

Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Chair
Mr. Tim Paslawski, Vice Chair
Mr. Steve Mendez, Secretary
Mr. Shawn Hanley, Member
Mr. John Kubinec, Member
Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
Ms. Takosha Swan, 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 & Memorials Division, GDVS
Ms. Tonjala Moton-Williams, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer
Ms. Shelley Seinberg, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Ms. Carolyn Cagle, Georgia American Gold Star Mothers
Mr. Drew Craig, Chief Design Officer, VA Veteran Experience Office
Mr. Anand Rao, President, Student Veterans of America for Georgia Southern Univ.
Ms. Vivian Greentree, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Mr. Don Layne, VECTR Chief Operating Officer
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. Ramona Roper, 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
Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator, GDVS
Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homeless Coordinator, GDVS
Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS
Ms. Irene Mackson, Business Support Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 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. Ms. Swan gave the invocation. Mr. Kopsie led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the February 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, VFW

- The Department Service Officer attended the GA Veteran of Foreign Wars Department Mid-Winter Conference and Banquet on February 14 - 16, 2025, held at the Macon Marriott City Center, 240 Coliseum Dr., Macon, GA 31217.
 - Council of Administration Meeting
 - Marketplace
 - Training Classes
 - Leadership
 - Adjutant
 - Quartermaster
 - Trustee
 - Chaplin
 - Recruiting
 - Post Service Officer Training
 - Awards Banquet
 - Voice of Democracy
 - Patriot Pen
 - Teacher
 - Elementary
 - Middle
 - High
- The Department Service Officer attended the Atlanta VAMC VSO meeting hosted by Atlanta VA Health Care Lovetta Ford, Executive Deputy Director. The virtual meeting was held on February 14, 2025, at 3PM. Briefed on 1,000 VA Employees being terminated.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Georgia Department of Veteran Service (GDVS) Leadership Institute virtual training session held on February 21, 2025, at 8AM.
 - Discussed – The Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni
 - Absence of Trust
 - Fear of Conflict

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- Lack of Commitment
- Avoidance of Accountability
- In attention to Results
- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual Quarterly VSO/Directors meeting hosted by Tony Milons, Director and Brian Morgan, Change Management Analyst, (CMA) held on February 25, 2024, at 10AM – 11AM. The following issues were briefed:
 - Director's Updates:
 - The Director is taking advantage of the Deferred Resignation Program. His last day in the office will be Friday, 2/28.
 - Schedule for employees to return to the office 5 days a week is as follows:
Supervisors: 2.24
Non-Supervisor/Non: 4.28
BUEs: 5/5
 - Parking is limited – there is not enough.
 - PACT Act Most Common Granted Disabilities
 - Allergic Rhinitis
 - Hypertensive Vascular Disease
 - Maxillary Sinusitis
 - Bronchial Asthma
 - Malignant Growths of Genitourinary
- The Department Service Officer attended a monthly VSO VSC Vet Talk hosted by Brian Starke, AVSCM held on February 27, 2025, at 10AM – 11AM, at 1700 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA 30033.
 - 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 topic: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Claims Processing (ALS) Presenter: Peter Robertson, Atlanta RO RQRS.

Ms. Tonjala Moton-Williams, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

March 21 - March 23, 2025, Department of Georgia-Spring Conference Sonesta Place, 1775 Pleasant Hill Rd, Duluth, GA, United States.

Upcoming events:

- April 4, 2025, at 1:00 pm, Commander and his delegation will visit Lake City VA Medical Center 619 South Marion Avenue Lake City, Florida 32025

Ms. Carolyn Cagle, Georgia American Gold Star Mothers

We are in the process of preparing for the Gold Star Family Sleepover and Gold Star Family Day at the Georgia Aquarium. We partner with the Home Depot Foundation and have served over 750 Gold Star families. Everything is free for these families. If you know of any Gold Star families, please let them know they can find more information and register at georgiaagsm.org.

Commissioner Patricia Ross

On Thursday, February 20, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with her Finance and Health & Memorials teams to discuss funding for the homes. She then attended the Veterans Service Board meeting. Later she had a discussion on Atlanta Medical Center South and met with Dr. Allen from Central Georgia Technical College about programming in Milledgeville.

On Friday, February 21, 2025, Commissioner Ross led an in-person session of the Leadership Institute. She also met with Cajun Comeau and Kim Scofi to discuss the upcoming We Care Veterans Fairs.

On Monday, February 24, 2025, Commissioner Ross had accelerated training discussion with Jeff Scruggs from Central Georgia Technical College. She then attended the Open House for the Perry CBOC in Perry, GA and later met with Unite Us for the bi-weekly update.

On Tuesday, February 25, 2025, Commissioner Ross toured two possible sites for a future veteran's home in South Georgia meeting with key individuals from the community.

On Wednesday, February 26, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the Agency Heads meeting at the Governor's Mansion, hosted by Gov. Kemp. She later met with Shelly-Ann Simpson and Mark Eister to discuss the upcoming VA Day in Newnan in April. That evening she attended the Emperor's birthday celebration at the Japanese Consulate in Atlanta.

