ -	\$ -
Vehicle	\$ 239,744	\$ -	\$ -
Contracted Services	\$ 11,055,834	\$ 383,858	\$ 454,006
Recreational Equip. Supplies	\$ 66,437	\$ -	\$ 36,852
Risk Management Insurance	\$ 1,930,605	\$ 14,607	\$ 57,354
Human Resources Assessment	\$ 338,954	\$ 9,507	\$ 36,775
Data Processing Svc SRC	\$ -	\$ 11,102	\$ -
Total Operating Expenditures	\$ 86,814,942	\$ 4,076,234	\$ 6,773,884
Non-Operating Expenditures			
Service Charge to General Revenue	\$ 375,732	\$ -	\$ 1,804
Refunds-State Revenues	\$ 606,731	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Cost	\$ 62,597	\$ -	\$ -
Payment Sales Tax	\$ 4,124	\$ -	\$ -
Trust Fund Sweep	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Non-Operating Expenditures	\$ 2,382,509	\$ -	\$ 1,804
Fixed Capital Outlay			
New Home Construction	\$ 2,272,124	\$ -	\$ -
Add & Improvements to State Veterans' Homes	\$ 3,029,119	\$ -	\$ -
Maintenance/Repair	\$ 2,340,664	\$ -	\$ -
Fees	\$ 336,980	\$ -	\$ -
Total Fixed Capital Outlay	\$ 7,978,887	\$ -	\$ -
Total	\$ 95,843,013	\$ 4,076,234	\$ 6,775,687



■ State Veterans' Homes Program ■ Executive Direction and Support Services ■ Veterans' Benefits and Assistance



The Gold Seal program awards were developed and implemented by the Governor's Panel, recognizing nursing home facilities that demonstrate excellence in long-term care. The Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O' Lakes and the Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City are current recipients. Twenty-eight Skill Nursing facilities received 2018 Governor's Gold Seal award in Florida for providing consistence and exceptional high level of care to their residents.



Facilities that wish to be considered for the Gold Seal Award must be in operation for a minimum of 30 months and meet rigorous standards for quality of care, financial soundness, family and community involvement, training and workforce stability. Facilities must also have an excellent regulator history in the 30 months preceding their application.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicare Services (CMS) created the Five-Star Quality Rating System for Nursing Homes to help residents and their family members compare the quality of care and services provided at skilled nursing facilities. There is one overall 5-Star rating for each nursing home, and a separate rating for each of the following three sources of information:

- Health inspection results
- Staffing data
- Quality Measures

Homes that receive an overall rating of 5-Stars are in the top 10 percent of all homes measured. FDVA is proud to share that four out of six State Veterans' Nursing Homes are recognized as CMS Five Star quality rated nursing homes.



Five-Star Quality Rated
by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services



Thirty-five veterans were awarded the Governor's Veterans Service Award at the Feb. 8 Cabinet meeting at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa.

- Alexander “Sandy” Ninger State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Pembroke Pines
- Baldomero Lopez State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Land O’ Lakes
- Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans’ Nursing Home, St. Augustine
- Emory L. Bennett State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Daytona Beach



The American Health Care Association and National Center recognized the Florida State Veterans’ Homes with the Bronze Commitment to Quality Award for Assisted Living. The National Quality Award Program provides a pathway for providers of long-term and post-acute care services to demonstrate their commitment toward performance excellent for the quality of care to seniors and persons with disabilities. The six out of seven State Veterans’ Homes were awarded Bronze recipient veterans’ homes are:

- Alexander “Sandy” Ninger State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Pembroke Pines.
- Baldomero Lopez State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Land O’ Lakes.
- Clifford C. Sims State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Panama City.
- Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Port Charlotte.
- Emory L. Bennett State Veterans’ Nursing Home, Daytona Beach.
- Robert H. Jenkins State Veterans’ Domiciliary Home, Lake City.

2018 PRUDENTIAL PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS

The Prudential Productivity Awards are made possible through the generosity of Prudential, and the vision of the late J. E. Davis and A. D. Davis, co-founders of Florida TaxWatch. Since 1989, Florida TaxWatch has publically recognized and rewarded state employees and work units whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.



2018 Prudential Productivity Award recipients.

The FDVA received one individual cash winner and four team recognition plaques during FY 2017-18. Awardees include:

Cash Winners

- James (Jim) Ansbury, Claims Bureau Chief, Division of Veterans’ Benefits and Assistance

Plaque Winners

- **Facility-based C.N.A. Training Program Team**
Lisa Wise and Gwendolyn Hamilton, Staff Development Coordinators at the Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home
- **Records Management Task Force**
Cindy Carmichael, Susan Brey, Neeta Patel, Sandra Wells, Debra Weaver, Leslie Jackson, Tronda Evans, Cheryl Holley

Agency Winners

- **The State Veterans' Nursing Home Planning Team**
Executive Director Glenn Sutphin, Deputy Executive Director Al Carter, State Veterans' Nursing Homes Program Director Connie Tolley, Communications Director Steve Murray, Division of Administration Director Leticia Nazario-Braddock, Legislative and Cabinet Affairs Director Roy Clark, General Counsel Chuck Faircloth and Attorney Linda Williams.
The Billing Unit, Division of Administration
Ronald Burke, Patricia Anderson, Liliane Bitar, Kimberly Franzolino, Kainoa Maka, Neha Mehta, Sherrie Miller, Shushma Patel, Courtney Poole, Darlene Robinson, Yolanda Rodriguez and Marcie Williams.

