



STRATEGIC PLAN

2008-2013

SERVING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES





STATE OF MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, CLARK DYRUD



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Dear Colleagues and Fellow Minnesotans;

I am proud to present the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Strategic Plan, a roadmap that will guide our department in effectively carrying out our mission of “serving Minnesota Veterans and their families.”

Over the past two years, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has experienced tremendous growth and change, including the merger with the five Minnesota Veterans Homes in November 2007. This is truly a critical, rewarding and exciting time to be at the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Although the challenges we face are greater than ever, thanks to the professional dedication, creativity and expertise of our staff – combined with legislation that has given us new authorities and resources – our ability to meet these challenges has never been better.

Creating a shared vision and working to accomplish a common mission moves us forward together, beyond simply the sum of what any one of us can accomplish alone. The development of this plan has reinforced our belief in the strength each employee brings to the table, and the critical role of our community partnerships.

We look forward to working together to implement our plan and approach our vision of “fulfilling the needs of Minnesota Veterans and their families by providing proven and innovative programs and services to maximize the quality of life.”

We are proud of our commitment to serving Minnesota Veterans and their families, and through the adoption of this plan, we reaffirm that commitment.

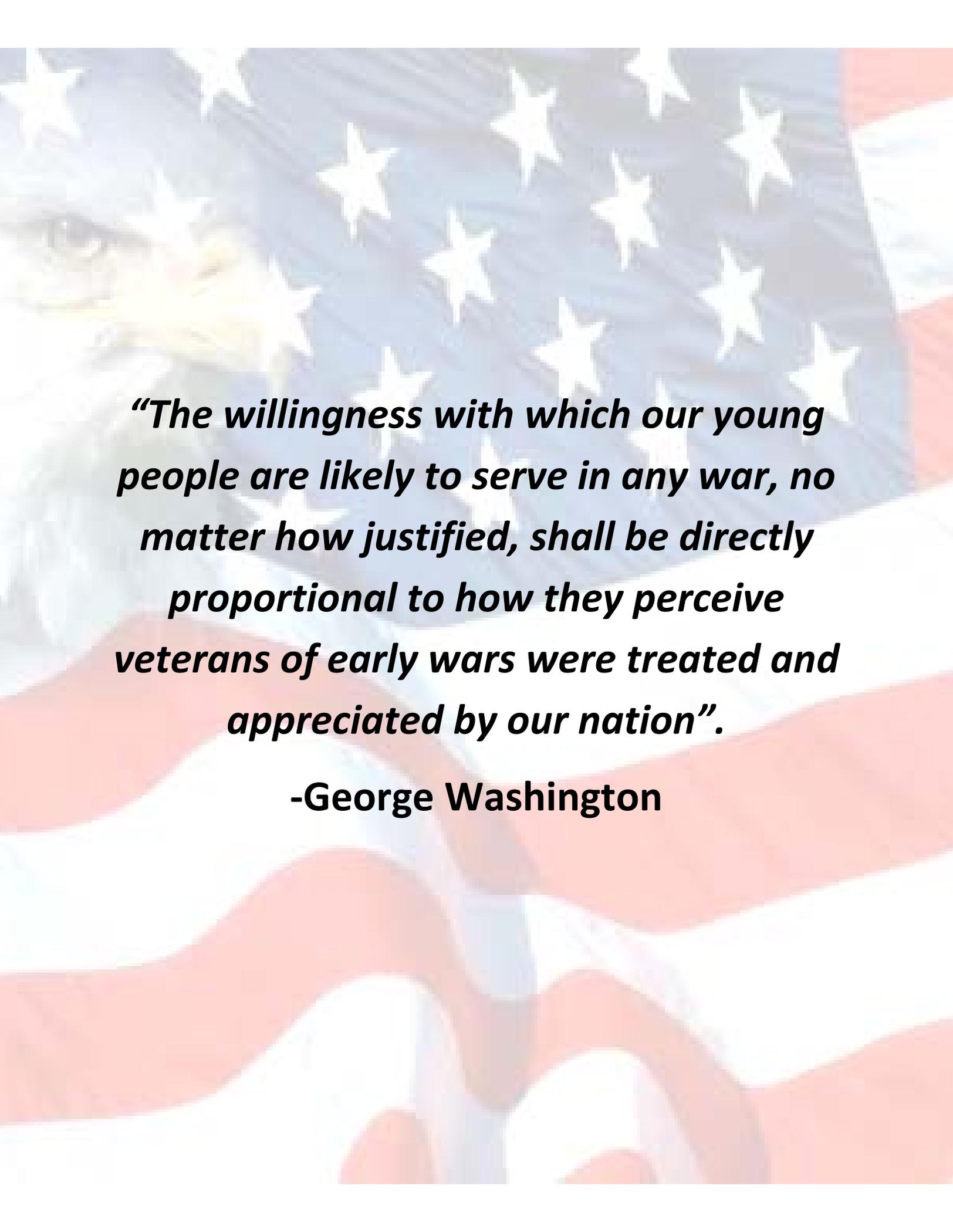
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Clark Dyrud".

Clark Dyrud

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The background of the image is a faded American flag with a bald eagle's head on the left side. The text is centered over the flag.

“The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of early wars were treated and appreciated by our nation”.

-George Washington

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Executive Summary

The State of Minnesota is currently home to more than 410,000 Veterans and their families. We are able to accomplish our mission “Dedicated to serving Minnesota’s Veterans and their families” through the support of our many partners and stakeholders. Veterans and their families across Minnesota receive \$1.28 billion in federal benefits, due in large part to efforts by the dedicated staff at the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

The State of Minnesota operates on a biennial budget cycle. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs total biennial budget for fiscal year 2008-09 was \$196.8 million, which consists of state general funds, federal funds, miscellaneous revenue and donations. The Department’s budget is managed through its two main programs; Veterans Services - with a general fund appropriation of \$40.7 million, and Veterans Homes - with a general fund of \$88.3 million.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs receives limited federal funding in support of the following areas:

- State Approving Agency - \$803,000 (per biennium)
- VA Per Diem for the Veterans Homes - \$30.4 million (per biennium)
- Cemetery Plot Allowance - \$133,000 (per biennium)

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Veterans Home Board merged in November 2007 through Governor Pawlenty’s Reorganization Order 194 (www.mdva.state.mn.us/VeteransHomes/). This Strategic Plan will act as a roadmap and guide the Department through the many challenges and opportunities over the next five years. The strategic planning process for the Department was filled with energy and a strong desire to improve the care and services of Minnesota Veterans. The planning process was divided into phases and was used to solidify the Department and build a strong leadership team with one purpose; caring for Veterans. The team identified and addressed many of the issues and concerns outlined in a Stakeholders’ meeting and captured many of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in this plan.

In the early stages and development of the Strategic Plan we focused our attention on the following:

- How will the Department fulfill the needs of Minnesota Veterans and their families?
- What will our customer look like in five, ten or twenty years?
- How will the Department ensure Resident/Veteran centered care throughout the State?
- What untapped services are available for Minnesota Veterans and how can the Department identify and fill these voids?

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Strategic Plan supports the state’s Drive to Excellence including the values, goals and principles. www.excellence.state.mn.us

Our Mission, Vision and Core Values are:

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.

Core Values:

V - Veterans first in our hearts, mind and actions

E - Excellence is our standard

T - Trust through results

E - Ethics is our cornerstone

R - Respect for service (past and present)

A - Advocacy for care and services

N - Nation Leading services

S - Stewardship of resources

The Department developed five strategic goals with accompanying objectives and strategies. The goals and objectives will assist the Department with the smooth delivery of programs, services and care to Minnesota Veterans and their families. Our five goals are:

1. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will develop integrated service lines to promote program delivery to the Minnesota Veterans community.

2. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will ensure financial integrity and viability through the development of an attainable financial base that includes resources supplemental to and independent of state appropriated funds.
3. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will formalize and implement organizational systems to support departmental operations.
4. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will develop strategies to foster employee morale and strong partnerships with stakeholders.
5. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will meet the needs of the Veterans community by providing innovative customer service.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is proud of all the hard work represented in the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan. The staff focused a great deal of time, effort and enthusiasm, on the construction of this plan to ensure it reflects the current and future needs of Minnesota Veterans. We will use the plan to track performance and the Department's leadership team will meet quarterly to discuss and analyze the progress of the goals and objectives. The intent of this tracking and monitoring system is to meet timelines and ensure that the strategic planning remains successful. The Department will revisit this plan annually to make sure the mission and vision of the Department truly reflect the ever-changing world of Veteran care and services. Look for the published plan update annually on the Department's website (www.mdva.state.mn.us) and in the Department's Annual Report.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
Strategic Plan 2008 - 2013

Mission:

Dedicated to serving Minnesota Veterans and their families.

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Stakeholder Relationships

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs values the strong relationships with its diverse stakeholders. We will work closely with our stakeholders to capture their passion, leadership and talents toward Veterans in fulfilling our mission of serving Minnesota Veterans and their families. We are committed to ensuring Minnesota Veterans receive all benefits and services afforded them under state and federal law. The Strategic Plan places importance on the Veteran and their families while continuing to foster our strong relationships with stakeholders. The following is a description of our valued stakeholders, coupled with partnerships we have developed.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA or VA):

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has enjoyed a strong relationship with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for over 60 years. Our relationship with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs encompasses many departments and services. A few of these services include but are not limited to; claims, benefits, medical center and construction grant services. The relationship with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs is crucial to the continued success of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices:

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices (VAROs) are part of the VA that makes decisions about all Veterans benefits, such as compensation, pension, education and death benefits. Based on 1930s federal legislation, the VAROs provide free office space to MDVA and other organizations that provide advocacy service to Veterans applying for their benefits. The Regional Offices support Department initiatives such as reintegration, town halls, training and staff development, notification to disabled Veterans about the property tax exclusion and many other services to Minnesota Veterans and their families.

United States Veterans Administration Medical Center:

We currently have partnerships with four Veterans Administration Medical Centers, which include medical centers in states outside of Minnesota. With five Minnesota Veterans Homes and 410,000 Veterans statewide, a strong relationship with the Veterans Affairs Medical Center is crucial to our continued success. The Minneapolis Veterans Administration Medical Center is the largest in the area and provides ambulatory, ancillary and acute care for the Minnesota Veterans Homes in Minneapolis, Hastings and Silver Bay. The Fargo, North Dakota Veterans Administration Medical Center provides ambulatory, ancillary and acute care for the Minnesota Veterans Home - Fergus Falls. The Sioux Falls, South Dakota Veterans Administration Medical Center provides similar services to the Minnesota Veterans Home - Luverne. The St. Cloud Veterans Administration Medical Center also provides services to Veterans throughout the state and is an important partner with the Department.

Veteran Integrated Network System (VISN):

VA Midwest Health Care Network, one of twenty-one Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) within the United States. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), oversees the provision of health care provided to Veterans residing in the several states around Minnesota. VISN focuses on the benefits of both a facility based structure and a patient care service line structure. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs works closely with VISN to ensure that quality care and medical standards are met at the Veterans Homes. The Department works closely with VISN and the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care to advance quality care for aging and chronically ill Veterans in the most efficient manner. VISN sponsors training seminars and meetings to ensure dissemination of updated changes and continuity throughout the service lines within VISN. VISN is a valued partner in the reintegration effort with the Department, enrolling all returning Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) service members in the proper Veterans Administration Medical Center for healthcare. Their participation in the 30, 60 and 90 day community reintegration events provide necessary services to Veterans and their families, ensuring a more seamless transition back into civilian life. VISN also assists the Department to promote and heighten awareness of the Minnesota Service C.O.R.E program, which provides case management, advocacy and services for Veterans, service members and their families experiencing multiple issues and barriers.

Commanders Task Force:

The Commanders Task Force is comprised of nine Congressionally Chartered Veterans Organizations that include the Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Vietnam Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans, EX- Prisoners of War, Marine Corps League and the American Veterans. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs works closely with the Commanders Task Force throughout the year. During the months of the legislative sessions, the Commanders Task Force acts as a strong lobbying force for the Department and Minnesota's Veterans. The Commanders Task Force partners with the Department to co-sponsor the State's Veterans Day program. The Commanders Task Force is a unified forum in Minnesota which advises, addresses and supports Veteran issues.

United Veterans Legislative Council:

The United Veterans Legislative Council (UVLC) is a venue for Veterans Service Organizations and Veterans to become familiar with and receive updated information concerning national and local Veteran related news and legislation. The UVLC meets monthly and receives updates from the Department, Minnesota Congressional Delegation and various organizations with Veteran interests. The UVLC provides assistance with the legislative process through support and lobbying efforts.

County Veterans Service Officers:

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

Governor's Office:

As a Cabinet Level Department, the Commissioner has a direct and consistent line of communication with the Governor's office. This is essential when critical issues arise and information needs to be disseminated. The Governor's office provides support through initiatives and policy development. The Commissioner provides the Governor's office with 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. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs works closely with the Minnesota National Guard on reintegration, raising awareness on Veteran-related issues, legislation relating to Veterans, service members and their families, promotion of the Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. program and various marketing and communication projects. MDVA also partners with the National Guard on Veteran events, forums and roundtables and keeps the Minnesota National Guard informed on important issues relating to the Veterans community.

Minnesota State and Federal Elected Officials:

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs works closely with state and federal elected officials on legislation to better the lives of Minnesota's Veterans and their families. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs works with elected officials to raise awareness on Veteran-related issues in their communities. Upon request the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs attends in-district Veteran events, town-hall meetings, forums and roundtables. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs keeps legislators informed on important issues relating to the Veterans community.

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans:

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization that serves Veterans in crisis. This valued partner provides a variety of distinctive services to Veterans and their family members in the areas of housing, employment and legal assistance. MACV receives a direct appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature to assist Veterans experiencing homelessness and collaborates with MDVA to ensure the needs of underserved Veterans are met.

Minnesota Veteran 4 Veteran (V4V) Trust Fund:

MDVA works closely with the V4V Trust Fund Board of Trustees who are appointed representatives from the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. The Office of the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is involved in the approval of grants using a designated process that is currently in place by the V4V Trust Fund. The Minnesota Veterans Homes grants help to improve the quality of life for Minnesota Veterans living at the Minnesota Veterans Homes.

Association of Minnesota Counties:

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) is a voluntary statewide organization that assists the state's 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. It is the mission of the Association to assist in the provision of effective county governance for the people of

Minnesota. The association works closely with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that legislation and policies are in support of the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers' mission and purpose.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Minnesota Veterans Homes

History

With the consolidation of services provided to Minnesota Veterans, by merging the five Minnesota Veterans Homes with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, the state continues a long tradition of recognizing the contributions of Veterans. Over the years the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Veterans Homes have alternately existed separately and been combined, depending on the needs of Veterans at that particular time. Whether combined or separate, both entities have always cooperated to provide services to Minnesota Veterans.

Beginnings

The history of the Minnesota Veterans Homes began two decades after the Civil War. As Veterans of that conflict began to age, there was a growing conviction that provisions should be made for those Veterans who, because of wounds, disease, old age or infirmities, were unable to support and care for themselves. The Minnesota Legislature authorized the establishment of the Minnesota Soldiers Home in 1887 as a "reward to the brave and deserving," and a Board of Trustees was established to manage the facility. A Soldiers Relief Fund was also established that year, which continues today as the State Soldiers Assistance Program. By 1888, construction at the site of the current MVH -Minneapolis had begun; and, by 1911, five men's cottages and one women's cottage had been built, along with several support services buildings (infirmary, dining hall, etc.). The Soldiers Home was operated in a military atmosphere; the head of the facility was appointed as Commandant, and services and discipline were meted out in a quasi-military fashion.