On Thursday, February 27, 2025, Commissioner Ross was a panelist for the Institute for Veterans and Military Families/Bunker Labs national ambassadors conference and discussed innovative solutions and best practices for addressing challenges faced by military-connected entrepreneurs. That evening she attended the Red Carpet Movie Premiere of No Address, a film about homelessness which features the portrayal of two veterans. This event was sponsored by United Military Care and she also helped present the organization's annual awards.

On Friday, February 28, 2025, Commissioner Ross visited Milledgeville to meet with the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association as they toured the War Veterans Home. She also spoke to the Senate Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security about a bill allowing military undergoing a permanent change of station move to Georgia to register their children in K-12 prior to their arrival or obtainment of a physical residence.

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On Sunday, March 2 through Wednesday, March 5, Commissioner Ross attended the NASDVA conference in Washington, D.C. Also in attendance were Shelly-Ann Simpson and Kerry Dyer. While there she was elected the Vice President for the Southeast District. From best practices from states, territories and districts to hearing from Secretary Collins and new VA leadership, the conference was a great training and learning opportunity for the team.

On Thursday, March 6, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the monthly meeting of the Veterans Service Foundation Board. She also attended the meeting of the VA Readjustment Committee and helped draft the annual report. Later that day she was in East Point to tour the Atlanta Medical Center South building, as a possible site for a veteran's home or hospital. Unfortunately, the facility is not wholly compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and would need significant renovation.

On Friday, March 7, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with Lindsey Kirchhoff of the Veterans Justice Commission to discuss ways to assist veterans.

On Monday, March 10, 2025, Commissioner Ross, Raven Holstick and Jarelle Thompson met with Veterans Service Board member Andy Hilmes to discuss the Workforce Development Summit in Columbus on April 17th. She also led a Director's Meeting. She later attended the Unite Us bi-weekly meeting. She also spoke to the Gainesville Mayor about veteran initiatives.

On Tuesday, March 11, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the weekly meeting of the Suicide Mortality Review Committee. She then had a call with Mike Couch from Milledgeville. She attended a meeting with Chris Wells of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency about additional synergies and partnerships between the agencies. She then attended the SSG Fox SPGP Grant Operations Monthly Call and attended the USDVA SHCGP Grant Process Overview Meeting.

On Wednesday, March 12, 2025, through Monday, March 17, 2025, Commissioner Ross was on leave. During this time, she applied for Congressionally Directed Spending grants for a new homeless initiative.

On Monday, March 17, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with the AG's office about the Foundation.

On Tuesday, March 18, 2025, Commissioner Ross testified at the Senate Appropriations Committee and attended the in-person training for the Suicide Mortality Review Committee by SAMHSA. She later attended the unveiling ceremony of the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame at the Capitol with Gov. Kemp.

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

GENERAL

- On March 2-5, Ms. Simpson attended the NASVDA winter meeting in Arlington, VA with the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner. We received briefings and updates from VA and DOD personnel.
- On March 13, Ms. Simpson attended the 2025 Bob Woodruff Foundation Summit in Charlotte, NC. It was a day of networking and problem solving with over 300 public, private, and nonprofit sector representatives all focused on how we can most effectively support veterans and military families throughout the I-85 Corridor.
- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters: 814** Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in February 2025.

Projected Positions:

- 2 Openings in Appeals
- 1 Opening in Jasper

Ms. Ramona Roper, Director of Training Division:

- February 24, 2025, Ms. Ramona Roper visited veterans at the Oaks Nursing Home and Skilled Rehabilitation Center of Athens. This visit was to provide benefits information to the veterans at the facility. Two veterans filed Intent to File applications to preserve their effective dates for a claim to be filed later.
- March 5, 2025, Ms. Ramona Roper and Mr. Steven Fay participated in an OGC VSO Training Audit with Attorney Advisor, Shakeba Morrad, with the Office of General Counsel via MS Teams. Every few years, OGC performs an audit of the training information and materials provided to the employees to maintain accreditation as VSOs. We provided Ms. Morrad with a virtual tour of the Absorb Training Portal to include showing her VSO transcripts, quizzes, annual training classes and final exams, and explained the Departmental Required Online Proficiency (DROP) classes. Upon completion of the meeting, Ms. Roper emailed Ms. Morrad, the VSO Training Guide and GDVS Resource Guide, which are training tools used in new hire training.
- March 10-12, 2025, Mr. Steven Fay and Glenn Massey conducted new hire training at the VA Regional Office for the new employee at the Joseph Maxwell Cleland VA Medical Center Veteran Service Office. This training introduces new VSOs to the accredited training processes and procedures to assist veterans and claimants. The Absorb Learning Portal is also introduced. The portal has classes and quizzes to help navigate the vast subjects of filing VA claims.

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- March 17-19, 2025, Mr. Steven Fay and Glenn Massey conducted new hire training at the VA Regional Office for the new employee at the Marietta Veterans Service Office at 1150 Powder Springs Road. This training introduces new VSOs to the accredited training processes and procedures to assist veterans and claimants. The Absorb Learning Portal is also introduced. The portal has classes and quizzes to help navigate the vast subjects of filing VA claims.

