

### Agency Purpose

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

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

### Core Functions

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

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

### Operations

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

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

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

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

### At A Glance

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

**Budget**

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

**Contact**

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