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs placed a 15-second public service announcement before the opening credits of "The Vietnam War," a ten-part, 18-hour documentary film series directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick that aired on PBS, Sept. 17-28, 2017. Florida is home to more than 500,000 Vietnam-era veterans, the Sunshine State's largest veterans' demographic. The premiere episode of "The Vietnam War," which was unveiled Sept. 17, was PBS' best-performing telecast since the series finale of Downton Abbey on Masterpiece and is the highest-streamed series opener in PBS history. In addition, The Vietnam War's first six episodes closed the Nielsen 2016-2017 broadcast year for PBS and were the programming service's highest-rated telecasts of that season. In Florida, more than 3.5 million households viewed our PSA during the 10-episode series. Our sponsorship amounted to a little more than one penny per household, which is an outstanding return on investment.



Gov. Rick Scott addresses veterans at the National Guard Armory in Marianna, May 2018.

Actions Taken Relevant to Florida Statutes

Chapter 292, FLORIDA STATUTES

§§ 292.05 (4) F.S. *The Department may apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services from the state, the United States Government or any of its agencies, or any other public or private source and may use funds derived from these sources to defray clerical and administrative costs as may be necessary for carrying out its duties.*

State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans' Education and Training

FDVA maintains a contract with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide for State Approving for Veterans' Education and Training. Costs are reimbursed 100% by the VA and include coverage of clerical and administrative expenses of the Bureau, SAA within the Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance.

Division of State Veterans' Homes

The Division of State Veterans' Homes applies for and receives federal funds from the VA including per diem as well as construction and renovation grants. Our homes accept funds from Medicare, Medicaid, hospice, private insurance reimbursements and from individual residents in the form of co-payments for services rendered. Our network of veterans' homes also accepts cash donations as well as gifted items and services for the benefit of the residents.



Aerial shot of site preparation for the new Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie.

§§ 292.05 (5) F.S. *The Department shall conduct an ongoing study on the problems and needs of those residents of this state who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and the problems and needs of their dependents. The study shall include but not be limited to:*

- A survey of existing state and federal programs available for such persons that specifies the extent to which such programs presently are being implemented, with recommendations for the improved implementation, extension or improvement of such programs.
- A survey of the needs of such persons in the areas of social services, health care, education and employment, and any other areas of determined need, with recommendations regarding federal, state and community services that would meet those needs.

- A survey of federal, state, public and private moneys available that could be used to defray the costs of state or community services needed for such persons.

FDVA continually surveys its constituency through feedback garnered while counseling thousands of veterans, receipt of training critiques, participation on numerous veteran-related governmental committees, regular meetings with veterans' organizations and their leadership, and as possible analyses of official VA data and reports. The Bureau of Information and Research, intended by the legislature to perform this task full time, has never been funded. FDVA attends Florida Veterans Council meetings with veteran service organization representatives throughout the state as a best-effort to not only gather information on veterans and their needs, but to disseminate information on available benefits to as many veterans as we can reach.

§§ 292.05 (7) F.S. The Department shall administer this chapter and shall have the authority and responsibility to apply for and administer any federal programs and develop and coordinate such state programs as may be beneficial to the particular interests of the veterans of this state.

State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans' Education and Training

Under the provisions of Title 38 United State Code and the contract maintained between the FDVA and the VA, the SAA is charged with inspecting, approving and supervising programs and courses offered by accredited and non-accredited educational institutions (public and private) as well as training organizations. Lists of such educational institutions and specific courses, which it has approved, are furnished to the VA Regional Office at Bay Pines so that eligible veterans or other eligible persons enrolled in such courses may receive veterans' education benefits.

Division of State Veterans' Homes

The Homes' Program may apply to receive federal funds that provide for the needed facility renovations and monthly per diem for eligible residents for the cost of care.

The total number of beds currently available in the Division of State Veterans' Homes is 870. Of those, 720 are nursing home beds. The veteran population over 65 years old in Florida is estimated to be 789,717. According to Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration, Florida has a total of 83,944 nursing home beds and an over- 65 population total of 3.8 million-more than half a million with Alzheimer's or related dementias.

The construction of new state veterans' nursing homes is subject to approval by the Governor and Cabinet, with 35% of the funding provided by the Florida Legislature and 65% of construction costs matched by the VA.

Chapter 295, FLORIDA STATUTES

§§ 295.05 (7) F.S. Veterans' Preference in Hiring and Retention. Florida Statute (§ 295.07) provides that the State and political subdivisions accord preferences in appointment, retention and promotion to eligible veterans. Section 295.11, Florida Statutes, tasks FDVA, upon written request of any eligible person, to investigate complaints alleging violation of veterans' preference rights.

