

**Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

Present Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Chair  
Mr. Steve Mendez, Secretary  
Mr. Tim Paslawski, Vice Chair  
Mr. Pete Peterson, Member  
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors Present: Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS  
Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS  
Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer, Chief Finance Officer, GDVS  
Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director Health, Contracting & Facilities, GDVS  
Ms. Amy Sillmon, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office  
Ms. Kathryn Wright, Governor's Office of Planning & Budget  
Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS  
Mr. Tony Dobbins, Adjutant, Georgia VFW  
Ms. Vivian Greentree, Veterans Service Foundation Board  
Ms. Gail Ramey, Georgia VFW Auxiliary  
Ms. Devora Valdez, Constituent Services, Rep. Lucy McBath's Office  
Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVNH, Augusta, GA  
Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS  
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS  
Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS  
Mr. Steven Fay, Director, Training Division, GDVS  
Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS  
Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS  
Mr. Edwin Berry, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS  
Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS  
Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator, GDVS  
Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homeless Coordinator, GDVS  
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS  
Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS  
Ms. Kaitlin Little, Business Support Analyst, GDVS  
Mr. Neil Slay, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS  
Mr. Roger McDonald, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS  
Mr. Justin Stennett, Appeals Division, GDVS  
Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Wednesday, January 22, 2026, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Kopsie called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Mr. Peterson gave the invocation. Commissioner Ross led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the January Agenda. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the November minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. There were no objections. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted for the Board meeting:

**Ms. Belinda Boldoe, GDVS, VFW Service Officer**

- The Department Service Officer participated in picking up and delivering 28 turkeys to the Atlanta VAMC Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) in support of their Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway. The turkeys were delivered to the CDCE on November 10, 2025.
- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual training session - VSO Coffee Talk, hosted by the GDVS Training Team. We discussed the processing of VA specialty claims to include Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), Pension, and Fiduciary. The virtual training session was held on November 17, 2025, at 8AM.
- The Department Service Officer participated in stuffing bags with toys, candy, and fruit and then decorated mini-Christmas trees in support of the VFW Henry County Post 12180, Christmas Toy Giveaway. The Post Members stuffed bags and decorated mini-Christmas trees on December 05, 2025, from 6 PM – 830PM.
- The Department Service Officer attended the VFW Department of Georgia Council of Administration COA meeting. The meeting was held on December 06, 2025, at 5 PM at the VFW Department of Georgia Headquarters located at 4952 Columbus Rd, Macon, GA 31206.
  - Council of Administration Meeting
  - Christmas Dinner
- The Department Service Officer participated in picking up and delivering 14 turkeys to the Atlanta VAMC Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) in support of their Christmas Turkey Giveaway. The turkeys were delivered to the CDCE on December 08, 2025.
- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual Quarterly VSO/Directors meeting hosted by Angela Seelhammer, Acting Director, and Brian Morgan, Change Management Analyst (CMA). The following items were briefed:

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- Introduction to Mr. Cory Hawthorne, Acting Executive Director of the Montgomery VA Regional Office and MST Operations Center and most recently served as the Acting Executive Director for VBA's Southeast and Northeast District Offices.
  - VA processed an all-time high of over 3 million (3,001,734) disability compensation and pension claims in fiscal year 2025 – shattering the previous record of 2.49 million set in FY 2024 (18.5% more).
  - Current VBA Priority – Backlog Reduction Critical Veteran Services Initiative
  - Reduced backlog by 57% since January 20, 2025, from 264,717 to 112,353.
  - Current goal is to reduce to below 100,000 by the EOM December.
  - VBA Fully Funded for FY26.
  
- As of 12.04.2025:
  - Claims Completed – 135,670
  - Claims Granted – 95,758
  - Sum of Net Award - \$548,617,254.65
  
- Backlog Claims are those pending greater than 125 days. The goal is to see a significant reduction in backlog by December 2025.
  - Atlanta's inventory stands at 5,636 claims. Of those, 857 are pending as backlog which is 15.2% of Atlanta's total inventory.
  - Atlanta's Average Days to Complete (ADC) – 77.3
  - Atlanta's Average Days Pending (ADP) – 68.2
  
- Public Contact - VERA Kiosk Launch – September 29, 2025
  - The elimination of manual entry for over 5,200 appointments, which freed up time for Intake Specialists to resolve basic inquiries, provide forms and letters, and perform other ancillary duties.
  - A streamlined intake process providing consistent experience for Veterans and visitors across locations.
  - Decreased effects of staff shortages in the event of an unexpected employee absence.
  - Improved data accuracy by automatically capturing critical interview data and eliminating self-reported data.
  - Reduced interruptions to on-going interviews.
  - VERA Wait Time: 19.6 minutes
  
- Court Decision – Ingram v. Collins

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- In a recent court decision, Ingram v. Collins, the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) held that the VA must consider the severity of the claimed disability in an unmedicated state, because the musculoskeletal disabilities diagnostic codes do not explicitly consider medication and the VA must compensate a Veteran for the level of disability that would be present but for the ameliorative effects of medication for these musculoskeletal disabilities.
- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual training session - VSO Coffee Talk, hosted by the GDVS Training Team. We discussed GDVS Partnership with Unite Us and the resources available to the community. The virtual training session was held on December 15, 2025, at 8AM.
- The Department Service Officer attended a monthly VSO VSC Vet Talk hosted by Lateisha Howard, Atlanta Regional Office AVSCM (Quality & Training), Keyva Dyson, Coach, and Phil Macon, Coach, held on December 17, 2025, at 10 AM, at 1700 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA 30033. The purpose was:
  - To conduct a monthly roundtable informational session in collaboration with Veteran Service Officers (VSOs).
  - This meeting aims to foster an inclusive environment and provide current guidance on administering Compensation Benefits.
  - The primary topics were Homeless Claims Process and Resources, Ingram v. Collins, and PL 117-328 Cleland and Dole
- The Department Service Officer attended a VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) December 2025 NVS Updates. The virtual meeting was held on December 18, 2025, at 2PM. The following was discussed:
  - Federal Circuit Decision on Dependent Education Benefits
  - M21-1 Updates.
- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual training session - VSO Coffee Talk, hosted by the GDVS Training Team. We received a presentation from GDVS Appeals Director on the appeals process. The virtual training session was held on January 05, 2026, at 8AM.
- The Department Service Officer attended the VFW Department of Georgia Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) meeting hosted by the VFW State Commander Bill Miles. The virtual meeting was held on January 07, at 7PM. We discussed the following:
  - Coordinated events
  - Volunteerism
  - Allocated Funds

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- Scheduling VFW State Commander Meet and Greet with the Atlanta VA Regional Office Director and the Atlanta VA Medical Center Director:
  - Atlanta VA Regional Office Director – 02.20.2026 at 11AM
  - Atlanta VA Medical Center Director – 03.11.2026 at 930AM

**Dr. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women**

GMW continues to do fabulous things in the community. We are thankful for extra recognition in November which included induction into the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame for GMW Founder Amy Stevens and being awarded Best Veteran Entry in the Atlanta Veterans Day parade. We were also featured in several media releases on social media, TV, and newspapers. A key takeaway is to note the constantly increasing visibility of women veterans via GMW. While there are other small women's groups in Georgia, GMW is the one that receives the most attention. This is good as it gives opportunity for members and partners to get seats at the table and have input to the veteran community unlike other groups. Part of what sets us apart is that as GMW is not a non-profit and we are not funded by anyone; we have liberty to lead the way without obligations to other agendas that may not align with our deep morale sense of duty of care to support other veterans. Moving into 2026, GMW is hopeful that we will be able to expand our mission with more mutual resources and contributing leadership education to like-minded groups.

We will continue to provide social and educational opportunities online and in person for women veterans in Georgia. Any woman who has served in the military who lives in Georgia is welcome to join us. It is a private group and there are some screening roles to ensure that the best interests of participants are maintained.

While we are a non-partisan group, we will be more visible next week January 21<sup>st</sup> joining with Georgia Veterans on the Hill for a rally supporting more visibility for veterans with Georgia State Legislators. GVOH is an alliance with the major VSOs in Georgia. The rally will be at Liberty Plaza 1100 to 1230. All veterans are invited to attend. A key issue that GMW is supporting is to eliminate claim sharks in Georgia who prey on vulnerable veterans by charging them for working on their VA disability claims. Other issues are to support full funding to the GA Dept of Veteran Services to align their pay scale to match that of other state agencies. GDVS employees are paid significantly less than other state employees. Finally, to support full operational funding to the current GA State War Homes and to allocate additional funding to build additional nursing homes in Georgia. Georgia only has 2 veteran nursing homes, and we really should have at least six. We are far behind other states in meeting this need and it is shameful to know that we are not honoring our senior veterans with the services they need.

As always, thank you for this opportunity to share this report.

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**Mr. Tony Dobbins, Adjutant, Georgia VFW**

We had our Hats on the Hill rally yesterday in Liberty Plaza. The Veterans on the Hill group sponsored the event. We had approximately 150 people in attendance. We focused on HB 108, the Claim Shark bill. We also advocated for more veterans' homes here in Georgia. The third issue was for GDVS to be fully funded. Sen. Bonner asked for a meeting with the leaders of the American Legion, VFW and AMVETS to discuss HB108. We still have a battle on that issue

**Commissioner Patricia Ross**

On Monday, November 17, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended a Fox Grant meeting. She then attended the November Veterans Service Board meeting. Later in the day she attended a Unite Us bi-weekly meeting.

Commissioner Ross was on leave 18 – 19 November 2025.

On Friday, November 20, 2025, Commissioner Ross worked with the Director of Workforce Enhancement for South Carolina to determine the number of transitioning military into their respective states. She also coordinated the presentation of colors for the Suicide Mortality Review Academy in January, co-sponsored by the VA and SAHMSA.

On Friday, November 21, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the Leadership Institute session focused on communication and decision making. She also attended a meeting to discuss proposed legislation. Additionally, she met with the Deputy Commissioner and the Executive Director of the National Association for State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) for a virtual walkthrough of the hotel for next fall's conference.

On Monday, November 24, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the Fox Grant Update meeting. She also met with the founder of Georgia Military Women. She also began engaging with the city of Augusta about the news release and additional funding for state veteran cemeteries.

On Tuesday, November 25, 2025, Commissioner Ross began working with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget on a possible veterans' cemetery in Augusta. Additionally, she met with the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Defense State Liaison to discuss possible legislation on jurisdiction.