Upcoming Events:

- Continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- Provide support to Outreach Events
- Provide new hire training in North and South Georgia
- Annual Training Conference prep

Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **February 2025** was **70**.
- As of **February 28, 2025**, the Isakson VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of February 2025:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid
Compensation	109,944	\$260,391,852
DIC	4,436	\$7,800,568
Survivor Pension	646	\$633,452
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	<u>1,272</u>	<u>\$1,496,651</u>
Grand Total	116,298	\$270,322,522

YTD through 02/28/2025 Total Compensation, Pension and other benefits paid: \$539,187,350 for the veterans that we represent who receive VA benefits.

Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region

Retro Awards: \$2,209,544.99
Of Note: \$111,838.71 Retro Pay to Veteran

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Director Site Visits/Inspections: 0

Community Involvement:

- 2/4/2025-Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-Supported the UNG-Dahlonega students by answering VA-related questions.
- 2/6/2025-Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-Supported Vet-to-Vet Cafe in Braselton at The Phoenix at Braselton
- 02/18/2025-02/19/2025 - Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-Participated in the 2025 GA Suicide Prevention Conference in Peachtree City, GA
- 2/22/2025-John Giddens (Demorest) Attended outreach event in Blue Ridge Ga with about 25 Veterans in attendance. Briefed the services provided by GDVS and what state and federal benefits Veterans might be eligible for.
- 02/26/2025—Tanya Rogers (Gainesville)-Participated in a local Homelessness support event with Good News at Noon Clinic
- She also obtained 10 backpacks from United Military Care for homeless veterans to provide to the homeless veterans we encounter here at the Gainesville office.
- 02/27/2025 -Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-Supported the UNG-Gainesville students by meeting with the Veterans Liaison to improve relations
- 5/12/19/26 Feb-Terrance Leggon and Maxine Brock (Conyers)-Did outreach at the Covington Department of Labor

North Area Gains/Losses:

Terance Traylor-Atlanta VAMC-New Hire 2/17/2025

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		February-25					
A	B	C	D / E			G	G / E
			D	E	F	H	
			Total	Work	Average	Total	Average
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Office	Claims	Claims
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	Submitted	Submitted
	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	To	By VFSOS
Office Name						VA	To VA
						Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	50	6,350	20	317.50	2,162	108.10
Number of Offices:		29	Average Visits/Office:		218.97	Average Claims/Office: 74.5517241	

*Total monthly office visits include: 2,114 In-person and 4,236 phone calls/emails.

Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

- From March 3 – 20, the Albany office relocated to the Albany Technical College campus.
- On March 12th, interviews were conducted to hire a VSO for the Albany office. The tentative date of hire will be April 1, 2025.
- On March 13th, interviews were conducted to hire a VSO for the Ft. Benning office. The tentative date of hire will be April 1, 2025.
- On March 17th, Mr. Jamaal Lemon relocated to the new Perry office as Office Manager.
- There will be a Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony at the new Perry Clinic on March 31, 2025, from 1 – 3 p.m.
- Since the last board meeting, South region offices reported total lump sum payments of \$454,144.92, with the highest single payment of \$125,484.57 reported from the Warner Robins office.
- South Region Gains/Losses:
 - Effective March 31, 2025, John Kevin Gibbs in Statesboro retired. Mrs. Tammy Bacon was promoted to Office Manager.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 239,553.

Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- February 17-21, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the 2025 Georgia Suicide Prevention Conference at the Hilton Peachtree City Atlanta Hotel & Conference Center.
- February 17, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the Fox Grant Summit update.
- February 19, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended the Youth Let's Connect planning meeting.
- February 24, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the Fox Grant Summit update.
- February 25, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the initial Operation Ogletree planning meeting. Ms. Brooks attended the Emotional Intelligence in Action virtual training.
- February 26, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended the Youth Let's Connect planning meeting.

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- February 27, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended the NASWVC EXE Meeting. Ms. Brooks participated in a Clayton County collaboration meeting and will join the veteran coalition to partner with their efforts.
- February 28, 2025, Ms. Brooks was invited to Augusta to speak to a small group about GDVS, Women Veterans and what action can they take to support veterans.
- March 3, 2025, Ms. Brooks met with Tunnels 2 Towers. Ms. Brooks participated in the Fox Grant Summit update. Ms. Brooks met with Kathleen O'Loughlin, VHA Women's Program Manager, about updates happening within the Atlanta VHA.
- March 4, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in a Benefits Briefing and Suicide Prevention event at the Dublin VA, Freedoms Path, with Alicia Hall, Dublin VA Woman's Program Manager.
- March 6, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the CVVAMC Outreach Committee meeting.
- Tiffany Patterson announced that the next Virtual Clinic is scheduled for March 20, 4-6pm.
- Staffing shortages at the VetCenter continue to be an issue. Perry CBOC will do eligibility/enrollment Monday – Wednesday.
- Community Collaboration (homeless event) is scheduled for March 31, 11:00am to 3:00 pm at the Tift Parkin Albany.
- Denim Day is on April 30, 2025, to bring attention to the sexual assault issue.
- Official Ribbon cutting for the Perry CBOC is March 31, 2025.
- VFW Female Recognition program is scheduled for April 14, 2025 at 10:00am in the Dublin Auditorium.