Nevertheless, the mission of Soldiers' homes, in the nineteenth century, was to create beautiful, landscaped communities for Veterans - havens of rest for Veterans' later years. These homes were not primarily designed to be medical facilities; rather, they were seen as monuments to the contributions of Veterans. In fact, it was not until World War I that medical care was provided in Soldiers homes, and even then it was of secondary consideration.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs established

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1943 to consolidate and strengthen services provided to Veterans and their families during the height of World War II. As the needs of returning Veterans were recognized, it also became apparent that the needs of Veterans of previous wars were often neglected. The new Department was to consolidate the services and assistance provided to all Veterans and their families. It transferred services and programs previously provided by the Adjutant General, Division of Social Welfare and the Soldier's Welfare Director.

The first Commissioner of Veterans Affairs was William Revier, a World War I Veteran. He was appointed on July 1, 1943 and served until March 1, 1957.

The Minnesota Legislative Manual for 1945 describes the duties of the Department as:

"The Department of Veterans' Affairs assists Veterans and their dependents in obtaining federal and state benefits to which they may be entitled; maintains a permanent registry of the graves of all Veterans buried in Minnesota; compiles and maintains service records of all Minnesotans who served in the armed forces of the United States during war periods; administers the laws relating to Indian War Veterans; acts as custodian of all bonus records; administers the laws relating to the burial of Veterans and placing of headstones and markers; administers the laws relating to recreational or rest camps for Veterans; furnishes relief to needy disabled war Veterans and their immediate families; acts as guardian for minor or incompetent persons; and investigates the treatment of Veterans who are confined in any public institution."

Old Soldiers Home Transformed

The view that Soldiers homes were rest homes persisted in Minnesota until the 1960s. In 1968, for example, the Minneapolis Soldiers Home was licensed for 56 nursing care beds and 375 boarding care beds, the latter of which represented primarily custodial (non medical) care. By the late 1960s, however, the Soldiers' Home Board of Trustees, along with others, recognized a growing need for making the health care needs of Veterans a primary concern of the Home.

The 1970s began a time of change and growth for the Soldiers Home. In 1972 and 1980 new nursing care facilities were constructed on the Minneapolis campus. Along with this growth, the Board of Trustees was abolished in 1975 and the administration of the Soldiers Home became the responsibility of the state Commissioner of Veterans Affairs in an effort to consolidate all matters pertaining to Veterans into one department. Additionally, in 1978, the old state hospital in Hastings was converted into a domiciliary residence for Veterans.

In 1988, the Legislature reorganized and separated the Veterans Homes from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Veterans Homes Board of Directors was established, consisting of nine members appointed by the governor. The Board was charged with restructuring the Homes along the lines of the medical model of operations and turning them into high quality health care facilities, while also taking into consideration the special needs of the Veteran population. All of the facilities have medical directors, directors of nursing, social services, financial and other staff appropriate to the needs and levels of care of their Veteran Residents.

There are now five Veterans Homes operating in Minnesota. They are located in Minneapolis, Hastings, Silver Bay, Luverne and Fergus Falls.

Minnesota Veterans Homes merged into Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

In 2007, the Governor abolished the Veterans Home Board and transferred the five Minnesota Veterans Homes to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. This was done to consolidate all State Veterans services and programs into one department, and to improve the services provided to Minnesota Veterans.

Today

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs assists Minnesota's more than 410,000 Veterans and their families to obtain the benefits and services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Programs offered include: Claims and Outreach, Tribal Veteran Service Officers, Recently Separated Veterans Program, State Soldiers Assistance Program, State Approving Agency, LinkVet Referral Center, Minnesota Veterans Homes, Minnesota GI Bill, Higher Education Veterans Assistance, Minnesota Veterans Cemeteries, Bronze Star Markers, Minnesota Service C.O.R.E , Military Funeral Honors, Veterans Preference in Employment and the Women Veterans Program.

MDVA Issues and Challenges

As a Department, we face several challenges that need to be overcome to continue to improve and expand services and programs currently offered in order to achieve the high level of service our Veterans deserve. These challenges include:

- **Funding**
- **Staff Retention and Recruitment**
- **Information Technology**
- **Legislative Expectations**

Veterans Services Program

The **Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA)** was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1943. The original service program offered by the Department was the State Soldiers Assistance Program, which is still in existence today. Since then, MDVA has strived to enhance the lives of those we serve. Through the development and implementation of new Veteran-focused services, we have been successful in filling many of the voids that exist in the Veterans community. The services have been tailored to meet the current and ongoing needs of Veterans, service members and their families. We continue to collaborate with our partners in the Veteran service community to keep services in line with the current need. This also helps ensure services are complementary to one another, rather than duplicative in nature.

The **State Soldiers Assistance Program (SSAP)** provides direct, emergency financial assistance to Veterans, their dependent and survivors. Provisions are for shelter, utilities, optical and dental benefits, and cash grants for food and personal needs. A newer special needs program provides assistance to Veterans and their families on a case-by-case basis.

The **LinkVet Call Center** is managed by trained MDVA staff during business hours and provides information on Veterans' benefits, healthcare, education and reintegration. After business hours, the line is transferred to Crisis Connection counselors for 24-hour, seven days a week coverage (including holidays) for immediate crisis intervention and psychological counseling.

Minnesota Veterans Preference Act (VPA) ensures that state granted Veterans preference rights are upheld and enforced.

The **Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery** is located in Little Falls and provides dignified burial services to Veterans and their eligible dependents. Burial options include in ground casket, in ground cremation and columbarium niches for cremated remains.

Bronze Star Markers are offered by MDVA to mark the gravesite of any veteran buried in the state, where permitted.

The **Minnesota State Approving Agency (SAA)** provides administrative oversight of the federal G.I Bill's Minnesota Education and Training programs on behalf of state Veterans and other eligible persons. SAA is responsible for the approval of education and training programs to ensure that each program meets the necessary requirement prescribed under federal law. In order for Veterans to receive payments for their federal G.I Bill education benefits, the education or training program in which they intend to enroll must be pre-approved by SAA.

On the Job Training and Apprenticeship Programs provide increased opportunities for Veterans to use their earned federal G.I. Bill's educational benefits for on-the-job and apprenticeship training.

Higher Education Veterans Program is designed to support the success of Veterans, current military members and their families at Minnesota's public colleges and universities by providing on-campus Veterans Resource Centers, comprehensive information about benefits and resources as well as institutional readiness in support of the unique needs of these students.

The **Minnesota G.I. Bill** provides postsecondary educational assistance to eligible Minnesota Veterans, military members and to the children and spouses of deceased or severely disabled Minnesota Veterans.

Education Benefit is offered by MDVA as a one-time grant to Veterans who have exhausted their federal educational benefits.

Surviving Spouse/Dependent Education Benefit is provided to the survivors of Minnesota Veterans who died as a result of a service connected injury or disease.

Recently Separated Veterans Program (RSVP) assists Veterans who have identified Minnesota as their home of record and have requested that a copy of their Certificate of Separation or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form - 214) be forwarded to MDVA after release from military duty. Upon receipt of a DD Form - 214, MDVA mails a "Welcome Home" letter to the Veteran containing relevant transitional information and directs them to their local County Veteran Service Officer for available services.

Veterans Certificate of Separation or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form - 214) received by MDVA are scanned into the Department Liberty Net database. This is a secure web based program and documents can only be accessed by County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), assistants and Department staff. MDVA also serves as a discharge repository for Veterans to obtain Certificate of Separation or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form - 214) when applying for benefits.

Federal Claims Assistance is offered at the **St. Paul and Fargo Claims** divisions. MDVA staff represents Veterans, their dependents and survivors who seek benefits from the United States Department of Veteran Affairs (USDVA) with regard to multiple federal benefits. Responsibilities include: claims development, submittal of evidence in support of service connection claims, non-service connected pension, evaluation of VA decisions and assisting Veterans and dependents with appeals processes up to and including federal hearings.