County Population and Federal Benefit Distributions

FY17 Summary of Expenditures by State						
Expenditures in \$000s						
	Veteran Population*	Total Expenditure	Compensation & Pension	Education & Vocational Rehabilitation/ Employment	Insurance & Indemnities	Medical Care
ALACHUA	16,315	\$ 247,293	\$ 70,851	\$ 11,853	\$ 2,359	\$ 154,360
BAKER	2,104	\$ 15,307	\$ 7,052	\$ 822	\$ 68	\$ 7,364
BAY	24,631	\$ 177,237	\$ 120,129	\$ 13,770	\$ 894	\$ 42,444
BRADFORD	2,329	\$ 27,169	\$ 8,097	\$ 537	\$ 83	\$ 18,452
BREVARD	68,607	\$ 627,295	\$ 344,533	\$ 44,818	\$ 6,537	\$ 218,529
BROWARD	81,721	\$ 644,204	\$ 308,430	\$ 77,369	\$ 9,503	\$ 248,902
CALHOUN	1,335	\$ 12,826	\$ 4,748	\$ 287	\$ 102	\$ 7,689
CHARLOTTE	22,078	\$ 140,204	\$ 77,496	\$ 3,202	\$ 1,947	\$ 57,559
CITRUS	20,720	\$ 159,562	\$ 77,204	\$ 3,595	\$ 1,689	\$ 77,075
CLAY	27,935	\$ 227,716	\$ 135,407	\$ 29,703	\$ 1,929	\$ 60,678
COLLIER	28,242	\$ 104,649	\$ 62,534	\$ 4,301	\$ 2,981	\$ 34,833
COLUMBIA	6,726	\$ 123,387	\$ 35,916	\$ 2,316	\$ 580	\$ 84,575
DE SOTO	2,095	\$ 15,069	\$ 8,223	\$ 381	\$ 64	\$ 6,401
DIXIE	1,631	\$ 22,206	\$ 6,447	\$ 205	\$ 32	\$ 15,522
DUVAL	91,035	\$ 653,147	\$ 337,251	\$ 93,821	\$ 5,231	\$ 213,752
ESCAMBIA	40,979	\$ 325,962	\$ 193,911	\$ 26,596	\$ 2,609	\$ 95,811
FLAGLER	11,701	\$ 82,160	\$ 46,031	\$ 4,563	\$ 1,334	\$ 30,232
FRANKLIN	1,003	\$ 12,466	\$ 3,848	\$ 87	\$ 100	\$ 8,431
GADSDEN	3,498	\$ 52,770	\$ 12,773	\$ 1,083	\$ 302	\$ 38,611
GILCHRIST	1,666	\$ 19,063	\$ 6,653	\$ 338	\$ 93	\$ 11,980
GLADES	967	\$ 7,667	\$ 2,054	\$ 12	\$ 4	\$ 5,596
GULF	1,579	\$ 13,098	\$ 7,234	\$ 556	\$ 48	\$ 5,261
HAMILTON	945	\$ 12,296	\$ 5,391	\$ 442	\$ 30	\$ 6,433
HARDEE	1,371	\$ 9,262	\$ 3,999	\$ 292	\$ 72	\$ 4,899
HENDRY	1,544	\$ 13,468	\$ 7,580	\$ 528	\$ 42	\$ 5,318
HERNANDO	20,025	\$ 196,528	\$ 102,228	\$ 7,988	\$ 1,686	\$ 84,627
HIGHLANDS	10,768	\$ 75,418	\$ 39,984	\$ 1,575	\$ 594	\$ 33,265
HILLSBOROUGH	96,585	\$ 1,164,645	\$ 502,545	\$ 112,571	\$ 8,764	\$ 531,310
HOLMES	1,736	\$ 18,309	\$ 11,674	\$ 495	\$ 54	\$ 6,086
INDIAN RIVER	14,728	\$ 102,484	\$ 57,595	\$ 3,744	\$ 1,590	\$ 39,556
JACKSON	4,365	\$ 51,468	\$ 20,932	\$ 1,098	\$ 295	\$ 29,143
JEFFERSON	1,314	\$ 15,727	\$ 4,675	\$ 225	\$ 31	\$ 10,795
LAFAYETTE	559	\$ 4,169	\$ 1,382	\$ 95	\$ 27	\$ 2,665
LAKE	34,193	\$ 261,355	\$ 142,259	\$ 10,257	\$ 3,169	\$ 105,669
LEE	60,919	\$ 351,052	\$ 182,260	\$ 18,619	\$ 4,529	\$ 145,643
LEON	17,815	\$ 214,757	\$ 55,054	\$ 12,796	\$ 943	\$ 138,983
LEVY	4,684	\$ 55,173	\$ 15,734	\$ 639	\$ 159	\$ 38,641
LIBERTY	521	\$ 5,685	\$ 1,552	\$ 184	\$ 7	\$ 3,942
MADISON	1,322	\$ 18,134	\$ 6,483	\$ 398	\$ 44	\$ 11,209