Current committees:

- Violence Prevention Task Force
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee

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Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator

- February 10 & 24, 2025, Ms. Ferguson attended the Let's Connect Summit Meeting.
- February 11 & 25, 2025, Ms. Ferguson participated in the weekly SMRC meeting.
- February 12, 2025, Ms. Ferguson participated in the weekly SMRC meeting.
- February 13, 2025, Ms. Ferguson attended a meeting with The Military PTSD Group Counseling Group.
- February 14, 2025, Ms. Ferguson attended the DBHDD, 988 and GDVS Collaborative meeting.
- February 17-20, 2025, Ms. Ferguson and her Suicide Prevention Team attended DBHDD Suicide Prevention Summit.
- February 24, 2025, Ms. Ferguson present S.A.V.E. Training for the Auxiliary of VFW Post 5255 .
- February 26, 2025, Ms. Ferguson met with the Governor's Challenge Priority Group Leads.
- February 28, 2025, Ms. Ferguson accompanied Ms. Brooks to visit a disabled Veteran J Patterson.
- March 3-7, 2025, Ms. Ferguson attended the Fox Grant conference in San Francisco, CA.
- March 10, 2025, Ms. Ferguson Met with AMES Clinical Team to discuss the disposition of Veterans that are being Case Managed.

Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator

- February 18, 2025 - Transition and Employment Coordinator Attendance at Perfect Match Job Fair: Represented the department at the Perfect Match Job Fair, engaging with veterans and employers to promote transition and employment resources. Provided direct assistance, shared department initiatives, and strengthened partnerships to enhance veteran hiring opportunities.
- February 20, 2025 - Participation in Henry County Veteran Support Group Career Fair. Engaged with veterans and employers to provide career guidance, employment resources, and support services. Strengthened community partnerships to enhance veteran hiring and transition opportunities.
- March 1, 2025 - Transition and Employment Coordinator did a presentation at Learn and Learn, Dobbins Delivered a class on veteran transition and employment resources, providing actionable guidance to attendees. Engaged with service members to educate them on career opportunities,

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resume building, and navigating the civilian job market. Strengthened connections to support successful transitions.

- March 11, 2025 - Transition and Employment Coordinator attended Career Readiness with a S.M.I.L.E Certification – Atlanta Hawks: Attended this specialized career development event, gaining insights into workforce readiness strategies. Engaged with industry professionals to enhance veteran employment support initiatives and strengthen community partnerships for career transition success

Upcoming events:

- Meeting with work for Georgia
- Goodwill Job Fair (Smyrna)
- Department of Juvenile Justice Visit
- Virtual Military Mentor/ Coaching Certification

Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homelessness Coordinator

- March 5, 2025- Held a meeting with a sober living program. Make a Change Housing is a program that has 30 beds that can be used for veterans that need transitional housing or a recovery sober program.
- March 10, 2025 - I will attend OAC to complete my monthly engagement with their homeless population and provide resources and hygiene packets.
- March 13, 2025- I will attend the Veterans Roundtable hosted by Goodwill. The purpose is to engage with external stakeholders and partner with other agencies working with homeless.
- March 25, 2025- I will hold a meeting with Georgia State University to discuss how we can partner on events that they will host in the community with the school regarding veterans.
- March 27, 2025- I will be hosting an engagement meeting with North Georgia Veterans helping Veterans to discuss how we can work together to help more homeless individuals in the north Georgia area.

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

Accounting/Procurement/Compliance:

- Routine operations are continuing. We are continuously working to improve all accounts payable processing, to apply proper coding, accountability, organization of purchase orders, and on-time payments.

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- 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 continues to monitor Staples and Moore Business invoices, receipt invoices for payment and tracking purchase orders.
- Kirsten Dennis completed the Staples bi-annual bulk supply order for all the field offices and appeals, she is finalizing receipt of products to ensure every received their complete order.
- The DOAA single financial audit for the homes/federal funds is now complete and the auditor indicated there were no findings. The official report is still pending.
- The P-Card policy was completed and approved by DOAS effective March 1, 2025.
- Irene Mackson attended P-Card Administrator training on March 3, 2025.

GA@Work/NextGen Updates

- Mark Demers presented a GA@Work Briefing on February 26, 2025, to over 90 employees. The make-up session will be in May 2025 and will be presented by Kerry Dyer.
- Mark Demers, Kirsten Dennis, Julie Hammond, and Camala Ball attended GA@Work Systems Integration Cycle 2 kickoff for Finance/Procurement on March 5, 2025.
- Mark Demers, Kirsten Dennis and Camala Ball attended GA@Work Systems Integration Cycle 2 qTest Training Session for Finance/Procurement on March 6, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended NextGen cXML (Commerce eXtensible Markup Language) CFO meeting on March 13, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended NextGen NCN Halftime Report on March 14, 2025.
- Upcoming: Mark Demers- P-Card Financial/Procurement SIT Testing on March 19-20, 2025 from 0800-1600 both days. Grants and Core Finance TBD.
- Upcoming: Kirsten Dennis- Purchase Orders and Requisitions SIT Testing on March 12-13, 2025 from 0800-1600 both days; Strategic Sourcing/Bidder Registration on April 1, 2025; Supplier contracts on April 3, 2025.
- Upcoming: Camala Ball- Accounts Payable SIT Testing March 21/25/28, 2025; Core Finance SIT Testing March 27, 2025; Budget SIT Testing April 2-3, 20-25. Employee Reimbursement- TBD.