Veterans Outreach division locates, assists and meets the unique needs of Veterans in the underserved populations and communities in Minnesota, which include, but are not limited to, minority, female and homeless Veterans. Outreach also provides support to Veterans who have mobility issues and are unable to travel to seek benefits.

The Tribal Veterans Service Officers (TVSO) division provides community outreach in an attempt to locate and serve as the Veterans' advocate to a traditionally underserved population of Veterans and their dependents. They accomplish this by preparing and monitoring both federal and state benefits claims and through ongoing education and information dissemination.

Women Veterans Program works with women Veterans and focuses on creating equitable access to federal and state benefits and services. This program works specifically with the gender specific needs of women Veterans and helps ensure that these traditionally underserved Veterans are treated with dignity and respect.

Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. (Case Management, Outreach, Referral and Education) is a new, nation-leading program designed to bring essential, community-based services directly to Veterans, service members and families across Minnesota at no cost to them. Due to its unique structure, this program will also provide resources to previously underserved rural areas around the state. By partnering with Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS), Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. will be able to provide comprehensive assistance through the existing statewide network of resources LSS already has in place. The scope of services will include individual and family counseling, financial counseling, debt management, addiction counseling, disability services and in-home counseling.

CVSO Enhancement and Operational Grants the department has two grant programs for County Veterans Service Officers. The Enhancement Grant is an annual open, competitive grant process that all 87 counties plus the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers are eligible to apply. The Enhancement Grants are an opportunity for CVSOs to enhance the benefits, programs, and services provided to veterans. The Operational Grant program is provided to CVSO triennially. This grant program is a set dollar amount based on Veteran population in each county. The Operational Grant's purpose is to assist CVSOs in purchasing equipment for their offices.

Minnesota Veterans Homes Program

“Minnesota is home to an estimated 410,000 veterans who have served our country through extraordinary sacrifice to protect our liberty and freedoms. The State must ensure that Veterans and their families have appropriate options for meeting Veterans’ long-term medical needs in settings that provide high quality care and services.” *Governor Tim Pawlenty, November 19, 2007*

Minnesota's Veterans Homes began shortly after the Civil War. The Minnesota Legislature authorized the establishment of the Minnesota Soldiers Home in 1887, as a "reward to the brave and deserving." In 1888, construction at the site of the current Minneapolis Veterans Home had begun and by 1911, five men's cottages and one women's cottage were built.

The mission of the Soldiers Homes was to create beautiful, landscaped communities for Veterans in their later years. These homes were not primarily designed to be medical facilities; they were seen as monuments to the contributions of Minnesota Veterans. Medical care was first provided at the Veterans Homes during World War I, but housing was the primary consideration for Veterans at the Homes.

In 1968, the Minneapolis Soldiers Home was licensed for 56 nursing care beds and 375 boarding care beds. Today, Minnesota operates five State Veterans Homes. They are located across the State providing 24 hour skilled nursing and dementia care along with domiciliary care also known as board and care. The Veterans Homes are located in Luverne, Fergus Falls, Silver Bay, Hastings and Minneapolis, Minnesota and cover the southwest, central, northeast and the metro area of the state.

Minnesota will have 1.6 million people age 65 and over by 2030, representing one out of four Minnesotans, compared to one out of eight in 2008. The average age of Veterans in skilled beds is 78.8 and increasing. The Veteran population in Minnesota is estimated at 410,000 and it is anticipated that the number of Veterans 85 years old and older will peak in 2010, and decline gradually through 2025 to current levels. Approximately 25 percent of Minnesota’s homeless are Veterans and would qualify for domiciliary care.

Admission criteria for the Minnesota Veterans Homes require a Veteran be honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces with 181 consecutive days of active duty, be a Minnesota resident or had military service credited to Minnesota. Spouses of eligible Veterans over 55 years of age who reside in Minnesota are also eligible for admission to the Veterans Home. All applicants applying for admission to the Minnesota Veterans Homes must demonstrate medical need prior to approval for admission.

Core Services and Programs at the Veterans Homes:

With five Veterans Homes in the state of Minnesota there are a variety of services provided at each home. Some of the services include:

- **Nursing** – skilled nursing, special care for Dementia and Alzheimer’s Residents, medication management, medical treatments, tube feedings, behavioral intervention, Resident education, end of life support and person centered care.
- **Rehabilitation Services** – including physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. Services include physician ordered evaluation and treatment related to mobility,

musculoskeletal injury, basic and incremental activities of daily living, wheel chair positioning, cognition, communication and swallowing. Student programs include doctoral level physical therapy students and associate level physical therapy assistant students.

- **Dietetic and Nutritional Services** – provide well planned meals as well as snacks and nourishments to all Residents. Dietary also caters meals, snacks and beverages for special events. Some of these events include venison, pheasant and walleye dinners.
- **Resident Fitness Gym/Restorative Care** - provides supervised strengthening, conditioning and endurance programs.
- **Recreational Therapy** - programming geared toward individual and group Residents leisure needs, interests and preferences. Goals include; building Resident confidence, strengthening interpersonal skills, as well as providing opportunities for creativity and self expression. Day, evening and weekend programs are offered. The Homes have significant volunteer involvement from Veterans service organizations. Some highlighted programs include: shopping trips, socials, bingos, baking, ceramics, picnics and parties, overnight trips to Lake Superior, deer hunting, cooking and baking, etc.
- **Social Services** - provide a variety of assistance to Residents including advocacy, one on one counseling, care planning, benefit evaluation, financial assistance and discharge planning.
- **Pharmaceutical Services** - filling prescriptions and comprehensive pharmacist consultation program.
- **Transportation** - to Veterans Medical Center for appointments and other facility functions.
- **Spiritual Care** - chaplains provide spiritual and pastoral care for Residents and families. Guiding principles include: hospitality, religious freedom, leadership and education. Programs offered include: bible study, devotions, worship services, sweat lodge, memorial programs - including individual funerals, individualized Resident visits, etc.
- **Medical Services** - offer comprehensive primary care, which is provided by a team of physicians and nurse practitioners. All Residents receive a detailed history and physical examination on admission and regular visits. Acute illnesses are addressed using a team approach and care is provided at the VA Medical Center or local hospitals.
- **Mental Health Program** - providing Resident assessments, individual and group therapy, behavioral management program, employee training and student intern program.
- **Resident Work Therapy Program**- designed to assist domiciliary Residents to maintain productive lives. Residents work within and out of campus in various positions. Some of these positions include managing the coffee shop, library and computer room, clothing distribution, Resident transportation, barber and beautician shop, making poppies, building pharmacy dispensers, etc.
- **Dental** - admission and annual exam, coordination to access Soldier Assistance Program and other Resident payer options.

- **Domiciliary Program** – serves residents from underserved populations that do not fit within a program in the community. Programs clinical focus includes rehabilitative care with a goal of placing Residents in a non-institutional setting. Our Domiciliary program is a board and care that focuses on medical and mental health management, substance abuse treatment and counseling, mental health and transitional services.
- **Leisure Time Activities** – provided by the generosity and assistance of the Veterans service organizations, their auxiliaries and numerous fraternal and community clubs, enable our Residents to enjoy recreation opportunities such as dancing, leather and wood working, parties, fishing, casino trips, train rides, lunch outings and scenic rides. Leisure time activities also include TV lounges, outdoor gardens, visiting pets and recreation outings.
- **Barber Shop & Beauty Salons** – Local barbers and stylists offer their services on a regular scheduled basis.