Thursday, November 27 and Friday, November 28, 2025, were State Holidays.

On Monday, December 1, 2025, Commissioner Ross held a Director's meeting. She also attended the Unite Us bi-weekly meeting. Additionally, she completed a draft budget worksheet for OPB for an Augusta cemetery.

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On Tuesday, December 2, 2025, Commissioner Ross had her bi-weekly meeting with Jeff Bell, Chief Operating Officer of STG International. She also reviewed the Statement of Work for an upcoming Request for Proposal.

On Wednesday, December 3, 2025, Commissioner Ross toured the SHARE Military Initiative at the Shepherd Center to view their expansion and provide insight into upcoming grant opportunities.

On Thursday, December 4, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended The Warrior Alliance Community Partner Gathering in Atlanta. She also attended the December Veterans Service Foundation Board meeting. She also attended a collaboration meeting between GDVS and the Jobs for Veterans State Grant leadership to help foster better collaboration. She was later interviewed by Michael Kappaz, a graduate student at Stanford and former submarine officer in the Navy, regarding how to make the claims system better.

On Friday, December 5, 2025, Commissioner Ross held an Open Forum for the Department. She also met with Unite Us for a Payments module demo. Along with her Outreach Team, she later toured the Tucker facility for Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC).

On Monday, December 8, 2025, Commissioner Ross held a Director's meeting. She then hosted a meeting of the Suicide Mortality Review Committee. She later had a meeting with Russell Feagin, Robert Orange, Mark Demers, Camala Ball and Ernie Cowart about funding for the cemetery in Augusta. She then attended the Fox Grant Update meeting.

On Tuesday, December 9, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the Women in Leadership Breakfast in Atlanta. She then worked with her team and KSU on the Fox Grant Year 4 Plan. She also met with the Department of Administrative Services on the upcoming Request for Proposal.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with leadership in Gwinnett County, to include Commissioner Jasper Watkins, Department Director Lindsey Jorstad (Community Services), Deputy Department Director Regina Miller (Health and Human Services), and Division Director Jacqueline Hughes, Health and Human Services. She then attended the US Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Women Veterans National Partners and Stakeholders Meeting.

On Thursday, December 11, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the Returning Veterans Task Force meeting. She then met with the VA and STG International to discuss the news article on the Milledgeville Home. She then met with Bridge My Return to discuss the Georgia White Label MVP. She later attended the Suicide Mortality Review quarterly call.

On Friday, December 12, 2025, Commissioner Ross facilitated the Leadership Institute session focused on Change. She also attended the funeral of former Assistant Commissioner Dan Holtz's wife. Later that day she, along with the Executive Committee of NASDVA met with the Deputy Secretary of the VA.

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On Monday, December 15, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the VSO talk and held a Director's meeting. She also met with Unite US.

On Tuesday, December 16, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with Jarelle Thompson, Homeless Coordinator, to discuss a veteran assistant system and program involvement. She then attended a quarterly meeting with Kai Mentzer, Executive Director of the Atlanta VA Health Care System. She later attended a meeting with Neal VanMarter and Katie Shepherd from Sen. Ossoff's office to discuss recent changes affecting caregivers and community-based services for Georgia veterans.

On Wednesday, December 17, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended a meeting with the Southeast District of NASDVA discussing the Electronic Provider Scheduler (deployed at key VAMCs to include Atlanta). She later met with the team from HereNow Help.

On Thursday, December 18, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with Russell Feagin and Ernie Cowart to discuss the veteran cemeteries and the new cemetery opportunity in Augusta. She then had a meeting with her finance team to discuss the Fox Grant.

On Friday, December 19, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with Dr. Fabersha to discuss how she could assist with veterans in Georgia. She then met with Kim Scofi from United Military Care. Later in the day, she and Charlotte May met with Bridge My Return to discuss the Georgia White Label MVP program. Commissioner Ross also joined the Unite Us Implementation Meeting and then met with Neal VanMarter and Katie Shepherd from Sen. Ossoff's office.

On Monday, December 22, 2025, Commissioner Ross joined the Fox Grant Update Meeting.

On Tuesday, December 23, 2025, Commissioner Ross joined the meeting discussing the RFP for the Milledgeville War Veterans Home. She also had her quarterly meeting with Dr. Richard Norvel, the Chief of Staff for the VA Atlanta Health Care System.

On Monday, December 29, 2025, Commissioner Ross had a discussion regarding the Georgia War Veterans Home with the Lt. Governor's office. She later met with the Unite Us team for their bi-weekly meeting.

On Wednesday, December 31, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with Russell Feagin, Executive Director of Health and Memorials.

On Monday, January 5, 2026, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She also traveled to Glennville to award a 20-year state employee certificate to Mr. Howard, the Assistant Director. She also joined the Georgia Joint Defense Commission in Savannah.

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On Tuesday, January 6, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the final day of the Georgia Joint Defense Commission in Savannah.

On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, Commissioner Ross met with Veteran Service Organizations from across Georgia. She then joined the meeting to discuss the potential veteran's cemetery in Augusta and met with representatives from the National Cemetery Administration and the architects to go over the project plan and timeline.

On Thursday, January 8, 2026, Commissioner Ross joined the Veterans Service Foundation Board Meeting. She then met with Steven Fay, Director of the GDVS Training Division. Later, she joined the Unite Us meeting. She also met with Shelley Seinberg and Amy Sillmon from the Attorney General's Office.

On Monday, January 12, 2026, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She also joined the Unite Us Bi-weekly meeting. She also met with VA leadership from the VISN and Dublin VA medical Center on the GWVH in Milledgeville. She then met with Carolyn Lee to discuss the Heroes MAKE American initiative and opportunities for veterans in advanced manufacturing. Later she met with Congressman Rick Allen's Deputy Chief of Staff regarding the Augusta cemetery.

On Tuesday, January 13, 2026, Commissioner Ross met with Topline Strategy to evaluate Unite Us. She also joined her team for the Unite Us/GDVS Quarterly Check-in Meeting, held in person in the GDVS Conference Room. She participated in the meeting to discuss the RFP for the Milledgeville War Veterans Home and later met with the regional representative for the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) on the entrepreneurship spotlight during the annual National Association for State Directors of Veterans Affairs conference in Savannah.

On Wednesday, January 14, 2026, Commissioner Ross met with Sen. Blake Tillery, Senate Majority Leader Jason Anivatarte, Brent Churchwell, Senate Budget and Evaluation Office, and Caroline Hicks, Georgia General Assembly on the GDVS budget. She then traveled to the Big Canoe area in Marble Hill, GA to speak to the North Georgia Veterans on the subject of "Mission and Activities of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service."

On Thursday, January 15, 2026, Commissioner Ross travelled to Milledgeville to meet with the Dublin VA Medical Center Director and other representatives from Dublin and the VISN. She later joined the Unite Us Implementation Meeting.

On Friday, January 16, 2026, Commissioner Ross met with Nicole Goodrich, the Community Engagement Lead at CCK Law, to discuss ways to engage with support veterans in the Atlanta area. She then met with her CFO and Budget Analyst on the AFY26/FY27 budget.

On Tuesday, January 20, 2026, Commissioner Ross joined the meeting between GDVS, 2KM Architects and Grace Design to discuss plans for a new veteran's home. She also joined the meeting discussing the

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RFP for the Milledgeville War Veterans Home. She attended the bi-weekly Fox Grant meeting and later met with the Shepherd Center's CEO Jamie Shepherd.

On Wednesday, January 21, 2026, Commissioner Ross briefed the Joint Budget Hearing to present the Amended FY 2026 and FY 2027 recommendations and provide agency updates. She also met with Brian Montgomery, a Congressional candidate. Later she attended the meeting with Walker on the upcoming survey for transitioning military. Later she attended the IVMF Member Council.

Commissioner Ross discussed the current Legislative Session. The Joint Appropriations Committee was briefed yesterday and will be briefing the House Appropriations Committee tomorrow at 9:30am. The big asks are the Unite Us Platform and \$35 million in funds for a new home.

**Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals**

**GENERAL**

- On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, members from the Appeals Division and the North Region along with VHA partners supported Saint Philip AME Church in Decatur, at their Third Annual Veterans Symposium.
- On December 4<sup>th</sup> I attended The Warrior Alliance's Annual Community Partner Breakfast.
- On December 5<sup>th</sup>, along with the Commissioner, homeless coordinator, and transition and employment coordinators, I attended a briefing and tour of Friends of the Disabled Adults and Children in Tucker. This was a very informative briefing and tour as we were introduced to all they do for the disabled in metro Atlanta, and across the world.
- On December 11<sup>th</sup> at the invitation of the VET Center, I attended a Coffee Talk where I met with veterans and discussed VA benefits. Attendees enjoyed the format and were very engaged.
- On January 8<sup>th</sup> I attended the monthly Veterans Roundtable at the Decatur Goodwill Resource Center.
- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters: 56** Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in November 2025, and **144** letters were mailed out in December 2025.

**Projected Positions:**

- 3 Openings in Appeals
- 1 Opening in Zebulon
- 1 Opening in Waycross

**Mr. Steven Fay, Director of Training Division**

- Charles Isaac distributed turkeys and meals in the Hinesville community. Charles reports a retro of \$52,511.74.
- Glenn Massey and Steven Fay conducted new hire training for the VAMC new hire at the Isakson Regional Office. Glenn also conducted new hire training at Fort McPherson. New hire training introduces new VSOs to the accredited training processes and procedures to assist veterans and claimants. Refresher training is required to train and evaluate the proficiency of VA systems after issuance of their PIV card. The Absorb Learning Portal is also introduced. The portal has classes and quizzes to help navigate the vast subjects of filing VA claims.
- Sandra Bennett reports a retroactive payment of \$3,811.72. Sandra also conducted the following: November 3<sup>rd</sup>: VSO coffee talk, State Sexual Harassment Investigator. November 7<sup>th</sup>: 43<sup>rd</sup> Retiree Appreciation Day, Fort Benning/Speaker - Kerry Dyer. November 12<sup>th</sup>: Department Leadership Institute session 4. November 17<sup>th</sup>: VSO Coffee Talk - VA Fiduciary Program /Speaker - Jorge Castano, VBACMS - Field Examiner. November 20<sup>th</sup>: Warrior Widows luncheon, Widows benefit briefing Columbus, Speaker Sandra Bennett. December 1<sup>st</sup>: VSO coffee talk, General / Let's Talk About It – Thankfulness.
- Charles Isaac conducted VA systems for new PIV users. Christmas/New year leave.
- Glenn Massey and Steven Fay conducted new hire training at the VA CBOC Trink Davis clinic Carrollton and also new hire training for Appeals Division. New hire training Introduces new VSOs to the accredited training processes and procedures to assist veterans and claimants. Refresher training is required to train and evaluate the proficiency of VA systems after issuance of their PIV card. The Absorb Learning Portal is also introduced. The portal has classes and quizzes to help navigate the vast subjects of filing VA claims.
- Sandra Bennett conducted VSO Coffee Talk on December 1st and 15th.