County/ Congressional District	Veteran Population*	Total Expenditure	Compensation & Pension	Education & Vocational Rehabilitation/ Employment	Insurance & Indemnities	Medical Care
MANATEE	31,381	\$ 204,340	\$ 112,802	\$ 11,317	\$ 2,339	\$ 77,882
MARION	38,454	\$ 314,213	\$ 136,367	\$ 8,626	\$ 3,127	\$ 166,093
MARTIN	13,835	\$ 93,755	\$ 45,306	\$ 3,110	\$ 1,817	\$ 43,523
MIAMI-DADE	59,130	\$ 649,032	\$ 258,272	\$ 70,860	\$ 4,662	\$ 311,911
MONROE	7,148	\$ 57,691	\$ 28,132	\$ 5,563	\$ 456	\$ 23,540
NASSAU	8,886	\$ 53,889	\$ 29,779	\$ 4,930	\$ 587	\$ 18,593
OKALOOSA	35,600	\$ 279,792	\$ 203,544	\$ 30,907	\$ 2,050	\$ 43,290
OKEECHOBEE	2,808	\$ 32,647	\$ 15,064	\$ 633	\$ 86	\$ 16,863
ORANGE	68,408	\$ 731,255	\$ 333,130	\$ 83,598	\$ 6,035	\$ 304,684
OSCEOLA	17,497	\$ 234,739	\$ 113,411	\$ 16,460	\$ 2,182	\$ 102,686
PALM BEACH	80,395	\$ 674,173	\$ 271,845	\$ 42,852	\$ 13,803	\$ 338,115
PASCO	50,646	\$ 472,810	\$ 221,426	\$ 28,117	\$ 3,499	\$ 219,769
PINELLAS	87,262	\$ 1,056,774	\$ 378,938	\$ 41,779	\$ 7,320	\$ 497,746
POLK	49,512	\$ 422,771	\$ 203,802	\$ 23,534	\$ 4,112	\$ 191,324
PUTNAM	6,993	\$ 72,935	\$ 26,670	\$ 2,096	\$ 532	\$ 43,637
SAINT JOHNS	20,082	\$ 125,923	\$ 70,425	\$ 12,655	\$ 2,057	\$ 40,696
SAINT LUCIE	24,886	\$ 212,903	\$ 106,764	\$ 11,285	\$ 1,867	\$ 92,987
SANTA ROSA	24,741	\$ 206,309	\$ 144,697	\$ 21,200	\$ 1,277	\$ 39,135
SARASOTA	41,717	\$ 223,159	\$ 126,279	\$ 10,487	\$ 5,102	\$ 81,292
SEMINOLE	30,022	\$ 248,563	\$ 120,690	\$ 21,204	\$ 2,618	\$ 104,051
SUMTER	20,648	\$ 122,264	\$ 64,016	\$ 850	\$ 1,281	\$ 46,191
SUWANNEE	4,159	\$ 50,468	\$ 16,647	\$ 1,016	\$ 245	\$ 32,560
TAYLOR	1,897	\$ 25,578	\$ 6,988	\$ 303	\$ 25	\$ 18,262
UNION	1,067	\$ 9,522	\$ 4,030	\$ 328	\$ 47	\$ 5,117
VOLUSIA	53,790	\$ 453,525	\$ 246,418	\$ 39,276	\$ 4,388	\$ 163,445
WAKULLA	2,740	\$ 34,356	\$ 9,795	\$ 748	\$ 243	\$ 23,570
WALTON	7,012	\$ 42,447	\$ 26,440	\$ 2,167	\$ 409	\$ 13,431
WASHINGTON	2,388	\$ 19,905	\$ 11,994	\$ 658	\$ 114	\$ 7,139
FLORIDA (Totals)	1,525,400	\$ 13,406,124	\$ 6,371,816	\$ 988,717	\$ 132,806	\$ 5,709,770

Notes:

- * Veteran population estimates, as of September 30, 2017, are produced by the VA Office of the Actuary (VetPop 2016).
 - # Prior to FY 08, "Loan Guaranty" expenditures were included in the Education & Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (E&VRE) program. Currently, all "Loan Guaranty" expenditures are attributed to Travis County, TX, where all Loan Guaranty payments are processed. VA will continue to improve data collection for future GDX reports to better distribute loan expenditures at the state, county and congressional district levels.
 - ** Unique patients are patients who received treatment at a VA health care facility. Data are provided by the Allocation Resource Center (ARC).
- Expenditure data sources: USASpending.gov for Compensation & Pension (C&P) and Education and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (EVRE) Benefits; Veterans Benefits Administration Insurance Center for the Insurance costs; the VA Financial Management System (FMS) for Construction, Medical Research, General Operating Expenses, and certain C&P and Readjustment data; and the Allocation Resource Center (ARC) for Medical Care costs.
1. Expenditures are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars. For example, \$500 to \$1,000 are rounded to \$1; \$0 to \$499 are rounded to \$0; and "\$-" = 0 or no expenditures.
 2. The Compensation & Pension expenditures include dollars for the following programs: veterans' compensation for service-connected disabilities; dependency and indemnity compensation for service-connected deaths; veterans' pension for nonservice-connected disabilities; and burial and other benefits to veterans and their survivors.
 3. Medical Care expenditures include dollars for medical services, medical administration, facility maintenance, educational support, research support, and other overhead items. Medical Care expenditures do not include dollars for construction or other non-medical support.
 4. Medical Care expenditures are allocated to the patient's home location, not the site of care.



