



## Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

September 2024

# GDVS CEMETERIES RECEIVE GRANTS FOR EXPANSION

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently awarded the Georgia Department of Veterans Service with grants for the expansion of the state’s two veterans memorial cemeteries, located in Glennville and Milledgeville. Grant funds will be used to plan, prepare, and develop cemetery grounds to serve veterans and their families for the next 10 years.

Both cemeteries will see enhancements to roadways, landscaping, irrigation and supporting infrastructure, and the placement of the Space Force emblem in the ceremonial area.

**GVMC-Glennville** will undergo its first expansion since opening in 2017 and received a total grant of \$3,051,480 from VA to develop approximately 2 acres and add 920 pre-placed crypts.

The 42.6-acre cemetery has a potential capacity to provide a final resting place to over 40,000 veterans and their eligible family members. As of August 31, 2024, there are 2,580 veterans, spouses, and eligible dependents buried at GVMC-Glennville. Burials are

composed of 1,662 casketed burials, 530 cremations in the columbarium, 380 inground cremations, and 8 memorial markers.

**GVMC-Milledgeville** will use the grant funds to undergo its next major expansion into Phase 4B of the cemetery’s master plan. Previously expanded in 2011 and 2018, this expansion will use grant funds of \$5,135,900 to develop approximately 5 acres and add 1,680 pre-placed crypts and 548 inground burial spaces.

GVMC-Milledgeville, opened in 2001, is a 142-acre cemetery with the potential capacity to hold over 100,000 veterans and their eligible dependents when fully constructed. As of August 31, 2024, there are 5,579 veterans, spouses, and eligible dependents buried at GVMC-Milledgeville. The burials are composed of 3,673 casketed burials, 1,111 cremations in the columbarium, 764 inground cremations, and 31 burial markers.



## GDVS SELECTED AS SSG FOX GRANT RECIPIENT FOR THIRD YEAR

Eight programs were selected to receive a third year of funding from the SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program—including the Georgia Department of Veterans Service.

By working closely with our partners at the KSU AMES Research Center, the GDVS has been able to screen over 575 veterans in 2024 and connect them with mental and behavioral health services. Over 5,000 veterans and service members have been screened over the life of the program.

Grant funds will be used to continue researching trends, emerging areas of concern, and improving access to mental and behavioral health care services to veterans, service members, and their families across the state.

Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox  
**SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT RECIPIENT**

## APPLICATION OPEN FOR VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES GRANT PROGRAM

The Georgia Department of Veterans Service announced another request for proposal opportunity for the Georgia Veterans Mental Health Services Grant Program (VMHS) on September 25, 2024.

The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Aspire Health Partners received a grant of almost \$800,000 in the first round of VMHS funding of fiscal year 2025.

Remaining funds will be distributed after a second round of applications. If multiple applicants are approved for funding, the cumulative total of grant dollars awarded in this round cannot exceed \$200,000.

**The application will open at 10:00 a.m. on September 25, 2024 and will close at 4:30 p.m. on October 25, 2024.**

Subject to the availability of funding, competitive matching grants will be awarded to nonprofit community behavioral health programs that meet eligibility criteria. Applicants **MUST** have matching funding.

Find requirements and the application at [gdvsmentalhealthgrant.smapply.io](http://gdvsmentalhealthgrant.smapply.io).



## TOGETHER WE STAND: SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

September is Suicide Prevention Month, and we’re reminding veterans everywhere that suicide is preventable and there is hope.

As a part of the ongoing national “**Don’t Wait. Reach Out.**” campaign, VA and the Ad Council have released two new public service advertisements (PSAs). [The first video](#), informed by and featuring real Veterans and their loved ones, acknowledges that it can be hard for veterans to reach out if they’re struggling – but shows that in the eyes of their loved ones, seeking help can be an act of bravery.

Reaching out is what the GDVS Suicide Prevention Task Force demonstrates every day with their commitment to prevent suicide.

“It is our goal to work 365 days, 24 hours and 7 days a week to help prevent suicide among our service members, veterans, and their families,” said Calandra Ferguson, GDVS Suicide Prevention and Outreach coordinator.

Part of her duties include leading the state’s Governor’s Challenge and Suicide Prevention Task Force, a collaborative effort among state, federal, local, and nonprofits.

For Ferguson, her staff, and volunteers, working to prevent suicide is shown through actions – not just words.

During Suicide Prevention Awareness and Recovery month, the task force held and participated in several events including: Suicide Prevention Wellness Day in Dublin, Mental Health Day at St. Paul of The Cross in Atlanta, and, most recently, the Walk and Roll at the Atlanta VA Clinic where hundreds of volunteers gathered to support the message that suicide is preventable, and recovery is possible.



### SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE: LATOYA MCCALLUM



Latoya McCallum, an Army Reserve veteran, joined the GDVS 8 months ago and is already making a major impact as she

works to support veterans and their families.

As the administrative assistant for the Executive Director of Field Operations and Appeals, she provides assistance to both GDVS employees and veterans who contact the department for help.

What McCallum enjoys most about working with GDVS is being able to serve those in need of assistance.

“I am thrilled to be a part of this team and am looking forward to collaborating with more of the department to best serve our veterans,” said McCallum.

On her days off, McCallum enjoys spending time with her family.

### WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL SEPARATION BENEFITS

Have you recently seen or heard about veterans needing to repay VA before receiving their compensation benefits? This can happen for a few reasons, but the GDVS is here to help.



Veterans who received Special Separation Benefits (SSB), Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI), or involuntary Separation Pay (ISP) when they left the military and later became eligible for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation are legally not allowed to duplicate benefits.

Some veterans may receive a garnishment of their VA disability compensation until they have reimbursed the federal government the entirety of their SSB/VSI or ISP.

If this creates a financial hardship, veterans can file a VA Form 1100 requesting an alternate repayment schedule at [va.gov](https://va.gov), or they can seek assistance at any Georgia Department of Veterans Service office. Find your local office at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/locations>.

### NEW PHONE, SAME CARE: LATIKA ARCHIE



Veterans and families can rest assured they will be treated with patience, understanding and knowledge when GDVS Administrative Assistant, Latika Archie, answers their calls for help.

After 8 years with the GDVS and her service as a Sergeant in the US Army, Archie understands the importance of providing kind, consistent, and reliable service to veterans and their families.

It is what she enjoys most about working with GDVS.

Archie also currently serves as a Suicide Prevention Specialist, providing support to veterans and families in difficult situations, attending outreach events to grow Georgia’s network of care, and responding to requests for assistance from her fellow team members.

Archie has also provided administrative support for the Appeals Division during her tenure at GDVS.

When she is not working to support veterans and their families, Archie spends her days relaxing and meditating.