**Upcoming Events:**

- D.R.O.P. class for December and January
- Fox Grant suicide awareness training/Unite Us training
- Continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices including Central Office personnel
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- Provide new hire training in North Georgia, Trink Davis VA CBOC Carrollton, VA Regional Office Appeals new hire, Newnan new hire, Zebulon new hire
- Annual Training Planning 2026

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**Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division**

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **September 2025** was **96**.
- As of **September 30, 2025**, the Isakson VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of September 2025:

<b>Types of Claims</b>	<b>Number of Awards</b>	<b>Benefits paid</b>
Compensation	111,950	\$273,737,459
DIC	4,657	\$8,200,372
Survivor Pension	631	\$635,689
<b><u>Veteran Pension</u></b>	<b><u>1,226</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,440,233</u></b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>118,464</b>	<b>\$284,013,753</b>

YTD through 09/30/2025 Total Compensation, Pension and other benefits paid: **\$2,486,242,622.00** for the veterans that we represent who receive VA Compensation or Pension benefits.

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **October 2025** was **68**. Due to the VA Regional Office shutdown, **a total of 33 hearings** were rescheduled for a later date or withdrawn.
- As of **October 31, 2025**, the Isakson VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of October 2025:

<b>Types of Claims</b>	<b>Number of Awards</b>	<b>Benefits paid</b>
Compensation	112,285	\$275,750,228
DIC	4,694	\$8,263,950
Survivor Pension	621	\$624,867
<b><u>Veteran Pension</u></b>	<b><u>1,226</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,444,001</u></b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>118,826</b>	<b>\$286,083,046</b>

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YTD through 10/31/2025 Total Compensation, Pension and other benefits paid: **\$2,772,325,668.00** for the veterans that we represent who receive VA Compensation or Pension benefits.

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **November 2025** was **60**.
- Ten **(10)** other local hearings were rescheduled to January 2026.
- As of **November 30, 2025**, the Isakson VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of November 2025:

<b>Types of Claims</b>	<b>Number of Awards</b>	<b>Benefits paid</b>
<b>Compensation</b>	<b>Unavailable</b>	<b>\$276,345,122</b>
<b>DIC</b>	<b>Unavailable</b>	<b>\$8,262,607</b>
<b>Survivor Pension</b>	<b>Unavailable</b>	<b>\$624,439</b>
<b><u>Veteran Pension</u></b>	<b><u>Unavailable</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,449,787</u></b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>Unavailable</b>	<b>\$286,681,955</b>

YTD through 11/30/2025 Total Compensation, Pension and other benefits paid: **\$3,059,007,663.00** for the veterans that we represent who receive VA Compensation or Pension benefits.

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **December 2025** was **60**.
- The total number of hearings (**BVA, RVSR, HLR-Informal Conference**) completed in **2025** was **865**.
- The Appeals Division also filed **178 claims** and **34 Notice of Disagreements** including **22** requests for personal hearings for Proposed Reductions.
- As of **December 31, 2025**, the Isakson VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of December 2025:

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Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid
Compensation	112,819	\$287,005,941
DIC	4,744	\$8,582,025
Survivor Pension	618	\$635,465
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	<u>1,213</u>	<u>\$1,463,009</u>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>119,394</b>	<b>\$297,686,440</b>

YTD through 12/31/2025 Total Compensation, Pension and other benefits paid: **\$3,356,694,103.00** for the veterans that we represent who receive VA Compensation or Pension benefits.

**Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region**

**Report for December**

**Retro Awards:** \$1,315,045.35

Of note, the following single payouts were made.

Stiehl: \$145,212.35 (Compensation)

Rogers: \$130,465.80 (DIC)

**Director Site Visits/Inspections:** 3

**Community Involvement:**

11/6/2025-Ken Childre-Spoke at the Cobb County Veteran Employees Program-Over 50 Veterans in attendance. After speaking, manned table outside the event.

11/8/2025-Kristi Jones (Cartersville) and Ken Childre-Hearts for Heroes event in Hiram, GA. Assisted 12 Veterans during the event that had over 200 Veterans in attendance.

11/10/2025-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville)-Attended Gainesville Senior Center Living Facility Veterans Day Ceremony. Recognized 5 senior Veterans.

11/11/2025-Bill Smith (Rock Spring) and Ken Childre-Ken spoke at the Veterans Day event in Chattooga County and presented 5 Vietnam Veterans Certificates of Honor.

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11/11/2025-Terrance Leggon and Maxine Brock (Conyers)-Participated in Conyers Veterans Day Event.

11/13/2025-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville)-Participated in the opening of the Unity House Gainesville. Analyzed intake and referral processes to establish placement for Veterans

11/13/2025-Randy Gray and Antonio Morris (Ft McPherson)-Spoke to a Veterans group at the Veterans Empowerment Organization. 5 Veterans in attendance.

11/15/2025-Terrance Leggon and Maxine Brock (Conyers)-Participated in the Know Your Rights event in Social Circle.

11/19/2025-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville)-Participated in We Honor Vets meeting with NGHS partners to co-develop improved coordination methods across multiple surrounding counties.

**North Area Gains/Losses: 2**

Carrollton: Veronica Dailey-Resigned-10 Nov

Carrollton: Tabitha Fuller-New Hire-17 Nov

Marietta Office (Closed): Fred Young/Shane Robinson transferred to VECTR North Office-14 Nov

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		November-25					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H
	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	54	4,767	17	280.41	1,812	106.59
<b>Number of Offices:</b>		30	<b>Average Visits/Office:</b>		158.90	<b>Average Claims/Office</b> 60.4	

\*Total monthly office visits include: 1,664 In-person and 3,103 phone calls/emails.

**Report for January**

**Retro Awards:** \$2,559,720.38

**Director Site Visits/Inspections:** 0

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**Community Involvement:**

12/04/2025 - Tanya Rogers (Gainesville) Attended Gainesville Chamber of Commerce Business Networking Event to discuss ways to promote GDVS within the community and build relationships with other entities and organizations

12/01;08;11/2025-Danny Moreno (Zebulon) Went to the VFW Outreach Post 105 and assisted 5 Veterans with claims

12/13/2025-Christine Collins (Blairsville) Volunteered with Veterans and VA Clinic workers during "Shop with a Cop". Allowed 200 local children to shop in Blairsville with each getting \$300 worth of merchandise.

12/16/2025-Randy Gray (Ft McPherson) Spoke at Clairmont Crest 55+ Active Adult Community to a group of 15 veterans.

12/31/2025-Christine Collins (Blairsville) Attended VFW Post 7807 New Year's Eve Potluck. Met with numerous Veterans and set up an appointment for one of the attendees.

**North Area Gains/Losses: 0**

Mr. Childre gave an update on the Zebulon office. The individual who works there has transferred to the Griffin office. The Zebulon office will be without a VSO until one can be hired and trained.

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		December-25					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H
	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	54	5,420	21	258.10	1,978	94.19
Number of Offices:		30	Average Visits/Office:		180.67	Average Claims/Office: 65.933333	

\*Total monthly office visits include: 1,694 In-person and 3,726 phone call/emails.

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**Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director Veterans Benefits South Region**

- On December 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr. Christopher Thomas and Mr. Scott Weaver from the Brunswick and St. Mary’s offices, respectively, participated in the VFW Post 2588 VA Eligibility and Benefits Briefing. There was a total of 17 veterans in attendance. They covered basic eligibility requirements, service-connected disability processes, claim filing procedures, available benefits, and recent VA updates. A Q&A session followed, allowing attendees to address personal concerns and to clarify misunderstandings about VA processes.
- Office closures in December (due to campus closings):
  - Albany VSOs are teleworking Dec 24 and Dec 29-31
  - LaGrange VSOs are teleworking Dec 22-24 and Dec 29-31
  - Warner Robins VSOs are teleworking Dec 24 and Dec 29-31
- Since the last board meeting, South region offices reported lump sum payments totaling \$1,276,245.03, with the Macon office reporting the highest single retro award of \$187,773.79.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 232,245.

Average Visits Per VFSO  
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO

Region: SOUTH

Month: NOVEMBER-2025

# of Offices	# of VFSOs	Total Monthly Office Visits	Workdays in Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted to VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted by VFSO to VA Daily
26	40	966	17	56.82	912	53.65

Average Visits/Office	37.15
Average Claims/Office	35.08

**Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)**

- November 11-13, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in and facilitated a workday at the Ogletree home. A grateful thank you goes out to The Home Depot Foundation, Work Force Ga, and V2 Fostering change for the hard work and partnership to make the changes happen.

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- December 1, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended GDVS Director's Meeting.
- December 2, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the SSG Fox PGP-On Site Meeting.
- December 5, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended Open Forum with Commissioner Ross.
- December 6-10, 2025, Ms. Brooks worked with GDVS Suicide Specialist to develop files for past Fox Grant enrollees.
- December 8, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the quarterly SMRC Case Review. Ms. Brooks had a virtual meeting with Hollie Scoma and Ginger Miller to collaborate about the 2026 National Association State Women Veteran Coordinator's Conference, to be held in Savannah, GA this summer.
- December 11, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the Returning Veteran Task Force Meeting. She met with veterans in Cayton County.
- December 12, 2025, Ms. Brooks met with a woman veteran.
- December 22, 2025, Ms. Brooks Participated in the Fox Grant Update Meeting.
- December 28, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended and participated in the Fox Grant Case Management meeting with Ms. Ferguson.
- On January 5, 2026, Ms. Brooks met with Chekia Carr. Ms. Brooks participated in the Pre-Women Veterans Think Tank meeting.
- January 7, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended and facilitated the Women Veteran Think Tank. There were 19 women present in several categories, women veterans, allies, financial institutions, corporate, and spouses.
- January 8, 2026, Ms. Brooks met with Debra Anglin, the CEO of Hearts to Nourish Hope to finalize a community outreach. Ms. Brooks participated in the NASWVC Board Meeting.
- January 9, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended the Retirement Ceremony, Ray Lightfoot, DCCSB.
- January 10, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended the quarterly American Legion Post 291, Legion training and provided classes on Pension, Aid & Attendance, Burial and GYN.
- January 16-17, 2026, Community Outreach of giving in Clayton County.