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- Upcoming: Julie Hammond- Supplier Management SIT Testing March 17/19, 2025, P-Card March 20, 2025, Accounts Payable- March 21/25/28, 2025.
- Upcoming: Robert Orange SAO- Grants, Projects, Assets Management, AR/Billing, Banking & Settlement TBD.
- Upcoming: Kerry Dyer- Strategic Sourcing/Bidding, Supplier Contracts TBD.
- All of the testing is essential to a solid product by the go-live date on October 1, 2025.

Budget/Travel:

- Highlights include:
 - AFY2025- HB 67 (Final Signed by Governor on March 6, 2025)
 - Reduce funds not utilized for Subacute Therapy Unit Nursing Recruiting – (\$250,000) – Funds returned within the \$2,000,000 final version below
 - Provide one-time funds to support the opening of Subacute Therapy Unit- Final version \$2,000,000
 - Increase funds to address rising costs in healthcare at Homes- Final version \$1,500,000
 - Funds to replace expiring federal funds with state funds to sustain wraparound services- Unite Us- Final version \$1,750,204
 - FY2026- (Governor's version) (still pending House and Senate)
 - Adjustment to agency premiums for DOAS administered programs- (\$59,587) across all programs.
 - Adjustment to TeamWorks billing- \$3,128 across all programs.
 - Increase for TRS and health insurance premium increases- \$63,638.
- Camala Ball continued daily monitoring of general ledgers, purchase orders, and budget projection updates. She prepared amendments to record revenue collections in PBCS. She also monitored House and Senate appropriation updates.
- Mark Demers conducted a Concur travel information and troubleshooting session with the Appeals Division. There has been log in issues since Concur switched to a two-factor email based authentication.

Grant Program:

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$722,747 year 3)
 - We submitted draw #2 for year 3 for \$48,279.08 on March 3, 2025.
 - Upcoming: Fox Grant Summit in Savannah, GA on June 8-11, 2025.
- Unite-Us Grant- (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- (\$20,047,782.70 total)

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- Grant extended for a partial year 4. Carrying over \$1,729,196.19 to partial year 4 until expended. Year 4 agreement signed on February 10, 2025, with OPB Grant Management. The remainder of the 4th year will be funded via State Appropriated funds which was just approved on March 6, 2025.
- Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector are moving forward. As of February 13, 2025, we have **276,963** veterans in the system. The last SFTP data transfer was on February 13, 2025. Next will be March 14, 2025.
- We currently have **658** community partners on the Unite Georgia network.
- We received the advance payment request for the entire year on September 16, 2024, for \$6,088,640.28. We continue to pay invoices from this advance until June 2025.
- Since the Public Resource Directory has gone live on 3/22/2024 there have been 2,939 site visits, 1,490 visitors with 388 distinct programs viewed. The leading search term as of March 7, 2025 was "Housing." There have been 429 Assistance Request Form Submissions (self-referrals) with 91% case resolution.
- Proactive outreach campaign 7 (loneliness) identified 500 veterans (825 total touchpoints with veterans (2.86 avg touchpoints per veteran), 42 engaged via email and text, 79 veterans engaged via phone. Campaign 7 achieved an 8.4% engagement rate via text, which surpassed Advocata's national average by nearly 4%. Overall Unite Georgia Care Coordination has successfully reached 689 clients across 7 campaigns. Campaign 8 will focus on Food Insecurity and began March 7, 2025.
- The Quarterly Report for the second quarter was submitted via Survey Monkey on January 8, 2025. Next quarterly report will be due in April 2025.
- Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights:



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- Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)-
 - AFY2024- The grant was awarded to two vendors: \$1,000,000
 - Aspire (Cohen Veterans Network) for \$776,132
 - Emory Healthcare for \$212,500
 - The second quarter reporting was completed on January 31, 2025 for both awardees. Next reporting period will be April 2025.
 - This fiscal year's reporting will close on June 30, 2025.
 - 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
 - The funds for Cohen and About Face were distributed on February 7, 2025. The funds for AMES will follow soon – awaiting set up on KSU side.
- VA Suicide Mortality Review Cooperative Agreement - (\$502,124.68)
 - We submitted draw #4 for \$12,436.71 on March 4, 2025.
 - The agreement with DBHDD is currently in legal review with the agency.
 - The Suicide Mortality Grant subcontractors are KSU, DPHDD and Dr. Lynn Tison.
 - The first quarterly report was submitted to the VA on January 16, 2025. Next due in April 2025.