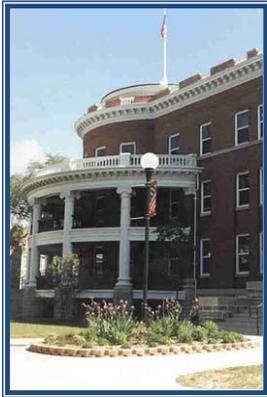
Volunteers

The Minnesota Veterans Homes has a dedicated group of individuals that willingly give their time to enhance the quality of life for our Residents. Volunteers range from children, community members, family members and state Veterans groups. Donations from these volunteer groups vary from monetary support to sponsoring a special program. The special support from these individuals makes a difference in the lives of the Residents.

Employee Values

The Veterans Home employees are committed to our Veterans and their families. Residents are treated with the level of dignity that they have earned and deserve. The Minnesota Veterans Home employees continue to work hard to ensure that each Home provides the excellent care and services that Minnesotans expect for our state's military heroes.

Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis



The Minnesota Veterans Home - Minneapolis was once known as the *Old Soldiers Home*. It was built in the late 1800's for indigent Veterans of the Civil War. Founders of the Home intended for it to be peaceful, beautiful and comfortable community for the Minnesota Veterans who required care during their golden years. The Home sits high on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River and near the picturesque Minnehaha Falls. In 1887, the Legislature authorized the establishment of a *Soldiers Home* as a reward to the brave and deserving.

The Minneapolis campus consists of 341 skilled nursing home beds and 161 licensed domiciliary beds; providing nursing care and related health and social services to Veterans and their spouses who meet eligibility and admission requirements.

Location Highlights:

The Minneapolis Campus is close to various public transportation systems, libraries, colleges, shopping malls, city parks and various businesses that may offer work opportunities for domiciliary Residents. The Home has a close working relationship with the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis.

Minnesota Veterans Home – Hastings



In 1978, the Hastings State Hospital was converted into a domiciliary residence for Minnesota Veterans. At the time, it was licensed for 200 board and care beds.

Located 21 miles southeast of St. Paul on 128 beautiful wooded acres along the Vermillion River, The Minnesota Veterans Home – Hastings houses Residents in two separate buildings, each providing access to the campus and many amenities.

Resident Profile

The Veteran who would most benefit from living at The Minnesota Veterans Home – Hastings is someone in need of medication management, psychosocial support and personal care reminders, but not requiring skilled nursing-level care.

The current clientele of The Minnesota Veterans Home – Hastings have a variety of medical, mental and/or chemical health needs. The top admitting diagnoses are:

- Alcohol/chemical/polysubstance dependency
- Schizophrenia
- Major depression disorder/depression
- Diabetes

Fifty percent of admitting Veterans are homeless or at risk of being homeless and the Residents are prescribed an average of 11 medications each. The staff works with the Residents of the Minnesota Veterans Home – Hastings to address their significant and diverse needs while empowering the Veterans to make positive choices to achieve change in their own lives.

Minnesota Veterans Home – Silver Bay



In 1991, the Silver Bay Elementary School was converted into a skilled care facility for Minnesota Veterans. The Minnesota Veterans Home – Silver Bay is located on the scenic North Shore of Minnesota overlooking Lake Superior.

The Home is licensed for 87 skilled care nursing beds. A 25 bed special care area has been created to meet the special programming needs of Residents with cognitive loss (dementia). This special care area was designed using the

philosophy of creating a community. This care area has an activity kitchen, living room and dining room. The Home’s programs and services focus on helping Residents reach their highest level of independence.

Location Highlights

Silver Bay offers all of the activities of Northern Minnesota. The community and surrounding area offer libraries, colleges, shopping, parks and various businesses that may offer work opportunities.

Minnesota Veterans Home – Luverne



Located on the prairie in Southwest Minnesota, the Minnesota Veterans Home - Luverne provides skilled nursing care for 85 Residents in a small town environment. Programs and services focus on providing person centered care based on a social model of care. The Home follows the Eden Philosophy model of culture change that seeks to address the loneliness, helplessness and boredom that can be a nursing home plague. Besides providing a huge array of both internal activities and outings, the Home

actively promotes events where children of all ages are involved in the activities with Residents. Also, dogs, cats and birds are an integral part of the Home.

Once a Resident is admitted to the Home, an individualized plan of care is developed by the primary service providers that will address the Resident's physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs. The goal of the plan is to promote as much Resident choice and independence as possible. The overall goal of the Home is to create and support an environment that provides a homelike atmosphere in a communal setting.

The Minnesota Veterans Home - Luverne has a 17-bed Alzheimer's/dementia care unit. The entire 42-bed wing, which houses the Alzheimer's/dementia unit, is focused on meeting the needs of those Residents that have cognitive loss. The other 43 bed wing is home to Residents that can initiate and participate in the social interactions provided in a more independent manner.

Minnesota Veterans Home - Fergus Falls



The Minnesota Veterans Home – Fergus Falls is an 85-bed skilled nursing care facility and is Minnesota's newest Veterans Home. It opened March 30, 1998, has reached capacity in little over a year, and has developed a solid reputation as demonstrated by long waiting lists. Accompanying the new building are new design ideas. A highlight is the Main Street—a hallway designed like an old town Main Street, with many of the rooms finished to the period 1930 to 1940. Along the Main Street are a barber shop, general store,

library, family inn and clinical exam rooms.

Unique to the facility is its Community Base Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). The clinic is established under a shared use agreement with the Veterans Administration and is the first VA Nurse Practitioner Nursing Home based clinic in the nation. This distinctively provides on-site medical review of eligible Veterans for access to care within the Veterans Administration system.

The Home has also introduced a new concept of nursing care with the innovative Nursing Universal Worker position. This nursing approach increases the accountability of nursing personnel and expands their sphere of influence over the care of the Residents. Primary Focus Nursing – a system developed by their leadership, has won state acclaim through the “Excellence in Practice” award from Aging Services of Minnesota.

MDVA Legislative Affairs **Division Summary**

The Legislative division of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs monitors all state and federal legislation dealing with Veterans related issues. This division is instrumental in advancing the governor's Veterans initiatives. To this end, the Legislative division works closely with the Minnesota Senate and House committees with jurisdiction over Veterans policies and budgets to promote the special interests of the Veterans community and to support the governor's agenda. This entails attending the House and Senate budget and policy committee hearings on Veterans issues, preparing and presenting testimony, and responding to legislative inquiries. During the legislative session, staff routinely keeps the Veteran community and the Congressionally Chartered Veterans Service Organizations apprised of all the state and federal legislative activities by providing weekly updates, and enlisting their membership to attend and participate in committee hearings.

The Legislative division of MDVA works closely with the Commanders Task Force in crafting their legislative message to state and federal legislators, providing support staff for their committee functions, and sponsoring the annual Veterans Day event.

In addition to legislative functions, the division is responsible for the planning, organizing and implementing of several annual Veterans-related public events; namely, Veterans Lobby Day on the Hill, the State Veterans Day Program, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, Korean War Armistice Day and, occasionally, the French Legion of Honor presentation. Also, the Legislative division of MDVA designs and orchestrates an annual three-day Leadership Conference to inform the incoming commanders of the CTF as to the Veterans programs and services provided by MDVA.

The division has oversight of the CVSO Enhancement and Operational Improvement Grants which requires dissemination of materials, tracking and reviewing of required grant reports, and monitoring of utilization of grant funds. The production of the department's statutorily mandated annual reports is also under the purview of this division. Lastly, the division ensures all laws regarding MDVA's programs and policies are implemented, and report such implementation to the Legislature.

MDVA Communications **Division Summary**

The Communications division supports the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs overall program goal of serving Minnesota Veterans through seven major areas, including:

1. Media Relations
2. Advertising
3. Internal and External Communications
4. Marketing
5. Branding
6. Event Management
7. Website Content Management

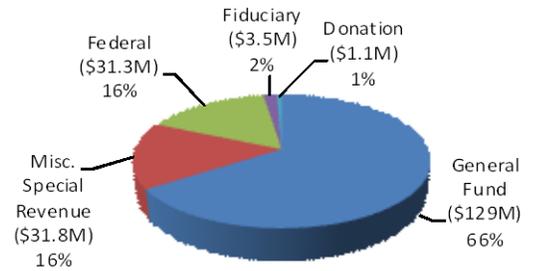
Duties include; drafting and distributing press releases, pitching story ideas to the media and supporting media requests; preparing newsletters, brochures and other written materials; coordinating special events; providing speeches, presentations, communication and media training; promoting the Department through select advertising; building relationships with strategic audiences and working with various community groups to promote MDVA and Veteran-related initiatives.