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**Current committees:**

- Violence Prevention Task Force
- VA/SAMHSA Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee
- Operation Ogletree Committee

**Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator**

- December 22, 2025, Ms. Ferguson participated in the Fox Grant Update Meeting.
- December 28, 2025, Ms. Ferguson attended and participated in the Fox Grant Case Management meeting.
- January 2, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Training with Governor’s Challenge TF, Priority Group 3.
- January 5, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attending the Bi-Monthly Fox Grant Meeting with AMES.
- January 13, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended the quarterly In-Person Unite US (Georgia) planning meeting for 2026.

**Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator**

- January 5, 2026, American Legion Department – Virtual Post Service Officer Training: GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator conducted a virtual training for American Legion Post Service Officers, providing guidance on veteran benefits, available resources, and effective referral practices to strengthen service delivery and support at the post level.
- January 5, 2026, American Legion VA Hospital Visits and Statewide Event Planning: GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator participated in coordinating VA medical centers visits alongside the American Legion to engage Veterans and share available resources and supported planning meetings to finalize upcoming American Legion Post events throughout Georgia aimed at increasing Veteran outreach, engagement, and access to services.
- January 6, 2026, CWT Job Readiness Seminar – “New Year, New Job” GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator served as a featured presenter at the Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta VA Medical Center alongside workforce and community partners, providing job seeking Veterans with motivation strategies, local employment insights, and information on GDVS employment services in

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support of VA Compensated Work Therapy requirements and collaborative workforce development efforts.

- January 8, 2026, Trinity House Outreach Visit - GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator conducted an onsite visit to Trinity House to engage Veterans who were previously incarcerated, providing education on available benefits, discussing reentry challenges, and offering employment assistance and workforce resources to support successful reintegration and long-term stability.
- January 13- 14, 2026, Hire Heroes USA Annual Training – Guest Presenter: GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator served as a guest presenter at Hire Heroes USA’s annual training, delivering the session “Stronger Together,” which focused on team alignment, strengths-based collaboration, and the importance of leveraging diverse archetypes to improve effectiveness during change and high-pressure environments.
- January 14, 2026, VTEC Workforce Development Meeting: GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator met with the Chief Executive Officer of VTEC, a nonprofit workforce training organization supporting transitioning service members, Veterans, and military families, to discuss the Fort Gillem Revitalization Plan and explore potential collaboration opportunities aimed at expanding career training and guaranteed employment pathways for Veterans across Georgia and nationally.

**Upcoming events:**

- Transition and Employment Cake Vision board event
- CWT Seminar
- American Legion Mid-Winter Conference

Ms. Holstick announced that the Woman Veteran Advisory Board has been formed. The women on the Board are from across the State. The next meeting will be on Feb. 19

**Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homelessness Coordinator**

- November 3, 2025 - Participated in the Director’s meeting.
- November 13-14, 2025 - I participated in a Grant Writing class held in Rockdale County. We learned how to write grants so that we can write grants in the future.
- November 17-20 - Participated in DCA conference in Savannah. At this conference I was able to network and learn about the different components of affordable housing, zoning, childcare and economic development throughout the state.

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- November 21, 2025 - I participated in the Leadership Institute session four regarding Difficult Distance and Difficult Decisions. This session allowed us to explore the opportunities around having professional conversations to address issues that may arise in the workplace.
- October 31, 2025 - I participated in the Macon standdown and gave out 20 blankets and 35 hygiene packets to homeless veterans. I also got a woman veteran housed through the local SSVF program.
- November 25, 2025 - I participated in two site visits in Stone Mountain to partner with a local apartment agency Mills Creek Crossing and a local landlord in stone mountain that would like to house veterans.
- December 4, 2025 - I participated in the monthly GDVS Foundation Board meeting. We discussed our next steps to delivering our new donation and educational trifold around housing and also elected the 2026 officers.
- I held 3 meetings with landlords throughout Georgia that would like to collaborate to house veterans.
- Working with 15 veterans on current housing needs in December.
- December 18, 2025 - Participated in Point in Time count meeting.
- December 18, 2025 - Held a meeting with a landlord to add to resource list for available properties for veterans.
- January 6, 2026 - Participated in monthly CWT Job Readiness and briefed about the homeless program at the agency.
- January 7, 2026 - Held a meeting with a landlord to add to resource list for available properties for veterans.
- January 8, 2026 - Attended the monthly Veteran's Foundation Board meeting.
- January 9, 2026 - Completed an outreach event meeting with a client to provide services due to his loss of hearing.
- January 14, 2026 - Held a meeting with a landlord to add to resource list for available properties for veterans.

**Upcoming Events/Highlights:**

- I was recognized for being one of the top employees using the platform Unite Us
- I am currently working with 7 individuals to provide housing resources.

**Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer/Chief Financial Officer**

**Report for December:**

**Accounting/Procurement/Compliance:**

- Routine operations are continuing. We are continuously working to improve all accounts payable processing/procurement processing, to apply proper coding, accountability, organization of purchase orders, on-time payments and reconciliations.
- We are continuing to work with the SAO Shared Services to prepare the procurement and accounting data in Team Works for migration to GA@Work.
- Kirsten Dennis processed 6 purchase orders totaling \$23,221.85 as well as 10 invoices and 4 quotes.
- Kirsten Dennis completed mass supply order for all Field Offices and Appeals totaling \$13,500. She ordered 30 name badges as well.
- Kirsten Dennis has been active in the meetings regarding the GVWH-Milledgeville Request for Proposal (RFP) for the coming year.
- Kirsten Dennis and Mark Demers attended the APO/CUPO Meeting on December 3, 2025
- 37 of 38 end of year reports have been submitted to SAO thus far. The remainder will be completed once the forms open for submission. The last one is due in January 2026.

**GA@Work/NextGen Updates**

- Mark Demers and Kaitlin Little attended the NextGen Townhall Meeting on November 18, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen Change Management Network Meeting on November 18, 2025.
- Mark Demers and Camala Ball attended the NCN Agency Readiness meeting on November 19, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended the GA@Work Grants Reporting Review on December 1, 2025, and December 8, 2025.
- Mark Demers and Kaitlin Little attended the GA@Work Weekly Grants Workstream on November 18, 2025, December 2, 2025, and December 9, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended the GA@Work Monthly CFO meeting on November 21, 2025, and December 11, 2025.
- The GO-Live date for GA@Work was pushed back to **July 1, 2025**.

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**Budget/Travel:**

- Camala Ball continued daily monitoring of general ledgers, purchase orders, and budget projection updates.
- Camala Ball has reviewed budget projections with program managers as of November closing and discussed plans for appropriated dollars.
- Kaitlin Little, Mark Demers and Camala Ball answered multiple follow-up budget inquiries from OPB and Senate analysts.
- Camala Ball stated that as of December 10, 2025, we have expended 37.09% of the total FY 2026 budget allocated to GDVS.

**Strategic Plan/Legislation:** None

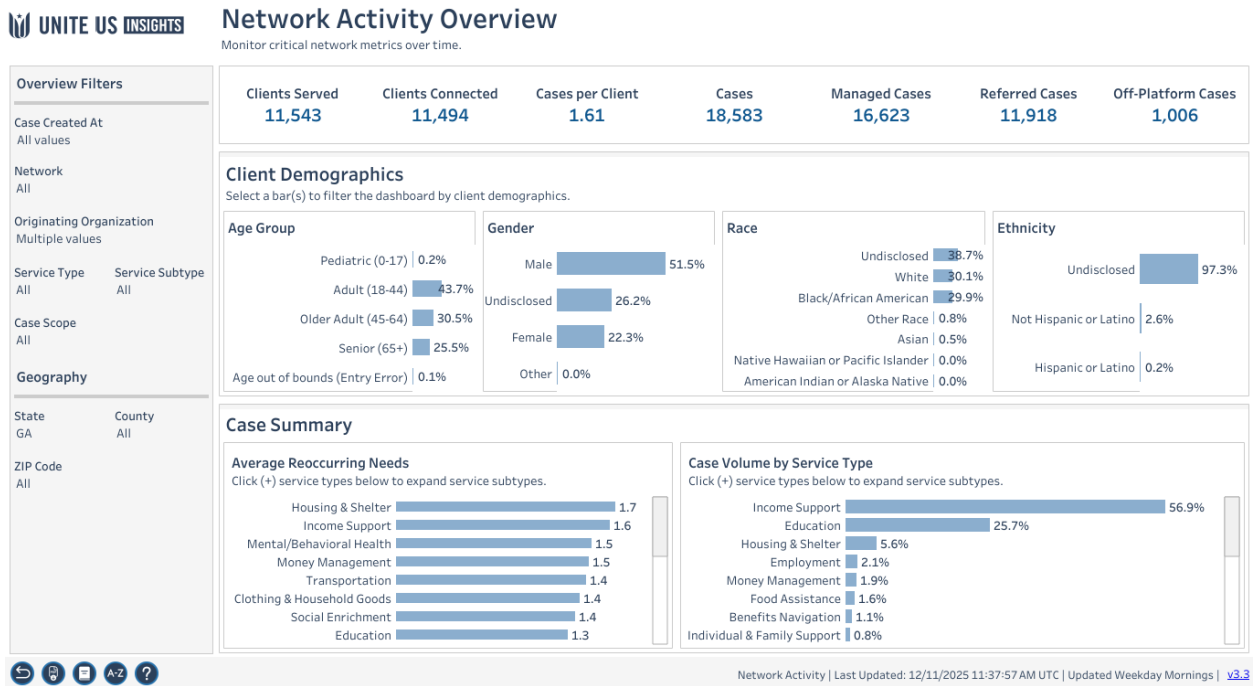
**Grant Program:**

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$722,747 year 4)
  - We were awarded the grant for a 4<sup>th</sup> Year.
  - VA SSG Fox in-person audit occurred on December 10, 2025, preliminary results of the audit indicated the grant financials had no findings at all. We are awaiting the results of the year 2 and 3 audit.
  - Kaitlin Little completed the SSG Fox SPGP Data Analytics Dashboard Training.
- Unite-Us Grant- (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- (\$20,047,782.70 total)
  - Grant extended for a partial year 4. All grant funds have been expended at this point.
  - The final Unite Us Quarterly Report will be due in January 2026.
  - Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector are moving forward. As of December 10, 2025, we have 284,132 veterans in the system.
  - Since the Public Resource Directory has gone live on March 22, 2024, there have been 6,393 site visits, 4,627 visitors with 828 distinct programs viewed.
  - Campaign 11 began on November 7 and will be focused on loneliness (which is especially pertinent during the holidays). Awaiting Campaign 10 results.
  - The Quarterly Report for the 1st quarter was submitted via Survey Monkey on October 1, 2025. Next report will be due in January 2026 (this will be the final report for this grant).
  - The team attended the semi-monthly meeting with Unite-Us.
  - Irene Mackson, Kaitlin Little and Mark Demers attended Unite Us Payments Demo for grants on December 5, 2025.
  - The following organizations completed applications to join the Unite Us Social Platform: Jennifer Pollard of Hosannas Grace(Housing), Tina Bartleson, Director of Maxine Clark Family Resource Center(Health and Well-Being), Toyasha Albert with Funded VA (Educational Sessions