Veterans Service Foundation:

- The next board meeting is on April 3, 2025, at 1000.
- The board is going to determine who will complete the IRS 990 form for last FY. Business taxes must be submitted to the IRS by May 15, 2025.

Events/Other:

- Next Leadership Institute session will be held on March 14, 2025. Subject: NASDVA update.
- Attended and spoke at the Senate Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security hearing at the capital mezzanine 1 regarding SB73 SAVE Act on February 25, 2025. This bill was tabled (it would have allowed non-accredited companies to charge veterans for advice- which is contrary to federal law (38 USC)).
- Attended the Senate Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security hearing at the capital mezzanine 1 on February 28, 2025, regarding SB236 Quality Basic Education Act which would allow military members who PCS to enroll their children in school prior to establishing residency.

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- Attended 2 House Regulated Industries Committee hearings on March 3, 2025, at 0800 and 1500 regarding HB 632 at 515 and 606 CLOB regarding veteran business license exemption clarification.
- Irene Mackson attended Women Veterans Breakfast on March 4, 2025.
- Mark Demers attended the State of Georgia CyQu Demonstration on March 4, 2025 and assisted Will Wilson in completing the 5 questionnaires (Privacy Insurance Supplemental, Media Content Liability Insurance Supplemental, Vendor Insurance Supplemental, Cyber Risk Evaluation Edition, Ransomware Insurance Supplemental) on March 5, 2025.
- Upcoming: Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Unveiling Ceremony at capital on March 18, 2025 at 1300.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through March 8, 2025) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	89	108	197
Service Connected *	32	43	75
Total Patients	121	151	272
Last Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	86	104	190
Service Connected *	34	42	76
Total Patients	120	146	266

* One hundred percent of the cost of these services is paid by the VA. No state funds are involved.

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers from Feb. 8, 2025 through Mar. 8, 2025.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home

Normal operations continue.

Georgia War Veterans Home

The FY 2025 Amended Year Budget included additional funds to move forward on opening the Subacute therapy unit or our med/psych facility. Coordination efforts are underway with STG International (Home Contractor) to make this happen.

Normal operations continue.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (through March 8, 2025)+

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,695	2,715	20
Milledgeville	5,734	5,767	33
Total	8,429	8,482	53

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from Feb. 8, 2025 through Mar. 8, 2025.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer

On Friday, February 21, 2025, Kerry Dyer contacted Leslie Davis, State Properties Leasing Specialist to discuss the relocation of the Griffin and Rome Field Offices. He also processed 1 new hire packet for the Brunswick Field Office. Later that day he spoke to Mr. Lance Griffin regarding the office deficiencies in the Griffin Field Office.

On Monday, February 24, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross, Sherri Whitfield and Jamaal Lemon, attended the Grand Opening Ceremony for the Perry VA Clinic in Perry, GA.

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On Tuesday, February 25, 2025, Kerry Dyer spoke to Kesha Jordan, SPD Policy, Supervisor regarding the contract extension for the Veterans Benefit Software. He also contacted Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager, to discuss the process of obtaining a Co-Operative Contract for the Veterans Benefits Software. Later that day he processed two internal transfer packets.

On Wednesday, February 26, 2025, Kerry Dyer spoke with Duan Tomlinson, DOAS Contract Management Specialist regarding a similar Veterans Benefit Software that's on the Statewide Contract. He also processed two new hire packets for the Macon Field Office. Later that day he processed 1 Office Manager Promotion Packet.

On Thursday, February 27, 2025, Kerry Dyer posted the Jasper Field Office vacancy externally and internally. He also distributed the New Office Leases for the Gwinnett Technical College and Albany Technical College to the Budget and Finance Team. Later that day he updated the Building, Land and Lease Inventory of Property (BLLIP) with the two new field offices.

On Saturday March 1, 2025, Kerry Dyer traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the Mid-Winter National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs Training Conference (NASDVA).

On Sunday, March 2, 2025 - Wednesday March 5, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross and ShellyAnn Simpson attended the 2025 Mid-Winter NASDVA Training Conference.

On Thursday, March 6, 2025, Kerry Dyer traveled back to Atlanta GA.

On Friday, March 7, 2025, Kerry Dyer updated the monthly Alpha Roster, Gains/Loss and Promotion Roster and distributed it to the Senior Leadership. He also registered David Flanagan, Grovetown Office Manager for the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training for Managers Course. Later that day he processed 1 Suicide Prevention Specialist Packet.

On Monday, March 10, 2025, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors Meeting. He also attended the UniteUs meeting. Later that day he John Scocos. Executive Director of NASDVA regarding the Hotel Reservations for the FY26 NASDVA Training Conference.

On Tuesday, March 11, 2025, Kerry Dyer attended the DOAS Risk Management Town Hall meeting virtually. He also met with Leslie Davis, State Properties Leasing Specialist to discuss the Albany Field Office Tax Assessors notification. Later that day he attended DOAS Procurement Officer Training.