Rather than dissemination, the division focuses on communication as a reciprocal process of exchanging information. By practicing this open systems model of communication, the division welcomes and values feedback from internal and external audiences. In addition to making MDVA responsive to the ever-changing environment, this information provides essential factors in decision-making by the Department.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Financial Profile

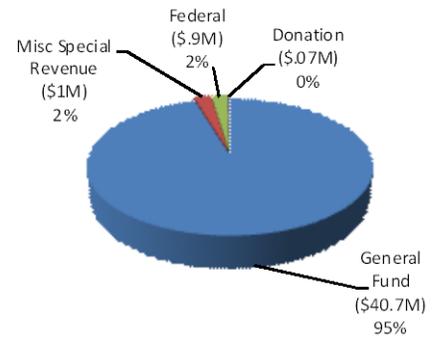
DEPARTMENT FUNDING

MDVA FY2008-09 biennial budget is approximately \$196.8 million. The current biennial budget consists of state general fund dollars, miscellaneous special revenue, federal funds, fiduciary funds and donations.



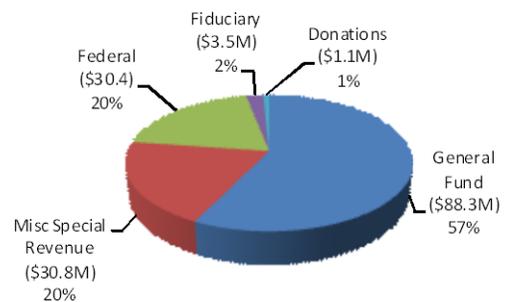
VETERANS SERVICES PROGRAM

The Department has two core program areas – Veterans Services and Veterans Homes. The Veterans Services program budget for FY2008-09 biennial budget is approximately \$42.7 million. The Veterans Service program activities are funded through state general fund appropriations, miscellaneous special revenue generated by State Veterans Cemetery burial fees and Support Our Troops license plate fees, federal funds generated by the State Approving Agency and State Veterans Cemetery Plot allowance and donations.



VETERANS HOMES PROGRAM

The Veterans Homes program budget for FY2008-09 biennial budget is \$154.1 million. The Veterans Homes activities are funded through state general fund appropriations, departmental earnings generated by Resident pay amounts, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs per diems and donations. The revenue from the federal per diem and Resident maintenance charges, when combined with the general fund appropriations, finance the operations of the program's facilities.



Human Resources Summary

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has approximately 1030 full time equivalents or 1350 employees working for the Department. All employees are governed by negotiated labor agreements which determine terms and conditions of employment. The labor agreements set compensation rates and benefits for all employees.

Employees are located throughout the State of Minnesota at 75 worksites. Not all employees have direct access to a Human Resource representative at their work location; but they can be assisted via internet and telephone as necessary.

Workforce planning is the number one challenge facing the Department in the area of Human Resources. Workforce planning requires constant analysis of what the work of the Department is today versus what it will be in the future and the skills needed to complete the work compared with the available workforce. Being able to provide the numbers of professional and para-professional employees needed to do the work of the Department requires tapping into many cultures and working with individuals who speak English as a second language. The Department has developed partnerships with community cultural centers and educational centers to attract the individuals needed to do the work. It is becoming more and more essential that the Department develop a plan to “grow” or develop employee skills from within its own ranks to meet the changing workforce needs.

Information Technology Summary

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs depends on technology to facilitate the efficient operations of the Department. Technology is always changing and the challenge remains to be using the most current forms of technology while being aware of the changes that are occurring for future use. The Department, prior to its merger, was on two separate technology platforms and it has been extremely challenging to get the Department onto one technology platform so all divisions can communicate and share information as the business needs arise.

The Department looks forward to hiring an Information Systems Director who can continuously evaluate current resources and identify future needs and develop detailed plans of action, which will carry MDVA into the future.

The Department has access to a tremendous amount of private data in the course of its work and it is essential the Department continually strive to protect that data and to develop security measures that will accomplish this.

The Veterans Homes Program is moving to an all electronic healthcare record and utilizes various electronic systems for protecting vulnerable adults while maximizing their independence.

The Veterans Services Program is in the process of implementing a seamless information system, which allows specific Veteran information to be added whenever a Veteran is applying for benefits or seeking information regarding benefits so that a single comprehensive record is developed. This system ultimately will increase the efficiency of processing Veteran claims/benefits.

Department Goals and Objectives

Goal #1:

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will develop integrated service lines to promote program delivery to the Minnesota Veteran's community.

Objectives:

- A. The Information Technology (IT) Director will facilitate the conversion of the IT platform to Microsoft in order to share data and enhance communication by July 1, 2009.
- B. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will facilitate the coordination and integration of all benefits available to Veterans to maximize program utilization by July 1, 2010.
- C. The Financial Officer will develop and maintain a financial structure that supports the delivery of integrated services by July 1, 2008.
- D. The Communications Director will develop an integrated communications process to create a unified voice by October 1, 2008.
- E. The Human Resources Director will develop a human resource system to consolidate and integrate human resource management functions to support service lines by July 1, 2009.

Goal #2:

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will ensure financial integrity and viability through the development of an attainable financial base that includes resources supplemental to and independent of state appropriated funds.

- A. The Financial Officer will identify current and potential revenue sources to support program initiatives department-wide by July 1, 2009.
- B. The Financial Officer will facilitate the cost benefit analysis of any potential revenue source identified in objective 3A to make prudent fiscal decisions to support current and future services by January 1, 2010.
- C. The Financial Officer will ensure generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) are followed to maintain fiscal integrity by December 1, 2011.
- D. The Financial Officer will implement a streamlined and standardized financial reporting procedure that will provide managers with financial reports to allow them to monitor and evaluate their budgets to make informed decisions by July 1, 2009.
- E. The Financial Officer will analyze purchasing practices and explore opportunities to make the best use of financial resources and maximize purchasing power by July 1, 2010.

Goal #3:

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will formalize and implement organizational systems to support Department operations.

- A. The Information Technology (IT) Systems Supervisor will analyze and develop a plan to address current and future IT service, system and equipment needs that will best support and improve department operations by July 1, 2009.
- B. The Human Resources Director will develop a department-wide education needs assessment and training plan to provide learning and development opportunities to recruit and retain the best skilled employees, fostering positive employee relations and decreasing turnover rates by five percent by July 1, 2012.
- C. The Facilities Director will analyze and report on current infrastructure and future growth so the Department is well positioned to meet the needs of those we serve by July 1, 2009.
- D. The Legal Analyst will review and revise rules so we may appropriately administer and provide fair and equitable services to our constituents by July 1, 2013.
- E. The Legal Analyst will review and revise Department policies and procedures to ensure legal and consistent business practices by October 1, 2010.

Goal #4:

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will develop strategies to foster employee morale and strong partnerships with stakeholders.

- A. The Communications Director will develop and implement a marketing plan for the Department to:
 - i. increase awareness of programs and services
 - ii. increase understanding of the MDVA mission
 - iii. garner support from stakeholders

This will be accomplished by June 1, 2010.

- B. The Deputy Commissioners will develop and implement strategies that promote a positive work environment to recruit and retain quality employees, and to enhance employee morale by July 1, 2009.
- C. The Department Webmaster will develop a secured Department internal website to enhance communication, support staff activities and share knowledge by June 1, 2010.
- D. The Communications Director will implement a department-wide external information dissemination process to ensure that stakeholders receive timely and relevant information by June 1, 2009.
- E. The Senior Directors will expand partnership opportunities and utilize external resources to enhance services for Veterans, families and employees by October 1, 2010.