FLORIDA VETERANS — F O U N D A T I O N —

In 2008, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) as a Direct Support Organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA). The Foundation operates for the direct and indirect benefit of the veterans of Florida, the FDVA, state Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO). The FVF is also a nonprofit organization operating for charitable and educational purposes under Section 501(c) (3). While many of Florida's veterans successfully transitioned to a post-military career, many encountered challenges that impede their progress. Veterans report priority services needed during this transition were employment assistance, transportation, housing, mental health and utility assistance in emergencies.

The Florida Veterans Foundation team is composed of a volunteer Chairman and Board of Directors. The majority of the Foundation Directors are retired, military disabled veterans who donate more than 40 hours per week of their time to support the Foundation's mission to align support with the FDVA mission of Advocacy, to ensure greater global impact for Veterans throughout the state of Florida. FVF has taken charge of representing Florida veterans and their families through congressionally chartered Florida-based Veterans Service Organizations.

Florida Veterans Foundation collaborates with entities and state agencies with an interest in solving issues that ultimately affect Florida and the economy. Our staunch effort is realizing successes throughout the veteran community and gaining incredible interest at all levels of the government within Florida and through recognized accomplishments.

Suicide Prevention, Opioids/Mental Health Initiative

The Foundation made a collaborative commitment with the 2-1-1 Contact Center, Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to reach-out the pilot veteran population in Florida. The contact center provides useful information and referral services through a fellow veteran and connect them with VA funded mental health service providers according to determined conditions such as Suicide Prevention, Opioid Abuse, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Mental Health Treatment. Worthwhile, an initiative approached with crisis center on statewide campaign of "Get Help Now" phone app to connect veterans with the Crisis Center Referral program.

In 2017, the governor, through the FDVA, provided funding for the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to establish a dedicated phone line 1-844-MYFLVET, hire and train personnel, maintain a veteran-specific resource database, conduct marketing and outreach, and to manage daily operations. The Crisis Center created to provide an operational service to the five counties around Tampa Bay including Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Manatee County.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration agreed to provide funding to the Crisis Center to support the following tasks:

- Identify other 2-1-1 agencies who will provide Peer-to-Peer Veteran Care Coordination
- Crisis Center will train 2-1-1 agencies across the state on how to recruit, support and retain veteran peers to provide Care Coordination

- Continue Awareness and Outreach Efforts through advertising and marketing
- Support efforts to identify appropriate service providers across the state and manage that information to keep it up to date and relevant to the needs of callers
- Decreased recidivism rate
- Reduction in ER visits
- Decreased harm to self-others
- Referrals and Linkages to VA
- Promote best practices and successful treatment reinforcement
- Set model for national replication

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) veterans identified numerous potential benefits to a peer support program for normalization to social process including social support, purpose, meaning and hope, and link them to therapeutic benefits. However, peer support could complement psychotherapy for veterans with PTSD by increasing initiation and adherence to treatment and continuing key peer support by providing training and continuing education throughout transition. The studies indicated that the peer support groups can be defined according to trauma type, gender, and era of service. In addition, studies highlighted the importance of the leadership and interpersonal skills of a peer support group leader. Overall, peer support is highly acceptable complement to existing PTSD treatments.

FVF has worked with FDVA to move forward on expanding services by addressing Attorney General (AG), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and others for Opioids Resources to execute program.

Aging Veteran Outreach

There are approximately 40,000 aging veterans in home receiving In-Home Health Care services and 20,000 veterans residing in the more than 3,100 Assisted Living Facilities (ALF's) across the State of Florida. This demographic desperately seeks the benefit of Aid and Attendance, Pension, and Disability Claims. This effort is to meet the needs of the elder and disabled veterans. This effort can potentially bring in over \$3 billion in federal VA funding to Florida that will free up state Medicaid resources.

With support of Direct Support Organization (DSO), FDVA has committed to help the veterans' aging dilemma with hope to keep them in their home as long as possible and continued to garner the earned VA benefits. A video has been produced by DSO and have been distributed to ALF's and Florida VSO, Florida State Agencies, Legislators, and State Elder Care Affiliates. This outreach research project is to determine if a statewide intensive campaign reaching out to the new generation of elderly veterans in Florida.



FVF is looking for support and resources to continue this initiative. FVF has collaborated with the American Patriot Service Corp and the National Association of Veterans and Families. The center of interest is to keep elder veterans in their home in comfortable environment with trusted family members, while utilizing earned VA benefits, such as VA Pension with Aid and Attendance, which helps to support their financial and medical needs, and enhance their quality of life.

Furthermore, with DSO's administrative support FDVA collaborated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide a medical supervision model adult day health care pilot program for veterans, pursuant to the legislative intent for the language in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) pertaining to care for veterans.

Veterans Legal Services

FVF has established a groundwork through collaboration with the Bay Area Legal Services (BALS) of Tampa Bay to reach out veteran with legal services. While, veterans transitioning through civilian life, veterans often face complex legal problems. They need lead to a stable healthy lifestyle to reinforce in the community.

