



**Georgia Department
of Veterans Service**

Cultivating community connections
– empowering Georgia’s veterans
and their families to flourish.

February 2025

**GEORGIA VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES GRANT
PROGRAM ANNOUNCES 2ND ROUND GRANTEEES**

The Georgia Department of Veterans Service is pleased to announce the selection of two additional grant recipients of the Veterans Mental Health Services Grant (VMHS) for Fiscal Year 2025 – **the Center for the Advancement of Military and Emergency Services Research (AMES)** at Kennesaw State University and **AboutFace-USA**.

Dr. Patricia Ross, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, praised the program for its significant impacts on support for Georgia’s military service members, veterans, and their families, caretakers, and survivors.

“Governor Kemp and our legislators’ continued investment in this program is a testament to the value it brings to supporting mental and behavioral health in Georgia,” said Ross.

Kennesaw State University’s AMES Center researches and develops solutions for the complex occupational and behavioral health concerns faced by military and emergency services personnel, veterans, their families, and the communities they live in.

The AMES Center will use grant funds to provide behavioral health services to service members,

veterans, and their families, including providing multiple sessions each week through their clinical services team and partnerships with the Kennesaw Public Safety Foundation.

AboutFace-USA partners with community stakeholders to promote the availability of resources and provides training to manage and improve coping skills, job-skills training, and family relationship—building programs.

AboutFace-USA plans to use Veteran Mental Health Grant funds to extend their current care provision to additional families in need. This includes expanding existing relationships with culturally competent behavioral health providers to reach more communities, as well as implementing additional tele-behavioral health services.

The Veterans Mental Health Services Grant Program was created through HB414 and was signed by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp in April 2023. The grant program aims to improve and expand access to mental health services for military service members, veterans, and their families in the state of Georgia.



Scan the QR code or visit
gdvs.resources.uniteus.io



Are you a veteran? Veteran family member? Veteran caregiver?

Could you benefit from assistance with:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|----------------|
| Employment | Food | Education | Utilities |
| Physical Health | Legal | Childcare | Transportation |

Help is available.

Unite Georgia, powered by Unite Us, is a coordinated care network made possible by partnership with the GDVS and community partners.

Scan the QR code on the left or visit gdvs.resources.uniteus.io to find resources near you. You can also submit a request for help at gaveteransfoundation.org/get-help/.



AUGUSTA WAR HOME RECEIVES GOLD STANDARD



The GDVS War Veterans Nursing Home in Augusta (GWVNH-Augusta) recently received prestigious awards from The Joint Commission and Activated Insights in recognition of their excellent care for Georgia’s veterans.

“This accomplishment is truly a reflection of our hard work and commitment to our veterans and their families,” said **Carlton Deese, the Executive Director of GWVNH-Augusta.**

Over 22,000 healthcare organizations and programs are surveyed and accredited by The Joint Commission. The Gold Seal of Approval is the highest award given to an organization—GWVNH-Augusta has won a Gold Seal for more than 10 years. The commission conducts a rigorous evaluation that includes educational experience, innovative solutions, and resources for continuous organizational improvement.

GWVNH-Augusta was named by Activated Insights, formerly known as Pinnacle Quality Insights, as a Best-in Class facility for Long Term Care for the 5th year in a row.

They also earned a Customer Experience Award™ in 12 areas, including overall satisfaction and care for individual needs.

GWVNH-Augusta is consistently ranked in the top 15% of all care providers nationally, as witnessed by their outstanding achievements and continued excellence in patient care. We are grateful for the GWVNH-Augusta’s dedication to Georgia’s veterans.

NOTES OF GRATITUDE

The Veteran Service Officers of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service continue positively impact the lives of Georgia’s service members, veterans, and their families, caretakers, and survivors.

The excellent work of **Carlas Wooden** in the Dublin Office has not gone unnoticed.

GDVS received compliments from the daughter of a veteran for Wooden’s extraordinary customer service. “Carlas is very professional and very patient,” said the daughter. “He answered all our questions and provided all the help we needed!”

His impact was immeasurable for another veteran who praised Wooden for being incredibly knowledgeable about the process and handling of disability claims.

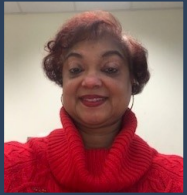
“He was able to provide us with answers that made complete sense, and he was able to guide us along the way,” said the veteran.

In St. Marys, **Scott Weaver** received a Bravo Zulu from a retired US Navy veteran who shared thoughts with the impact Weaver has had on his life throughout the years.

“He is very knowledgeable which I witnessed with questions I would ask Weaver. He would have the answers—he would go to the correct binder, chapter, page, and sentence to show me.”

The veteran added that after working with Weaver for 12 years, he would leave his office with a smile and confidence he always on track for a successful claim.

GET TO KNOW YOUR APPEALS OFFICER: MARCEDA RAND



“Working in the GDVS Appeals Division is an engaging experience, but meeting veterans and hearing their stories are some of

life’s true treasures,” said **GDVS Appeals Officer Marceda Rand.**

An Indiana native, Rand has worked for the GDVS for five years and enjoys the family work environment.

She is the spouse of a retired marine and the daughter of one of the Montford Point Marines, who received Congressional Gold Medals posthumously for their valorous service during WWII.

Her favorite thing about working with veterans is their gratitude for the help the GDVS provides through the entire

claims and appeals process, no matter how long it takes.

“There are so many veterans out there that have no idea of the help they can receive, free of charge, to get the compensation that they may be entitled to,” said Rand.

When she takes a break from handling veterans appeals, Rand stays busy working in the children’s church ministry and plans to take up golf in retirement.

Her advice to new and future appeals officers is to make sure they are in the job for the love of helping veterans.

“Be sure and learn all you can, because you never know what you are going to face when trying to help the veteran,” said Rand.