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for Veterans on VA Benefits and Housing), and Mr. Auguste Badiel, Executive Director of Home well Care Services (Personal Care Assistance for veterans).

- This grant will close on December 31, 2025.
- Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights:



- Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)-
  - FY2025- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)
    - The grant was awarded to 3 vendors:
      - Cohen Veterans Network- \$776,132
      - KSU-AMES-\$173,868
      - About Face USA- \$40,000
    - All funds for this grant year have been distributed.
    - The first quarterly report was completed on October 17, 2025. Next quarterly report will be due in January 2026.
  - FY2026- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)
    - The grant was awarded to the following:
      - Cohen Veterans Network (Centerstone) -\$806,578
    - The grant was reopened for applicants to bid on remaining balance, it will close on December 31, 2025.

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- PTSD study- Emory (HB 68, line 94.12). \$1,000,000
  - To increase funds for research on treatment of PTSD and wraparound services for veterans and their families.
  - Contract was signed and monies were distributed to Emory on September 30, 2025.
  - First quarterly report will be due in January 2026.
- VA Suicide Mortality Review Cooperative Agreement - (\$502,124.68)
  - We submitted draw #14 on December 2, 2025, for \$6479.29. Remaining balance is \$0.
  - We are waiting on the FFR to open in the PMS; the FER has been completed.
  - Preliminary audit documentation was submitted to the VA as per the instructions on July 25, 2025. VA Audit Payroll and Expense samples were completed and sent on September 5, 2025. We are awaiting the results of the audit.
  - Team attended SMRC semi-monthly meetings.
  - The final report will be due in December 2025, exact date TBD.

**Events/Other:**

- Leadership Institute in person session was conducted in person on November 21, 2025, conducted via Teams, subject: Difficult Distance/Difficult Decisions/Communication. Next session will be conducted via Teams on December 15, 2025, subject: Leadership/Overcoming Obstacles.
- Irene Mackson attended the leadership institute session as a facilitator.
- Irene Mackson attended VSO Coffee Talk on November 1, 2025.
- Irene Mackson and Kaitlin Little have been pursuing additional study on their own to assist with future grants.
- Mark Demers and Kaitlin Little attended the NASACT Webinar: Leading and Ethical Life-Behavior Ethics on November 24, 2025.

**Report for January:**

**Accounting/Procurement/Compliance:**

- Routine operations are continuing. We are continuously working to improve all accounts payable processing/procurement processing, to apply proper coding, accountability, organization of purchase orders, on-time payments and reconciliations.
- We are continuing to work with the SAO Shared Services to prepare the procurement and accounting data in Team Works for migration to GA@Work.

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- Kirsten Dennis processed 13 purchase orders totaling \$368,271.40 as well as 28 invoices and 4 quotes.
- Kirsten Dennis has been active in the meetings regarding the GVWH-Milledgeville Request for Proposal (RFP) for the coming year.
- 37 of 38 end of year reports have been submitted to SAO thus far. The remainder will be completed once the forms open for submission. The last one is due on January 30, 2026.

**GA@Work/NextGen Updates**

- Mark Demers, Camala Ball and Kaitlin Little attended the NCN Halftime Report on January 16, 2026.
- Mark Demers and Camala Ball attended the NCN Agency Readiness meeting on December 16, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen Projects Costing and Billing on January 7, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the GA@Work Grants Reporting Review on January 5, 2026.
- Mark Demers and Kaitlin Little attended the GA@Work Weekly Grants Workstream on December 18, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen New and Existing vendor training on January 16, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen Reconciliation Test Result Reports on January 15, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the GA@Work Monthly CFO meeting on January 22, 2026.
- The GO-Live date for GA@Work was pushed back to July 1, 2026.

**Budget/Travel:**

- Camala Ball continued daily monitoring of general ledgers, purchase orders, and budget projection updates.
- Camala Ball has reviewed budget projections (Augusta cemetery, plot allowance funds, budget projections for AFY2026 funds with program managers as of the December closing and discussed plans for remaining funds.
- Kaitlin Little, Mark Demers and Camala Ball answered multiple follow-up budget and KPI inquiries from OPB and Senate analysts.

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- Camala Ball, Kaitlin Little and Mark Demers attended the Joint Budget Live Stream with Governor Kemp on January 20, 2026.
- Camala Ball stated that as of December 31, 2025, we have expended 44.68% of the total FY 2026 budget allocated to GDVS. The breakdown is as follows:

Fund	Total Allotment	Expenditures	Remaining Balance	% Spent
State	\$ 33,144,535.00	\$ 14,762,341.71	\$ 18,382,193.29	44.54%
State- Prior Yr Res Funds- Unite Us	\$ 1,750,204.00	\$ 1,750,204.00	\$ 0	100%
Federal	\$ 38,527,097.00	\$ 15,980,594.38	\$ 22,546,502.62	41.48%
ARPA- Unite Us	\$ 1,729,222.34	\$ 1,729,222.34	\$ 0	100%
Other	\$ 6,596,509.00	\$ 2,303,479.18	\$ 4,293,029.82	34.92%
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$ 81,747,567.00</b>	<b>\$ 36,525,841.61</b>	<b>\$ 45,221,725.39</b>	<b>44.68%</b>

**Strategic Plan/Legislation:**

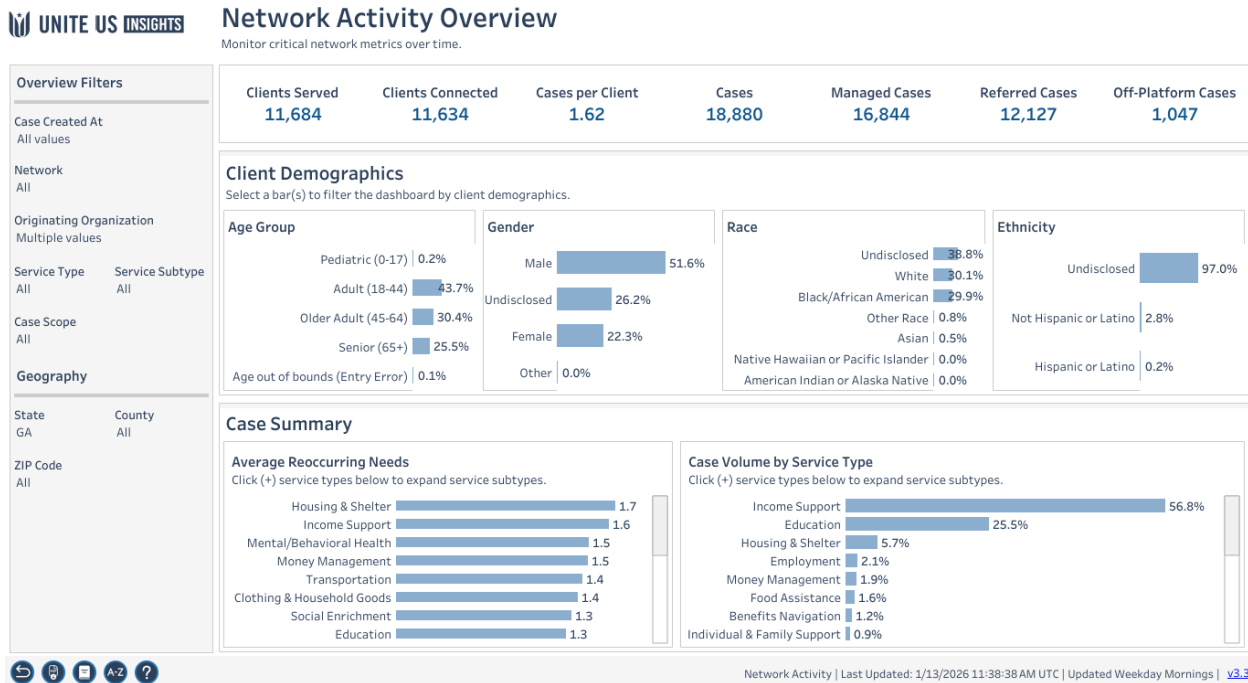
- The 2026 Regular session of the Georgia Assembly will be in session from January 12, 2026, to April 2, 2026.
- The 2026 Joint Appropriations Hearing will be on January 21, 2026, at 1045. Commissioner Ross will be speaking.

**Grant Program:**

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$722,747 year 4)
  - We were awarded the grant for a 4<sup>th</sup> Year.
  - VA SSG Fox in-person audit occurred on December 10, 2025, preliminary results of the audit indicated the grant financials had no findings at all. We are awaiting the results of the year 2 and 3 audit.
  - Mark Demers and Irene Mackson attended all Fox Grant Update Meetings.
  - Kaitlin Little, Irene Mackson and Mark Demers working on the Fox Grant Data Conversion Project (approx. 50,000 files).
  - Mark Demers and Camala Ball attended Fox Grant Demo Meeting on December 18, 2025.
  - Irene Mackson and Mark Demers attended the Fox Grant Operations Call on January 21, 2026.
- Unite-Us Grant- (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- (\$20,047,782.70 total)
  - The final Unite Us quarterly report was submitted on January 9, 2025.
  - The final audit documents as well as SF 428 and SF 429 were submitted to RSM auditors via Smartsheet on January 12, 2026-awaiting results.