The statewide Veterans Legal Helpline project will create the necessary collaborations and service structures to respond to the needs of our growing, aging, and diverse veteran population. Using helpline, veterans can get immediate appointment to speak with an experienced attorney, schedule appointments for extended services and coordinate referrals to partners throughout the state. In addition, the FVF has served on the Veterans' Access Panel for Civil Justice and gained momentum to create a standard with the Florida Courts system for Veterans Treatment Courts that includes:

- Wrongful eviction and foreclosure
- ID issues for homeless veterans (driver licenses and/or Florida ID)
- Discharge upgrades
- Disaster / FEMA assistance
- Family Law issues

In addition, FVF has provided financial and administrative support to the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council and Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame, and publication of the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guides.





Veterans Florida (Florida is for Veterans, Inc.) is a non-profit corporation created by the State of Florida in 2014 to help veterans fully transition to civilian life in the Sunshine State. We connect veterans to employers, grant funds to employers to hire and train veterans, and educate veterans on how to open their own businesses in the Florida.

Veterans Florida is backed by the State of Florida. Our board is appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, and the President of the Florida Senate. Additionally, our staff is composed of veterans with experience in state veterans' programs, economic development, and workforce development. Our unique programs assist Florida businesses recruit, train, and hire veterans to meet workforce needs.

Veterans Florida Career Services Program

To better serve the needs of veteran job seekers and employers, Veterans Florida maintains the Career Services Program. This program houses our largest grant program, the Veterans Florida Workforce Training Grant, which reimburses eligible companies for 50 percent of the training cost for every new veteran hired and trained, up to \$8,000 per employee.

The Career Services Program allows Veterans Florida to actively recruit qualified veterans to fill Workforce Training Grant funded positions at companies across the state. Veterans can upload their resume for consideration for any position or apply directly for open positions through the career portal on veteransflorida.org.

Veterans Florida has received more than 1,500 resumes from veterans seeking employment in Florida and is actively matching them with job openings at our training grant employers. Over 40 employers have used Veterans Florida Career Services.

Workforce Grant Statistics as of June 30, 2018				
	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	Total
Veterans Hired	36	151	169	356
Salaries after Training	\$1,460,606	\$6,022,582	\$4,162,210	\$11,645,398
Reimbursements	\$ 159,025	\$ 632,230	\$ 451,917	\$ 1,243,173
Total Grant Reimbursements and Obligated (as of October 31,2018)				\$ 1,465,613

Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program



The Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program offers veterans online and on-site instruction, facilitation, and mentorship designed to match up with their level of knowledge and their busy schedule.

The Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program is conducted its third year of operation in Fiscal Year 2017-18. Since the inception of the program in early 2016, the program has received more than 2,400 applications from veterans across the state, served 1,117 veterans and had 121 businesses started by the veterans who have graduated from the program. These businesses have collectively earned \$22 million dollars in revenue, accessed over

\$2.8 million in debt and equity financing, and hired 171 employees.

The program features three pathways to meet the needs of veteran entrepreneurs at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey. Veterans can enter at any stage of the program and the pathways do not need to be done in any particular order or sequence.

The first pathway, Discover, comprises online lessons which familiarize veterans with basic terminology and concepts and acts as a gateway to the second and third pathways.

The second pathway, Explore, offers topical workshops held on location at our six network partners. This pathway comprises a minimum of six, 2-3 hour workshops and is designed for veterans with early-stage ideas or early-stage companies.

The third pathway, Master, is an advanced program that delves more deeply into all aspects of entrepreneurship and comprises 60 hours of on location facilitation held at one of our six network partners. This pathway is reserved for a maximum of 20 veterans with well-defined business ideas or early-stage companies at each network partner.

Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program Network Partners for 2017-18





Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program Metric			
Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Participants Served	Program Graduates
FY 2015-16	612	424	167
FY 2016-17	458	300	147
FY 2017-18	787	393	82
Program Graduates Reported Data as of July 2018			
Revenue Generated	Capital Invested	Businesses	Hires
\$21,959,262	\$2,883,597	121	171

Veterans Agriculture Selection Program

Agriculture is one of Florida’s largest economic sectors generating nearly \$120 billion in economic impact and supporting nearly 2 million jobs. The Veteran Agriculture Selection Program (VASP) is a nine-month internship pilot program to help veterans transition into sustainable careers in Florida’s vibrant agriculture industry. The internship provides veterans a comprehensive learning experience that gives them the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be competitive for today’s leading agriculture careers.

Veterans Florida applied and won the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) VASP award in FY 2017-18 and will administer the program in 2018-19. Veterans Florida will market and recruit veteran interns to fill University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences positions located at Research and Education Centers located throughout the state. Selected interns will receive a monthly stipend for the duration of the internship. After completion of the VASP internship, Veterans Florida will assist participants with job placement and/or obtaining entrepreneurship resources in the agribusiness industry.

Marketing Campaign

Veterans Florida collaborates with VISIT Florida to operate a modern and comprehensive marketing campaign promoting three primary objectives: Job Placement, Entrepreneurship Training, and General Awareness of Florida as the best place to live and work for veterans and their families. Targeting is driven by qualitative research showing veterans are most likely to choose a permanent residence in the 12 months prior to and following military separation.

For purposes of maximum impact, efficiency, detailed targeting, and performance tracking, the campaign uses digital advertising as the primary marketing channel. Traditional advertising is strategically used when opportunities arise to reach key audiences in a cost-effective manner.