Goal #5:

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will meet the needs of the Veterans community by providing innovative customer service.

Objectives:

- A. The Communications Director will develop and market a user-friendly one-stop website for constituency by December 1, 2009 to enhance accessibility and awareness resulting in a 70 percent level of customer satisfaction.
- B. The Communications Director will formalize a process to identify the needs of Minnesota Veterans and their families to assist the Department with the development of new strategies to address unmet needs by December 1, 2009.
- C. The Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will formalize a process to define quality standards for the Department to assist in providing the highest level of care and services to our stakeholders, clientele, customers and constituents by July 1, 2009.
- D. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will define, streamline and coordinate Veterans services at the community level to ensure the unique needs of individual Veterans and their families are met by July 1, 2009.
- E. The Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will define the current and future continuum of care to ensure the Department is prepared to provide program choices to enhance quality of life for Minnesota Veterans and their families by July 1, 2010.

Veterans Homes Program Goals and Objectives

Goal #1:

The Veterans Homes Program will provide high quality care and services.

Objectives:

- A. The Director of Quality Services for the Central Office will develop and implement a quality improvement plan by October 1, 2009.
- B. The Veterans Homes Administrators will develop standards that define person centered care by July 1, 2009.
- C. The Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will evaluate current needs and direct resources to address behavioral health concerns by October 1, 2009.

Goal #2:

The Veterans Homes Program will develop a community relations plan to increase awareness and support of the Minnesota Veterans Homes.

Objectives:

- A. The Legislative Director will develop continuous awareness of legislative issues through training and communications by January 1, 2009.
- B. The Volunteer Coordinators and the Communications Director will develop a marketing campaign by January 1, 2010.

Goal #3:

The Veterans Homes Program will ensure fiscal integrity.

Objectives:

- A. The Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Health Care will conduct a feasibility study on Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by September 1, 2009.
- B. The Business Managers and the Financial Officer will identify and recommend alternative funding options by January 1, 2010.
- C. The Veterans Homes Administrators will develop a project management system to streamline the use of program funding based on Veterans Homes priorities by July 1, 2009.
- D. The Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will coordinate with the Senior Director of Veterans Services to develop a process to maximize and standardize Veteran benefits by March 1, 2009.
- E. The Veterans Homes Administrators and Directors of Nursing will evaluate current pharmacy services and options and make recommendations for future pharmacy services by July 1, 2009.
- F. The Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Health Care and the Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will conduct a feasibility study on future program development by September 1, 2009.

Goal #4:

The Veterans Homes Program will develop a comprehensive plan to address human resource needs.

Objectives:

- A. The Staff Development Directors, along with the Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will identify and implement educational standards by July 1, 2011.
- B. The Human Resource Directors will develop facility programs to recruit and retain excellent employees by July 1, 2010.

Goal #5:

The Veterans Homes Program will develop a comprehensive risk management program.

Objectives:

- A. The Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will coordinate a risk management analysis by October 1, 2009.
- B. The Senior Director of Veterans Health Care will coordinate a disaster plan for the Veterans Homes by July 1, 2010.

Goal #6

The Veterans Homes Program will maximize information technology tools.

Objectives:

- A. The Veterans Homes Administrators, in conjunction with Information Technology staff will identify the technology needs of the Veterans Homes by October 1, 2009.
- B. The Directors of Nursing, in conjunctions with the Director of Quality Services will fully implement the standardized electronic medical records by July 1, 2012.
- C. The Physical Plant Designee, in conjunction with the Facilities Director will fully implement a standardized Archibus system by July 1, 2012.
- D. The Veterans Homes Administrators, in conjunction with the Information Technology Supervisor will incrementally implement Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy and security rules to the Homes by October 1, 2010.

Veterans Services Program Goals and Objectives

Goal #1:

The Veterans Services Program will gather and distribute accurate information to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and stakeholders.

Objectives:

- A. The Legislative Director will provide timely and accurate Veterans legislative information to stakeholders weekly.
- B. The Director of Claims and Outreach will implement Virtual Veterans software within the Division to streamline claims processing and improve reporting by December 1, 2009.
- C. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will facilitate the implementation of a user-friendly, multi-faceted, interactive resource center to enhance accessibility and awareness by December 1, 2009.
- D. The Director of Higher Education Veterans Programs will implement software within the Division to streamline and improve reporting by December 1, 2009.
- E. The Communications Director will implement a marketing plan to increase awareness and understanding of services and programs for our internal and external audiences by June 1, 2010.
- F. The Director of Benefits will implement software within the Division to streamline benefits processing and improve reporting by December 1, 2010.

Goal #2:

The Veterans Services Program will increase the utilization of benefits and services by the Veterans community through increased education, advocacy and outreach.

Objectives:

- A. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will develop a formal, targeted outreach activity plan for the Programs and Services Divisions by July 1, 2009.
- B. All Programs and Services Division Directors will implement the targeted outreach activity plan by December 1, 2009.

Goal #3:

The Veterans Services Program will foster a culture of consistent improvement to increase efficiencies and streamline operations.

Objectives:

- A. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will ensure that all Directors and Supervisors complete LEAN facilitator training by March 1, 2009.
- B. The Directors will ensure all employees undergo LEAN 101 training by July 1, 2009.
- C. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will facilitate the utilization of the LEAN process within the service delivery models by July 1, 2009.

Goal #4:

The Veterans Services Program will implement a development program to increase employees' ability to effectively represent the Department and serve Veterans and their families.

Objectives:

- A. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will implement department cross-training for designated employees to increase their ability to effectively communicate about department programs to stakeholders by December 1, 2008.
- B. The Senior Director of Veterans Services and Division Directors will develop a New Employee Orientation Plan by March 1, 2009, empowering employees to effectively carry out their duties.
- C. Each Division Director will implement a specific training plan by December 1, 2009, providing the tools for employee success.

Goal #5:

The Veterans Services Program will develop a process to identify and address current and future needs of the Veterans community.

Objectives:

- A. The Senior Director of Veterans Services will identify baseline Veterans community needs by overseeing the development of coordinated research processes by December 1, 2011.

Goal #6:

The Veterans Services Program will ensure continuous fiscal integrity and good stewardship of program funding.

Objectives:

- A. The Financial Officer will provide a monthly budget update of program funding to Division Directors beginning July 1, 2009.
- B. The Division Directors will explore and report possible alternative funding resources to the Financial Officer beginning July 1, 2009.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is proud of all the hard work represented in the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan. The staff focused a great deal of time, effort and enthusiasm on the construction of this plan to ensure it reflects the current and future needs of Minnesota Veterans. We will use the plan to track performance measures, and the Department's leadership team will meet quarterly to discuss and analyze the progress of the goals and objectives. The intent of this tracking and monitoring system is to meet timelines and ensure that the strategic planning remains successful. The Department will revisit this plan annually to make sure the mission and vision of the Department truly reflect the ever-changing world of Veteran care and services. Look for the published plan, updated annually, on the Department's website (www.mdva.state.mn.us) and in the Department's Annual Report.

**MINNESOTA VETERANS HOME – MINNEAPOLIS
STRATEGIC PLAN
Updated – February, 2009**

MISSION:

“Serving those who have served”

VISION:

A person-centered community of excellence that meets and exceeds the needs of those we serve in an environment of peace and well being.