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- Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector are moving forward. As of January 9, 2026, we have 284,224 veterans in the system.
- Since the Public Resource Directory went live on March 22, 2024, there have been 11,240 site visits, 8,788 visitors with 1,025 distinct programs viewed.
- Campaign 12 will begin in February 2026 focused on financial insecurity.
- Irene Mackson and Kaitlin Little attended the semi-monthly meeting with Unite-Us.
- Mark Demers attended the Unite Us Grant Management implementation meetings on December 19, 2025, and January 15, 2026.
- Kaitlin Little, Irene Mackson and Mark Demers attended the Unite Us Quarterly Strategic Check on January 13, 2026.
- Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights:



- **Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)-**
  - FY2025- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)
    - The grant was awarded to 3 vendors:
      - Cohen Veterans Network- \$776,132
      - KSU-AMES-\$173,868
      - About Face USA- \$40,000
    - All funds for this grant year have been distributed.
    - The first quarterly report was completed on October 17, 2025. Next quarterly report will be due in January 2026.
  - FY2026- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)

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- The grant was awarded to the following:
  - Cohen Veterans Network (Centerstone) -\$806,578
- The grant was reopened for applicants to bid on remaining balance, it closed on December 31, 2025. Selectees are pending.
- PTSD study- Emory (HB 68, line 94.12). \$1,000,000
  - To increase funds for research on treatment of PTSD and wraparound services for veterans and their families.
  - Contract was signed and monies were distributed to Emory on September 30, 2025.
  - First quarterly report will be due on January 15, 2026.
- VA Suicide Mortality Review Cooperative Agreement - (\$502,124.68)
  - The FFR and FER have been completed and submitted on January 5, 2026.
  - The grant close out meeting with the VA was on January 8, 2026, everything was perfect both financial and programmatic.

**Events/Other:**

- Leadership Institute in person session was conducted in person on November 21, 2025, conducted via Teams, subject: Difficult Distance/Difficult Decisions/Communication. Next session will be conducted via Teams on December 15, 2025, subject: Leadership/Overcoming Obstacles.
- Irene Mackson attended the leadership institute session as a facilitator.
- Irene Mackson attended VSO Coffee Talk on November 1, 2025.
- Irene Mackson and Kaitlin Little have been pursuing additional study on their own to assist with future grants.
- Mark Demers and Kaitlin Little attended the NASACT Webinar: Leading and Ethical Life-Behavior Ethics on November 24, 2025.
- Kaitlin Little, Irene Mackson, Kirsten Dennis, and Mark Demers attended a team professional development session on Difficult Conversations-How to Discuss What Matters Most on December 11, 2025.
- Leadership Institute conducted via Teams on December 15, 2025, subject: Leadership/Overcoming Obstacles. Next session will be conducted via Teams on January 23, 2026, subject: The Legislative Process—Instructor will be Kaitlin Little.
- Irene Mackson attended the leadership institute session as a facilitator.

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- Irene Mackson worked on coordinating meals for in-person Leadership Institute event at the VECTR Center in Warner Robins, GA on February 19-20, 2025.
- Irene Mackson and Kaitlin Little attended VSO Coffee Talk on December 15, 2025, on customer service and treating veterans, and January 5, 2026, on appeals.
- Irene Mackson is scheduled to attend the Grant Management- Managing Subawards workshop at the Fulton County Board of Health on January 30, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the Veterans on the Hill Meeting on December 17, 2025.

Mr. Demers forwarded the Governor’s recommended budget worksheets to Mr. Kopsie (see attached).

**Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health, Contracting & Facilities, GDVS**

**December 2025**

**State Veterans Homes**

**State Veterans Homes Census (December 5, 2025) +**

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
<b>Regular Patients</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Service Connected *</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Total Patients</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>290</b>
Last Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
<b>Regular Patients</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Service Connected *</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Total Patients</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>295</b>

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers as of December 5, 2025.

**Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home**

Normal operations continue.

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Green Veterans provided a Thanksgiving luncheon on Wednesday, November 26, 2025, for veterans and staff. It was greatly appreciated.

**Georgia War Veterans Home**

Normal operations continue.

Green Veterans provided a Thanksgiving luncheon on Wednesday, November 26, 2025, for veterans and staff. It was greatly appreciated.

Seven veterans were moved into the Transitional Support Unit on December 10, 2025, in preparation for the VA Recognition Survey. This survey will take place December 17, 2025, through December 20, 2025. This is a pass/fail survey and any deficiencies noted can result in non-recognition of the unit. The VA does not pay per diem for the veterans in the unit until it is recognized. The State will have to pay both the State portion and the Federal portion of the per diem during this time.

Dennis Mize retired as the Executive Director of the facility effective November 30, 2025. Ms. Jessica Searcy became the new Executive Director effective December 1, 2025.

Ms. Janice Thomas, Assistant Executive Director of the facility, retired effective December 9, 2025. A replacement has not been identified yet.

**State Veterans Cemeteries**

**Burial Statistics (through December 5, 2025)+**

<b>State Veterans Cemetery</b>	<b>Cumulative Last Month</b>	<b>Cumulative Current Month</b>	<b>Increase</b>
<b>Glennville</b>	<b>2,867</b>	<b>2,884</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Milledgeville</b>	<b>6,014</b>	<b>6,046</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,881</b>	<b>8,930</b>	<b>49</b>

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from Nov. 8, 2025, through Dec. 5, 2025.

**Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville**

The cemetery will hold a Wreaths Across America ceremony on Saturday, December 13, 2025, starting at 12:00pm. Wreaths will be placed on the graves following the ceremony. There are enough wreaths to place one on each grave site.

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Cemetery operations continue as normal.

**Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville**

The cemetery will hold a Wreaths Across America ceremony on Saturday, December 13, 2025, starting at 12:00pm. Wreaths will be placed on the graves following the ceremony. There are enough wreaths to place one on each grave site.

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

**Potential New Cemetery in Augusta**

Efforts by Georgia State Senator Ossoff resulted in 150 million dollars being added to the federal budget for construction/expansion of State veteran’s cemeteries for Federal Fiscal Year 2027. This increase allowed NCA to offer our State a grant opportunity for a new cemetery in Augusta. Action to meet the terms necessary to accept this grant are underway.

**January 2026**

**State Veterans Homes**

**State Veterans Homes Census (December 31, 2025) +**

<b>Current Month</b>	<b>Augusta</b>	<b>Milledgeville</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Regular Patients</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Service Connected *</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Total Patients</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>Last Month</b>	<b>Augusta</b>	<b>Milledgeville</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Regular Patients</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Service Connected *</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Total Patients</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>300</b>

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers as of December 31, 2025.

**Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home**

Normal operations continue.

During calendar year 2025 there were 46 admissions and 43 losses due to deaths or discharges.

**Georgia War Veterans Home**

Normal operations continue.

Green Veterans provided a Thanksgiving luncheon on Wednesday, November 26, 2025, for veterans and staff. It was greatly appreciated.

The VA Recognition Survey took place as scheduled December 17-19. We have not received a response as to the status of the survey. We currently have six veterans residing in the facility.

The Request for Proposal for the Nursing Home Operations contract was posted on December 23, 2025. An Offerors Conference was held on January 7 with an on-site visit on January 9. Potential Bid Closing Date is February 9.

During calendar year 2025 there were 70 admissions and 49 losses due to deaths or discharges.

**Mr. Ernie Cowart, Executive Director Veterans Cemeteries, GDVS**

**State Veterans Cemeteries**

**Burial Statistics (through December 31, 2025)**

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,877	2,902	25
Milledgeville	6,034	6,071	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,911</b>	<b>8,973</b>	<b>62</b>

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers as of December 31, 2025.

**Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville**

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

**Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville**

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

**Potential New Cemetery in Augusta**

Nothing new to report.

**Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer**

On Tuesday, November 18, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with ShellyAnn Simpson, Mark Meeks and Barbara Burns, DOAS Procurement Managers, met virtually to review the question-and-answer sheet for the Claims Management System RFP. He also reposted the Cemetery Tech 1 vacancy externally. Later that day he contacted Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager to get the status on the quote for the ceiling, HVAC and light replacement for the 9<sup>th</sup> floor suite.

On Wednesday, November 19, 2025, Kerry Dyer contacted John Booker, GBA Support Specialist Parking & Access Services to discuss the replacement of a Panic Button. He also spoke with Petra Anderson, GBA Business Operations Manager, regarding access to Ghost Guard Security System. Later that day he processed 1 resignation packet.

On Thursday, November 20, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with ShellyAnn Simpson, Mark Meeks and Barbara Burns, DOAS Procurement Managers, met virtually to discuss the Claims Management System RFP. He also met with Russell Feagin, Tonya Jarrett, Mark Meeks and Barbara Burns to discuss the War Home RFP. Later that day he met with Kelly Farr, Reframe Solutions Project Manager, to discuss an automated appointment system for the field offices.

On Friday, November 21, 2025, Kerry Dyer traveled to Hyatt Regency Hotel in Savannah to meet with John Soccos, Executive Director NASDVA to conduct a site visit in preparation for the FY26 NASDVA conference.

On Monday, November 24, 2025, Kerry Dyer spoke with Leslie Davis, State Property Leasing Specialist, regarding the lease agreement for the Rome field office and the amended lease for the Chat Tech field office. He also spoke with Tashika Wells, DOAS Surplus Division Director, regarding the pick date/time for the Department Surplus items. Later that day he distributed the monthly Alpha Roster to the Senior Leaders.

On Monday, December 1, 2025, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors Meeting. He also along with Mark Demers and Commissioner Ross met with Kanti Chalasani, Georgia Data Analytical Center to

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discuss the data sharing agreements with DOL and DDS. Later that day he contacted Clark Wong, State Property Land Manager, to discuss the ownership of the land for the future Cemetery in Augusta.

On Tuesday, December 2, 2025, Kerry Dyer processed 1 internal transfer packet. He also submitted the Surplus turn-in packet to DOAS Surplus Division, for the two vehicles at the War Home. Later that day he contacted Verizon to discuss a Hotspot replacement for the Fort Stewart field office.