Vetcor Services is an company that works with Veterans...
492 views · November 7, 2017



4.3K views · September 28, 2017

In addition to paid advertising, Veterans Florida maintains an active presence on all major social media platforms with regular content driving users to VeteransFlorida.org to gain more information and complete conversion actions such as submitting resumes, applying for the Entrepreneurship Training Program, and signing up to receive future email updates.



Why are so many Veterans flocking to North Florida?
23K views · April 21, 2017

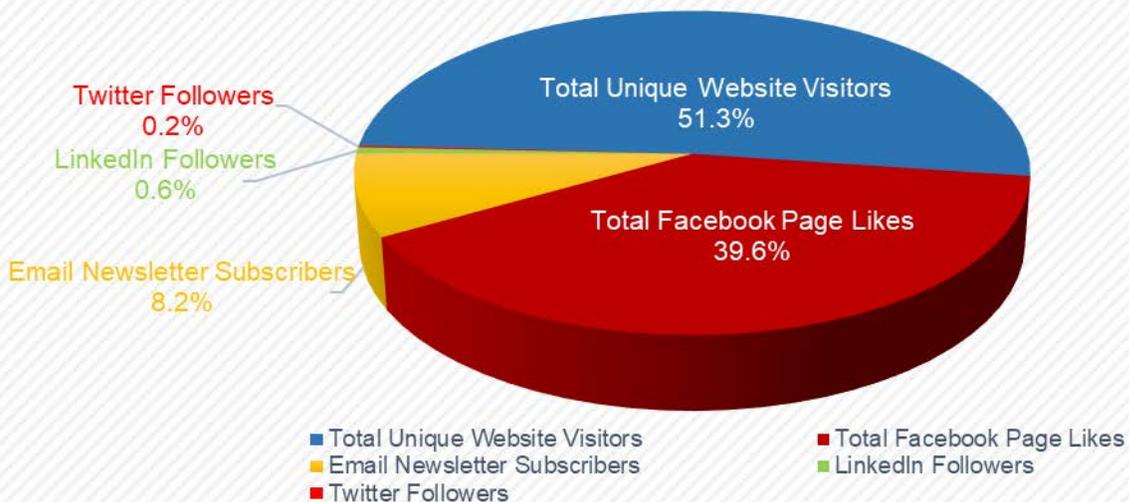


Veterans Florida Learn
950 views · April 20, 2016

In keeping with marketing trends, Veterans Florida's efforts emphasize video content for social media and we have built a significant catalog of video assets aligned with organizational objectives. Videos include regional spotlights, education opportunities, and testimonials from veterans and businesses that have engaged in Veterans Florida programming.

Year Over Year Comparison		
	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18
Total Unique Website Visitors	108,574	107,961
Total Facebook Page Likes	75,915	83,318
Email Newsletter Subscribers	13,479	17,325
LinkedIn Followers	682	1,275
Twitter Followers	298	368

FY 2017-18 Web Traffic by Sources



Associated Veteran Service Organizations

As the accredited representative of 10 veterans' organizations, FDVA has the opportunity to prosecute claims before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of veterans who have placed their trust in these organizations by completing an "Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative" designation. There are no fees charged to veterans for FDVA services.

Listed below are the veterans' service organizations that this department represents in claims processing with the VA:



American Ex-Prisoners of War



American Red Cross



Blinded Veterans Association



Fleet Reserve Association



Marine Corps League



Jewish War Veterans



Non-Commissioned Officers Association



The American Legion



The Retired Enlisted Association



Veterans of World War I (Family Members)

Certified Veteran Service Officers



In rendering assistance to the veterans of Florida, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs works closely with all county and city veteran service officers. A listing of each county veteran service officer, their location, phone number and e-mail address is available at <http://floridavets.org/locations/>. If you are reading the FDVA Annual Report online, your computer will let you go directly to the site by pressing and holding down the Ctrl key on your keyboard and left clicking your mouse on the link.

The FDVA website <http://floridavets.org/> provides many references and programs that can assist veterans and their

families at the federal, state, county and city level. All agencies work together in assisting Florida's veterans, their families and survivors to improve their health and economic well-being.





Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home Lake City (Columbia County), Staffing: 69 2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 99.3% (53 Admissions, 50 Discharges)



The facility is the very first Veterans' Home in Florida and the only Assisted Living Facility, having opened to residents in May 1990. With ongoing maintenance and energy-saving and quality of life renovations, the home is in excellent condition. The 150-bed Assisted Living Facility provides a special combination of housing, personalized support services and incidental medical care to its veteran residents.

Home Life: *Set on a quiet property with deer and wild turkey observed nearly every evening, Jenkins' residents enjoy diverse outings and multiple activities on the grounds and in the local community. The Domiciliary Home prides itself in providing excellent customer service in a home-like environment. We don't just look after residents' essential needs: We integrate opportunities to participate in lectures, book and special interest clubs, celebrations, socials and other programs that promote healthy, vibrant lifestyles.*





Five-Star Quality Rated
by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services



Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home

Daytona Beach (Volusia County), Staffing: 138

2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 95.2% (85 Admissions, 39 Discharges)

The facility opened to residents in December 1993 and is in excellent condition. Situated on 30 acres, this 120-bed facility provides skilled nursing care. This Five-Star Quality Rated home is in the top 10 percent of skilled nursing homes.