CORE VALUES:

“WE CARE”

W = willingness to serve in an

E = environment of person-centered care with

C = compassion

A = accountability

R = respect and dignity with

E = excellence as our standard

GOAL #1:

Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis (MVH – MPLS) will meet and exceed customer expectations by providing quality services as a community of excellence.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. The Quality Director will develop strategies to fulfill regulatory requirements (obtaining improved survey results) by 12.31.09.**
 - a. The Quality Director, Staff Development staff and the Leadership Team (Department Directors) will develop a Quality Improvement Plan, which will include training, implementation guidelines and the establishment of benchmarks.**
 - b. The Quality Director and the Leadership Team will develop a Survey Readiness Plan, which will include regulatory education and internal quality assessment surveys.**
 - c. The Leadership Team will identify “Best Practices” that will be shared with other Minnesota Veterans Homes.**

- 2. The Leadership Team will develop strategies to promote a culture of Person-Centered Care, resulting in improved customer satisfaction survey scores by 12.31.10.**
 - a. The MVH – MPLS community will promote a home-like environment based on resident preferences and needs.**
 - b. Person-Centered Care Teams (comprised of Residents, families and staff) will develop “neighborhoods” for all care areas.**
 - c. All Residents will receive “I” centered care and services.**
 - d. Family and/or significant others will be supported as an integral part of care teams.**

3. **The Leadership Team will develop strategies to explore the continuum of care by 07.31.10.**
 - a. **Current care/service models will be reviewed and recommendations will be brought to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs:**
 - 1.) **Domiciliary care – move to another campus**
 - 2.) **Nursing Care Units – expand to include other types of care**
 - 3.) **Dementia Care - expand**
 - b. **The following services will be explored as potential future services on campus:**
 - 1.) **Adult Day Care**
 - 2.) **Assisted Living**
 - 3.) **Hospice Services**
 - 4.) **Gero-psychiatric Services**
 - 5.) **Sub-acute Services**
 - 6.) **Traumatic Brain Injury Services**
 - 7.) **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Services**
 - 8.) **Female Veterans Services**
 - 9.) **Clinic(s) including dental, optometry, podiatry, audiology, etc.**

GOAL #2:

Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis (MVH – MPLS) will provide effective and efficient services according to Resident needs to ensure fiscal integrity.

OBJECTIVES:

1. **Administration, Finance and the Leadership Team (Department Directors) will prioritize staffing, Resident and facility needs according to financial projections by 04.30 (annually).**
 - a. **Overtime and use of agency (pool) staff will be minimized and/or eliminated.**
 - b. **Staffing patterns will be determined by Resident care needs/care levels.**
 - c. **Building upgrades, repairs, and equipment purchases will be prioritized to meet Resident needs and quality standards.**
2. **MVH – MPLS will maximize all revenue sources according to budgeted census, level of Resident care, benefits and staffing patterns (annually)**

- a. **The Admissions Department, Finance and Administration will continue to meet regularly to ensure timely admits according to bed availability (ongoing)**
 - b. **The Finance Department will monitor timely collection of maintenance fees and Veterans Administration per diems. (ongoing)**
 - c. **Social Services staff and Benefits staff will work with Residents to ensure benefit maximization is achieved. (ongoing)**
 - d. **Administration and Finance will explore alternative revenue sources and will make recommendations to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs by 06.30.11.**
3. **The MVH – MPLS Leadership Team will work with the Central Office and other Minnesota Veterans Homes to consolidate services and increase efficiencies during the next biennium. 07.01.09 to 06.30.11.**
 - a. **Opportunities to be explored to consolidate services (for cost containment and ease of service) are:**
 - 1.) **Purchasing**
 - 2.) **Pharmacy Services**
 - 3.) **Medical Services**
 - 4.) **Behavioral Services**
 - 5.) **Rehabilitation Equipment**
 - 6.) **Human Resources**
 - 7.) **Dietary Services**
 - 8.) **Social Services**
 - 9.) **Other**
4. **Administration and Finance will meet and/or exceed the compliance standards of the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA). (ongoing)**
 - a. **All areas identified in financial audits (i.e. OLA) will be corrected timely.**
 - b. **The Finance Department will report routine monitoring results to the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Committee at least quarterly.**

GOAL #3:

MVH – Minneapolis will establish customer service standards of excellence to sustain and expand positive customer relations.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. MVH – Minneapolis will develop a Customer Service Plan to improve internal and external relationships by 12.01.10.**
 - a. The Leadership Team will develop the components of the Customer Service Plan using tools such as the Pinnacle customer satisfaction surveys, LEAN and Kaizen.**
 - b. Human Resources will incorporate the Customer Service Plan components into all position descriptions.**
 - c. The Customer Service Plan and its standards will be integrated into the campus Quality Improvement Program.**

- 2. The Leadership Team will develop an outreach plan to enhance partnerships and improve the “community perception” of MVH – MPLS by 07.01.11.**
 - a. The following areas will be explored:**
 - 1.) Expanding internship programs**
 - 2.) Being a host site for community events**
 - 3.) Developing positive media opportunities**
 - 4.) Expanding the volunteer program to include corporations and community organizations**
 - 5.) Developing shared educational opportunities (i.e. with families, CVSOs, VAMC, other long term care facilities, Aging Services of Minnesota, etc.)**
 - 6.) Other**

GOAL #4:

Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis (MVH – MPLS), as the employer of choice, will recruit, hire and retain the highest quality workforce.

- 1. MVH – MPLS will establish and maintain an annual employee stability rate of 80% or greater.**

- a. **Human Resources and the Leadership Team will minimize the timeframe from “vacancy to hire” by 12.31.09.**
 - 1.) **Each department supervisor will determine “fill time” from “vacancy to hire” for each position filled. Information and data will be given to the Management Analyst for analysis and reporting.**
 - 2.) **Human Resources and department supervisors will identify any barriers to the hiring process.**
 - 3.) **The Leadership Team will develop and implement a plan to overcome the barriers.**

2. **MVH – MPLS will establish and maintain an annual employee turnover rate of 30% or less.**
 - a. **Staff Development and Human Resources will complete an assessment of all employees’ current “retention needs” by 06.30.09.**
 - b. **MVH – MPLS will contract with Pinnacle to complete employee satisfaction surveys by 04.30.09.**
 - c. **MVH – MPLS will establish and ad hoc employee recognition team by 06.01.09.**
 - d. **The Employee Recognition Team will make recommendations for recruitment and retention to the Leadership Team by 09.01.09.**
 - e. **The Leadership Team will develop an Employee Recognition Plan with an emphasis on employee appreciation by 09.30.09.**

3. **MVH – MPLS will provide all employees with education and training to meet the requirements of their position description and to assist them in meeting the needs of Residents.**
 - a. **The Human Resources Director and each supervisor will ensure that each employee has an individual development plan (as part of their annual review). Those plans will be submitted to Staff Development upon completion (by 04.30 each year).**
 - b. **The Staff Development Director and Quality Director will use the individual development plan data and regulatory survey data to create the overall MVH – MPLS education plan. The Leadership Team will review and implement the plan.**

GOAL #5:

Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis will maximize the utilization of technology to enhance the Residents' quality of life and services.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. The Leadership Team and Information Technology (IT) Department will identify technology needs of MVH – MPLS by 07.01.12.**

The Team will:

- a. Fully implement the electronic health record, including e prescribe**
 - b. Establish a wireless network**
 - c. Partner with the Central Office to improve access to VAMC electronic records**
- 2. The Leadership Team will research new technology and identify equipment needs by 05.01.09 (and annually).**
 - a. All departments will provide input for area-specific needs.**
 - b. The Team will develop a comprehensive neighborhood strategy related to resident space and new technology.**
 - c. The Team will develop strategies to integrate technology and equipment for current and future buildings.**
 - 3. Staff Development, Human Resources and IT will provide staff education and ongoing support for the established programs and systems by 12.31.10.**

The Team will:

- a. Develop guidelines for use of electronic communication**
 - b. Continue development of online academy training modules to ensure content is specific to MVH – MPLS**
 - c. Create an MVH – MPLS Help Desk**
- 4. MVH – MPLS and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will partner to formalize and implement technology systems to support operations by 04.30.09.**
 - a. MVH – MPLS will create a technology team, which will be chaired by the Assistant Administrator of Support Services.**
 - b. The Technology Team will develop a proactive plan to identify technology needs and recommendations.**