On Wednesday, December 3, 2025, Kerry Dyer submitted the monthly Fleet Manager Report to DOAS, Fleet Manager Division. He also spoke with Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager, regarding the posting of the War Home RFP. Later that day along with Jerry Lehar he assisted Gwen Middleton, DOAS, Commissioner Sullivan Executive Assistance with folding two GA flags.

On Thursday, December 4, 2025, Kerry Dyer submitted a Space Action Form to State Property for the Cedartown and Moultrie Field Office. He also contacted Precious Davis-Owens, DHS, Facility Manager, to discuss the W-9 Form for the Bainbridge Field Office. Later that day spoke with Andrea Rapowitz, Cobb County Senior Services Manager, regarding the Annual Holiday Celebration & Luncheon.

On Friday December 5, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with employees from the Department attended Commissioner Ross Open Forum. He also submitted a Facility Inspection Form to Leslie Davis, State Property Leasing Specialist for the Cedartown and Moultrie Field Offices. Later that day he spoke with Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager, regarding the War Home RFP.

On Monday, December 8, 2025, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors meeting. He also emailed Linda Lavendar 3 resumes for the Cemetery Tech 1 vacancy. Later that day he contacted Leslie Davis, State Property Leasing Specialist regarding office space at the Chatt Tech College in Canton GA.

On Tuesday, December 9, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with Russell Feagin, Mark Meeks, Tonya Jarrett, Kirsten Dennis and Commissioner Ross attended the War Home RFP meeting. He also attended the electronic scheduling meeting along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Demers and Kelly Farr, Reframe Solutions Project Manager. Later that day he met virtually with Barbara Burns, DOAS Procurement Manager, to discuss the Claims Management System RFP.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, Kerry Dyer processed 1 internal transfer packet. He also visited the Governor's Office Student Achievement to coordinate office space in preparation for the ceiling, lights and HVAC replacement on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor suite. Later that day he contacted Mukkavilli Seetharam, DOAS Contact Center Analyst to discuss the inability to download the bidder attachments.

On Thursday, December 11, 2025, Kerry Dyer attended the bi-monthly Returning Veterans Task Force Meeting along with Commissioner Ross and ShellyAnn Simpson. He also processed 1 promotion packet. Later that day he contacted Chloe Belanger, Hyatt Regency, Event Planner to discuss the registration and Ballroom diagram for the FY26 NASDVA conference.

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On Monday, January 5, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors Meeting. He also attended the VSO Coffee Talk session. Later that day he contacted Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager, to discuss the timeline for the ceiling, HVAC and lighting replacement for the 9<sup>th</sup> floor suite.

On Tuesday, January 6, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the New Fleet Management System Vendor webinar. He also contacted American Tech, Panoramic Software, and Ventura 89 to request an updated E-Verify form for the Claims Management System (CMS) RFP. Later that day he contacted Turbo Vet to request an updated Trade Secret Affidavit for the CMS RFP.

On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, Kerry Dyer processed 1 Resignation Packet. He also attended the War Home RFP Offerors Conference along with Russell Feagin, Jenelle Coleman and Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager. Later day along with Commissioner Ross, Russell Feagin and Jenelle Coleman attended the Augusta Cemetery kick off meeting along with representatives from the National Cemetery Association.

On Thursday, January 8, 2026, Kerry Dyer spoke with Leslie Davis, State Property Leasing Specialist, regarding the Augusta Field Office lease. He was also contacted by Mark Heerens, Carahsoft Account Representative, to discuss the quote for the automated scheduling system for the field offices. Later that day he distributed the Department Alpha Roster to the Senior Leadership.

On Friday, January 9, 2026, Kerry Dyer posted the Waycross Field Office vacancy internally and externally. He also emailed Linda Lavendar 3 Cemetery Tech 1 resumes. Later that day he spoke with Barbara Burns, DOAS Procurement Manager, regarding the Claims Management System Evaluation Kick Off meeting.

On Monday, January 12, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors meeting. He also processed 1 internal transfer packet. Later that day posted the Zebulon Field Office vacancy internally and externally.

On Tuesday, January 13, 2026, Kerry Dyer attend the CMS Evaluation Kick Off meeting along with Barbara Burns, Ken Childre, Sherri Whitfield, Charles Isaac, Dennis Booth and Rico Johnson. He also processed 4 Employee of the Year Packets and 4 Employee of the Quarter Packets. Later that day he contacted Barbara Burns, DOAS Procurement Manager, to discuss the Claims Management System Administrative Review Worksheet.

On Wednesday, January 14, 2026, Kerry Dyer contacted Precious Davis-Owens, DHS Leasing Specialist, to discuss the W9 and Vendor Management Form. He also contacted Ozy Arnato to discuss her Non-Collusion and Supplier Questionnaire form that was missing from her offer packet. Later that day he spoke with John Sococos, NASDVA, regarding the upcoming convention in Savannah.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from December 18, 2025 – January 14, 2026.

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Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Appeals Division	VACO 1	New Hire	Justin Stennett	01/05/26
Newnan	VFSO 1	New Hire	Ron Barfield	01/05/26

Mr. Dyer reported that the RFP for the Claims Management System has 6 bidders. We have a committee reviewing and evaluating those submissions. We are also getting ready to launch the Automated Scheduling System for the Department. Veterans will be able to schedule appointments online with this software.

**Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)**

- The approval, risk-based surveys, and supervisory visits of educational institutions, training establishments and training programs approved for veterans training is continuing with no significant problems in any area being noted.
- Approval of new veteran's On-The-Job training sites (OJT) continues to increase. As of this date the State Approving Agency (SAA) has granted approval to 2,240 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	521
Approved Training Establishments	1,719
Ch. 35 VA Education Beneficiaries for FY26 Q1	14,586
VA Education Beneficiaries for December 2025 CH 33 ONLY*	10,547
VA Education Beneficiaries for November 2025 CH 33 ONLY*	11,177
VA Education Beneficiaries for October 2025 *CH 33 ONLY*	11,376
VA Education Beneficiaries for September 2025 *CH 33 ONLY*	11,052
VA Education Beneficiaries for August 2025 *CH 33 ONLY*	10,110
VA Education Beneficiaries for July 2025	10,798
VA Education Beneficiaries for June 2025	11,419
VA Education Beneficiaries for May 2025	21,878

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VA Education Beneficiaries for April 2025	20,972
VA Education Beneficiaries for March 2025	21,867
VA Education Beneficiaries for February 2025	20,289
VA Education Beneficiaries for January 2025	17,775

\* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, WEAMS, Salesforce, Oracle BI CH33 Enrollment

**Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications**

**INFORMATION OUTREACH**

**Division Updates December**

1. GDVS Newsletter – The department’s monthly e-newsletter features top stories from the month at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>. The November edition celebrated Veterans Day across the state and included pictures from celebrations GDVS staff attended. This month’s newsletter also commemorated the 250<sup>th</sup> USMC birthday celebration at the Georgia State Capitol. Veterans and families were able to learn more about the great works of GDVS VSOs in this month’s newsletter articles through a spotlight on David Flanagan, who manages the recently relocated Augusta DHS office, and an article covering a house rehabilitation project for an Army veteran. GDVS staff worked with key partners like the Home Depot Foundation, WorkSource Georgia, and V2 Fostering change to help secure the veteran’s home.
2. Georgia Military Consumer Protection Guide – the department provided information to update the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division’s Military Consumer Protection Guide for active-duty service members, veterans, and their families who may be taken advantage of by shady business practices or online scams. The updated guide is available at <https://consumer.georgia.gov/military-consumer-protection-guide> and print copies may be obtained from the Consumer Protection Division at 404-656-3790.
3. Attended a meeting of the GTA Accessibility Working Group on December 3, 2025. The meeting covered the introduction of Roundtable, a new communications tool for state website administrators and contributors. Roundtable allows collaboration between state employees to best meet federal website accessibility standards beginning in April 2026.
4. Attended a meeting with representatives from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (JVSG) on December 4, 2025. GDVS and JVSG will collaborate on a checklist to better help staff understand who qualifies for assistance from both programs when seeking assistance. EAC will

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create a veterans benefits qualification checklist as a starting point for future work with assistance from Executive Director Simpson and Ms. Holstick.

5. Attended a Returning Veterans Task Force Meeting on December 11, 2025. The meeting introduced the HereNOW Help mental and behavioral health mobile application to the RVTF and featured a recap of TCSG's listening sessions during Fall 2025.
6. Wreaths Across America – assisted cemetery directors in Milledgeville and Glennville with production of programs for their annual ceremonies on December 13, 2025. EAC also promoted the events online and through social media.
7. Georgia Veterans Service Foundation – EAC refined and finalized a trifold brochure on homeless veterans in Georgia for the Foundation. The brochure includes information on the Foundation's mission, homelessness and state resources, and how to donate to the Foundation. The project has been submitted for a print quote and vote by the Foundation.
8. Benefits outreach – External Affairs and Communications continues to work with GDVS staff and partners to educate Georgia's veterans and families on the availability of benefits and resources.
  - a. Loneliness and suicide prevention – during the holiday season, EAC shares additional mental and behavioral health resources for veterans and family members who may struggle through difficult situations. Resources are shared at least weekly.
  - b. OpenAI for Veterans – shared information on a unique opportunity to receive ChatGPT Plus services free for one year for recently separated or retired military servicemembers and veterans. Services include training and assistance in finding employment.

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**WREATHS**  
**ACROSS AMERICA**

Georgia Veterans  
Memorial Cemetery

★ ★ **DECEMBER 13, 2025**



**WREATHS**  
*— across —*  
**AMERICA**

★ **KEEP MOVING FORWARD** ★

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Remembrance  
Wreath Ceremony  
Georgia Veterans Memorial  
Cemetery - Glennville  
December 13, 2025

**Division Updates January**

1. GDVS Newsletter – The department’s monthly e-newsletter features top stories from the month at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>. The December edition of the newsletter featured a headline story about the impact of Wreaths Across America at our Veteran Memorial Cemeteries in Glennville and Milledgeville. The newsletter also featured information about how to appeal or challenge a VA rating decision, GDVS Blairsville staff helping families in need celebrate the holidays, an update on homeless veterans per VA’s 2025 data updates, and a highlight of Lakesha Green, who manages the recently reopened Bainbridge office.
2. Attended a GOVChats webinar on December 16, 2025. The webinar covered the impact of generative AI on search results and how to best prepare websites for SEO by AI powered search indexes.