Home Life: *At Emory L. Bennett, we are a tight-knit family of residents and staff. We enjoy great support from our volunteer organizations. Every day we focus on serving our residents with compassion, sharing their lives and providing peace of mind for their families.*





Five-Star Quality Rated
by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home
Land O' Lakes (Pasco County), Staffing: 146
2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 98.9% (51 Admissions, 15 Discharges)



The facility opened to residents in 1999. The 120-bed home provides skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. The dedicated staff provides stellar care 24 hours a day to our American heroes residing at this residence. This Five-Star Quality Rated home is in the top 10 percent of skilled nursing homes.

Home Life: *Set on a quiet property, veteran residents enjoy diverse outings and activities. The Home prides itself on incorporating family and community members into our events, and fostering deep friendships among the residents. We encourage resident-driven choices, including the adoption of two cats and adding an aviary to the Baldomero Lopez family.*



Governor's Gold Seal Award

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home is a recipient of the Governor's Gold Seal Award. The program recognizes nursing home facilities that demonstrate excellence in long-term care over a sustained period promotes the stability of the industry and facilitates the physical, social and emotional well-being of nursing home residents.



Five-Star Quality Rated
by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services



Alexander “Sandy” Nininger State Veterans’ Nursing Home
Pembroke Pines (Broward County), Staffing: 142
2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 96.8% (53 Admissions, 23 Discharges)

The facility opened to residents in 2001. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer’s disease. The home provides veterans with 24-hour nursing care, daily living and recreational activities, rehabilitative therapy and nutritional cuisine. This Five-Star Quality Rated home is in the top 10 percent of skilled nursing homes.

Home Life: *Life in the Nininger Home is anything but sedentary. Frequent outings provide the residents with an open forum to the surrounding community. The home enjoys superb community and volunteer support.*





Five-Star Quality Rated
by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home
Panama City (Bay County), Staffing: 140
2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 98.5% (61 Admissions, 25 Discharges)



The facility opened to residents in 2003. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. The home remains in excellent condition and is located strategically in the state to care for our veterans in their time of need. The dedicated staff provides stellar care 24 hours a day to our American heroes. This Five-Star Quality Rated home is in the top 10 percent of skilled nursing homes.

Home Life: *The skilled nursing facility is located in a beautiful, wooded setting, surrounded by wildlife and nature. The residents enjoy regular outdoor activities and frequent offsite events such as ballgames, movies, restaurants and shopping.*



Governor's Gold Seal Award

Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home is a recipient of the Governor's Gold Seal Award. The program recognizes nursing home facilities that demonstrate excellence in long-term care over a sustained period, promotes the stability of the industry and facilitates the physical, social and emotional well-being of nursing home residents.



Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home
Port Charlotte (Charlotte County), Staffing: 139
2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 96.5% (71 Admissions, 24 Discharges)

The facility opened to residents in 2004. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. We provide our veterans with 24-hour nursing care, daily living and recreational activities, rehabilitative therapy and nutritional cuisine.

Home Life: *A modern skilled nursing facility surrounded by an involved community of supportive public and civic organizations, Douglas T. Jacobson actively celebrates and honors veterans with interactive community events both on the secluded grounds and within the historical neighboring cities.*





Five-Star Quality Rated
by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home
St. Augustine (St. Johns County), Staffing: 155
2017-18 Occupancy Rate: 99.3% (47 Admissions, 18 Discharges)

The facility opened in September 2010 and remains in excellent condition. This is FDVA's newest State Veterans' Nursing Home, a LEED-certified Gold facility that respects the environment while providing a warm, caring atmosphere for its residents. This state of the art facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. The home provides residents with 24-hour nursing care, daily living and recreational activities, rehabilitative therapy and nutritional cuisine. This Five-Star Quality Rated home is in the top 10 percent of skilled nursing homes.

Home Life: *The Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home, situated in a lodge-like setting, prides itself in customer care and services. Residents enjoy a wide variety of special events and diverse activities designed to appeal to individual interests.*



Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home

Port St. Lucie (St. Lucie County), Staffing: N/A

2017-18 Occupancy Rate: N/A—Facility under Construction.



The newest State Veterans' Nursing Home is named in honor of a Medal of Honor recipient from the Vietnam War -- Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County native Sergeant Ardie R. Copas, an Army specialist who died in 1970 while serving in the Vietnam War.

This state of the art facility at the 28.5-acre site will offer private and semi-private rooms with 24-hour nursing care and can accommodate residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease.



Artist's Draft



Lake Baldwin State Veterans' Nursing Home
Orlando (Orange County), Staffing: N/A
2017-18 Occupancy Rate: N/A—Facility to be renovated.





“Honoring Those Who Served U.S.”

Our website at www.FloridaVets.org acts as a portal to help veterans find the information they need to access benefits and services more efficiently and effectively. In addition, our free mobile application, offered in the Apple and Android markets, integrates with the website and offers veterans reminders and updates about services. It also points veterans to Employ Florida Vets, the state's veteran employment website, to help them find available jobs. For those of you online, you can also join us on Facebook and LinkedIn. Thank you for your service. We're honored to represent you.