On Wednesday, March 12, 2025, Kerry Dyer contacted Leslie Davis, State Properties Leasing Specialist to discuss the relocation of the Thomasville Field Office. He also reached out to Jessica Asbill, Assistant Attorney General, to get an update on the Glennville Veterans Cemetery Road acquisition.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from February 20, 2025 – March 19, 2025.

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Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Marietta	VFSO 1	New Hire	Shane Robinson	3/3/2025
Brunswick	Office Mgr	New Hire	May Elizabeth	3/17/2025
Lawrenceville	VFSO 1	New Hire	Robin Harris	3/17/2025
Statesboro	Office Mgr	Retired	Kevin Gibbs	3/31/2025

Highlights: Effective, Monday, March 17, 2025. We opened Field Offices at Fort Eisenhower, Perry VA Clinic and Gwinnett Technical College. Bringing the total number of Field Offices across the State from 55 to 58. In addition, we relocated the Albany Field Office to Albany Technical College.

On the horizon: Open Field Offices at Kings Bay Naval Base and Atlanta Technical College.

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 2,210 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	497
Approved Training Establishments	1,713
VA Education Beneficiaries for February 2025	11,657

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, WEAMS, Salesforce, RCS 20-0259-260, J250 Payment Type Detail

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications

INFORMATION OUTREACH

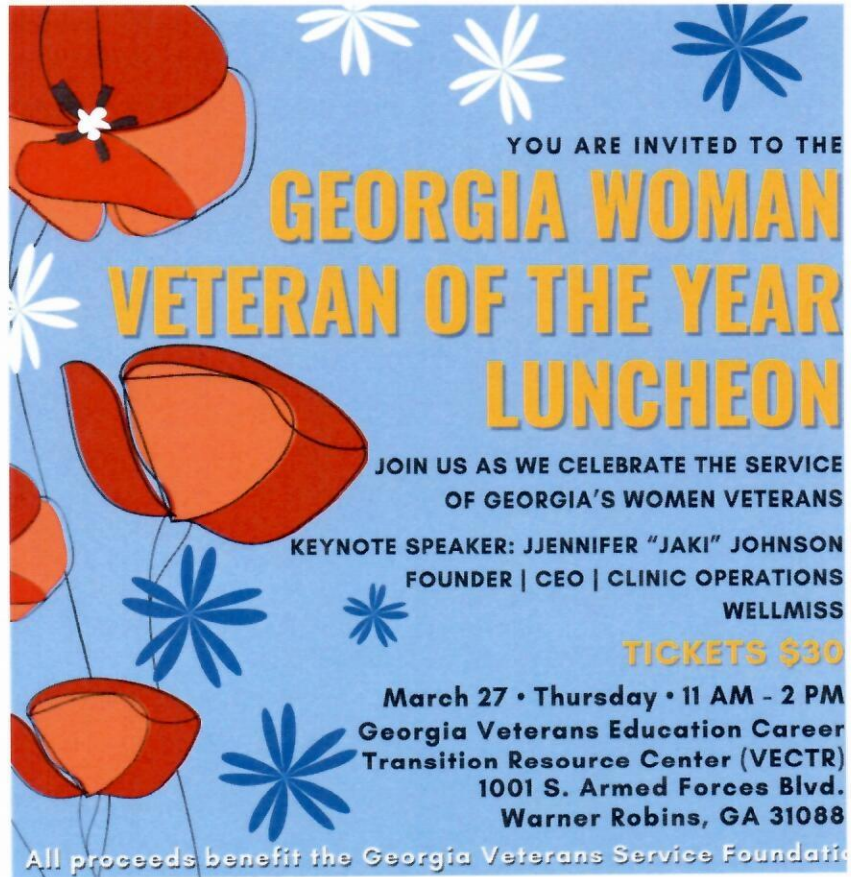
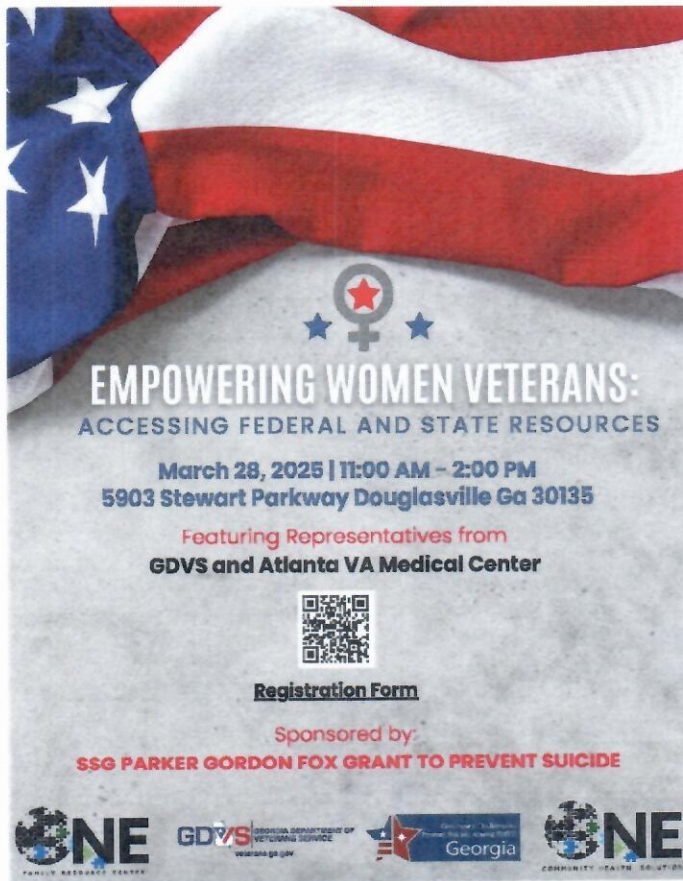
Division Updates