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3. Attended a meeting with Unite Us and Here Now Help to discuss collaboration strategies. GDVS assisted in introducing the two platforms to determine how to make it easier for veterans to access resources within the Here Now Help application and see the Unite Us network.
4. Attended the Georgia Veteran Service Foundation meeting on January 8, 2026. EAC provided an update to the Foundation on the status of a new tri-fold brochure focused on veteran homelessness.
5. Attended the Unite Us and GDVS quarterly strategic check-in on January 13, 2026. The meeting discussed platform utilization and future planning for best usage.
6. Attended a meeting of the GTA Accessibility Working Group on January 14, 2026. The meeting covered how to navigate digital compliance guidelines as part of a standard workflow.
7. Benefits outreach – External Affairs and Communications continues to work with GDVS staff and partners to educate Georgia’s veterans and families on the availability of benefits and resources.
  - a. Loneliness and suicide prevention – during the holiday season, EAC shares additional mental and behavioral health resources for veterans and family members who may struggle through difficult situations.
  - b. Resource fairs and claims clinics – share information on events for veterans seeking help with housing, employment, and community resources from the Augusta VAMC and WorkSource Georgia.
  - c. Shared a situational update on the Savannah VA Clinic after a water line break interrupted clinic operations.

Ms. May announced that we have been receiving messages and emails about a mailer card fraud targeting Georgia veterans. They offer special rates for things like car insurance, which are not real. We are releasing information to inform veterans of this scam.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business to discuss.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mr. Kopsie announced that Ms. Takosha Swan submitted her resignation as a member of the Veterans Service Board to Gov. Kemp. She will be pursuing political office. He thanked her for six years of service to the Board.

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Ms. Greentree announced that Syracuse University is hosting an event for women veteran entrepreneurs here in Atlanta, Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-Wise) on April 17-19. She has some extra tickets for anyone interested in attending.

Commissioner Ross announced that another Legislative Breakfast is being worked on and will take place at the end of Legislative Session.

Mr. Dyer announced that the Employee of the Year for GDVS is Ms. Joycelyn Jones from the Moultrie Office.

Mr. Dyer announced that W2s will be available the last week of January.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Mr. Kopsie asked Mr. Feagin and Mr. Deese if the Homes have had a problem with the flu. Mr. Feagin answered that the Milledgeville Home has not had an issue with the flu. Mr. Deese answered that they had an uptick in flu cases about a month ago. They have put some internal controls in place to handle the uptick.

A file was shown onscreen of the land project area for the Augusta Cemetery. This is a project that has been in the works for the last 25 years and we finally have federal funding for the project. DBHDD has identified the land, and their Board will be meeting on Feb. 26 to vote on giving the land to GDVS. The land is just over 50 acres. There is a small sliver on the map we are trying to acquire, which is privately owned. The total capacity for burials is about 50,000. There is also property on the map that belongs to the Forestry Commission, which we may be able to acquire in the future.

DBHDD had used a portion of the property as a dumping site after Hurricane Helene. It will take about \$200,000 to remove the debris and we are requesting those funds in the amended budget. Some expenses, like the bell tower, are not reimbursable through the VA, so we will be trying to raise additional funds through our partnerships in Augusta and through the Foundation Board. The Veterans Service Board will plan to meet the day after DBHDD votes on the property so that they can vote to receive the property.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for February 27 at 11:30am. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:10 p.m.

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SIGNED:



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Joshua Kopsie, Chair

ATTEST:



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Steve Mendez, Secretary

**Section 48: Veterans Service, Department of**

		Gov's Rec		Total Funds	
		State Funds			
FY2026 Budget		HB 68	\$33,144,535	\$60,820,272	
<b>48.1 Departmental Administration (DVS)</b>		HB 68	\$4,241,773	\$4,241,773	
48.1.1	[S]Reflect an adjustment in telecommunications and infrastructure rates for the Georgia Technology Authority.		(\$11,534)	(\$11,534)	
48.1.2	[S]Reflect an adjustment to agency premiums for Department of Administrative Services administered insurance programs.		\$2,669	\$2,669	
48.1.3	[S]Reduce funds to reflect a reduction in the employer contribution rate for the State Health Benefit Plan from 29.454% to 20.264%.		(\$101,676)	(\$101,676)	
48.1.4	[S]Reflect an adjustment for GA@Work billings to meet projected expenditures.		\$599	\$599	
		<i>Program Net</i>	(\$109,942)	(\$109,942)	
		HB 974	\$4,131,831	\$4,131,831	
<b>48.2 Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery</b>		HB 68	\$1,051,037	\$1,378,933	
48.2.1	[S]Reflect an adjustment to agency premiums for Department of Administrative Services administered insurance programs.		\$1,505	\$1,505	
48.2.2	[S]Reduce funds to reflect a reduction in the employer contribution rate for the State Health Benefit Plan from 29.454% to 20.264%.		(\$57,320)	(\$57,320)	
48.2.3	[S]Reflect an adjustment for GA@Work billings to meet projected expenditures.		\$460	\$460	
		<i>Program Net</i>	(\$55,355)	(\$55,355)	
		HB 974	\$995,682	\$1,323,578	
<b>48.3 Georgia War Veterans Nursing Homes</b>		HB 68	\$18,114,399	\$44,708,314	
48.3.1	[S]Increase funds for the Teachers Retirement System to reflect an increase in the actuarially determined employer contribution from 21.91% to 22.32%.		\$25,780	\$25,780	
48.3.2	[S]Reflect an adjustment in telecommunications and infrastructure rates for the Georgia Technology Authority.		(\$5,894)	(\$5,894)	
48.3.3	[S]Reflect an adjustment to agency Premiums for Department of Administrative Services administered insurance programs.		\$226	\$226	
48.3.4	[S]Reduce funds to reflect a reduction in the employer contribution rate for the State Health Benefit Plan from 29.454% to 20.264%.		(\$8,595)	(\$8,595)	
48.3.5	[S]Reflect an adjustment for GA@Work billings to meet projected expenditures.		\$486	\$486	
48.3.6	[P]Increase funds to match increased federal funds to maintain existing bed count.		\$455,159	\$455,159	
		<i>Program Net</i>	\$467,162	\$467,162	
		HB 974	\$18,581,561	\$45,175,476	
<b>48.4 Veterans Benefits</b>		HB 68	\$9,737,326	\$10,491,252	
48.4.1	[S]Reflect an adjustment in telecommunications and infrastructure rates for the Georgia Technology Authority.		(\$4,045)	(\$4,045)	
48.4.2	[S]Reflect an adjustment to agency premiums for Department of Administrative Services administered insurance programs.		\$11,688	\$11,688	
48.4.3	[S]Reduce funds to reflect a reduction in the employer contribution rate for the State Health Benefit Plan from 29.454% to 20.264%.		(\$445,178)	(\$445,178)	
48.4.4	[S]Reflect an adjustment for GA@Work billings to meet projected expenditures.		\$3,692	\$3,692	
48.4.5	[P]Increase funds for Field Operations and Appeals positions to meet the Department of Administrative Services' minimum salary guidelines.		\$258,776	\$258,776	
48.4.6	Increase funds for one position for the new Savannah Tech VECTR Center.		\$60,986	\$60,986	
		<i>Program Net</i>	(\$114,081)	(\$114,081)	
		HB 974	\$9,623,245	\$10,377,171	
		<i>Agency Net</i>	\$187,784	\$187,784	

**Section 48: Veterans Service, Department of**

		Gov's Rec	
		State Funds	Total Funds
<b>Section 48: Veterans Service, Department of</b>			
FY2026 Budget			
<b>48.1</b>	<b>Departmental Administration (DVS)</b>		
48.1.1	[S]Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to full-time, regular state employees.	HB 68 \$33,144,535	\$60,820,272
		HB 68 \$4,241,773	\$4,241,773
		Program Net \$34,448	\$34,448
		HB 973 \$4,276,221	\$4,276,221
<b>48.2</b>	<b>Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery</b>		
48.2.1	[S]Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to full-time, regular state employees.	HB 68 \$1,051,037	\$1,378,933
48.2.2	Transfer funds from the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Homes program due to the delayed implementation of 40 new beds to the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery program for the upfront design costs of a new cemetery in Augusta with complete federal reimbursement for design and construction.	HB 68 \$30,142	\$30,142
		Program Net \$800,000	\$800,000
		HB 973 \$1,881,179	\$2,209,075
		Program Net \$830,142	\$830,142
<b>48.3</b>	<b>Georgia War Veterans Nursing Homes</b>		
48.3.1	[S]Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to full-time, regular state employees.	HB 68 \$18,114,399	\$44,708,314
48.3.2	Redirect funds from the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Homes program due to the delayed implementation of 40 new beds to the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery program for the upfront design costs of a new cemetery in Augusta with complete federal reimbursement for design and construction.	Program Net (\$800,000)	\$421,988
		HB 973 \$17,736,387	(\$800,000)
		Program Net (\$378,012)	(\$378,012)
		Agency Net \$44,330,302	\$44,330,302
<b>48.4</b>	<b>Veterans Benefits</b>		
48.4.1	[S]Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to full-time, regular state employees.	HB 68 \$9,737,326	\$10,491,252
48.4.2	Provide funds for technology platform for community service referral.	Program Net \$1,729,196	\$280,513
		HB 973 \$1,989,709	\$1,729,196
		Program Net \$11,727,035	\$1,989,709
		Agency Net \$2,476,287	\$12,480,961
		HB 973 \$35,620,822	\$2,476,287
		Agency Net \$63,296,559	\$63,296,559

Key to special symbols appearing in front of Budget Change Items.  
 [S] = The Item is a Statewide Common Budget Change that will occur in multiple agencies and generally reflects a change in funding level for services common to all agencies.

Track Sheet

Section 48: Veterans Service, Department of		Gov's Rec	Total Funds
FY2027 Budget	HB 974	State Funds \$33,332,319	\$61,008,056

Key to special symbols appearing in front of Budget Change Items.

[S] = The item is a Statewide Common Budget Change that will occur in multiple agencies and generally reflects a change in funding level for services common to all agencies.

[P] = The item is a Program-specific Common Budget Change that occurs in multiple sub-programs of the affected parent program.

- AUGUSTA COMMITMENTS:**
- DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS
  - REDEVELOP BYRD ROAD