1. GDVS Newsletter – The department’s monthly e-newsletter features top stories from the month at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>.
 - a. The February edition of the department newsletter featured the announcement of the recipients of the second round of Veterans Mental Health grantees for FY25, an article highlighting the outstanding care GWVNH-Augusta’s staff provide to our veteran residents and their recent awards, the return of the Notes of Gratitude from veterans and families who received excellent service from GDVS VSOs, and a spotlight on Appeals Officer Marceda Rand.
2. Legislative Session – EAC continues to track veteran related legislation as it moves through the General Assembly.
 - a. Accompanied Commissioner Ross and CDO Demers to a Senate Veterans, Military, and Homeland Security meeting on Friday, February 27, 2025, in support of SB 236. The bill helps parents or guardians on active duty enroll their children into public school systems during their transition to a new duty station before establishing physical residency to reduce loss in education hours.
 - b. Accompanied CDO Demers to a House Regulated Industries Regulatory Subcommittee and House Regulated Industries Committee meeting on Monday, March 3, 2025, in support of HB 632. The bill clarifies eligibility for the veteran’s business license exemption.
3. Attended CDO Demers NEXT GEN information briefing on Wednesday, February 26, 2025.
4. Attended the Veterans Service Foundation board meeting on Thursday, March 6, 2025.
5. Assisted Commissioner Ross in developing a presentation for NASDVA to consider locating the 2026 NASDVA regional conference in Savannah.
6. 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. Careers and Employment – shared information from Hiring Our Heroes on an upcoming Military Spouse Hiring Event at Fort Eisenhower, a career fair at the VECTR Center, VBOC courses in St. Marys, SBA’s resources for military spouses, and more.
 - b. Woman Veteran of the Year – the division worked closely with Ms. Brooks to set up an Eventbrite listing and invitation for the Georgia Woman Veteran of the Year Luncheon, to be

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held on March 27, 2025, in Warner Robins at the VECTR Center. For more information and tickets, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/georgia-woman-veteran-of-the-year-luncheon-tickets-1268921090139>.

- c. Suicide Prevention and Awareness – shared information from partner organizations to remind veterans and families of the availability of mental health resources.
- d. Library of Congress Veterans History Project – local veteran Sergeant Major (ret.) Sarita Dyer was featured in a recent post on the Veterans History Project. Shared information on the project and how other veterans can record their service for future generations.
- e. Housing resources – share information for homeless veterans in different areas in the state, as well as option for veteran homeowners who may be facing instability.



OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Commissioner Ross announced the testimony today before the House Committee on HB 53, the Burial Equity Act, HB 108 The Save Act, which will allow non-accredited for profit companies to do veteran's benefits, and SB 236, which would allow parents to register their children in the district they plan to move to. Our license plate bill was added to HB 208, a larger license plate bill. She also announced that all state agencies were asked to provide a report on doing a 1% reduction in funding.

Ms. May announced that the Veteran's Resource Guide is now available. Copies have been presented to the House and Senate.

Mr. Childre announced a Veteran's Expo in Newnan on April 11. Seven offices from the North and two offices from the South will be closed in order to serve veterans at the Expo.

Ms. Thompson announced that they were able to house 2 additional families so far in March.

Mr. Dyer announced that 6 new hires will start on April 1. There is currently 1 vacancy. As of April 1, we will have a total of 58 offices.

Mr. Feagin announced that the Glennville Cemetery has been awarded the National Cemetery Administration Operational Excellence Award.

Commissioner Ross announced that the National Association of State Directors for Veterans Affairs has agreed to have their meeting in Savannah, Georgia in August 2026. This is the first time Georgia will be hosting in its 75 year history. It will be a big event for us and we're looking forward to it.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Hanley and Mr. Mendez plan to work on getting the VA's Wheelchair Games here in Georgia. He will contact Secretary Collins' office.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for April 16 at 12:30pm. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

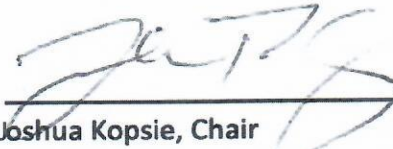
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Ms. Swan made a motion for the Board to move into Executive Session . Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed and the Board moved into Executive Session at 12:49 p.m.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 1:35 p.m.

Ms. Swan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kubinec seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:36 p.m.

SIGNED:


Joshua Kopsie, Chair

ATTEST:



Steve Mendez, Secretary