



Strengthening Support for Veterans: New York State Department of Veterans' Services

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Introduction

Veteran Statistics

NATIONAL

- **6.4% of US population has served in the military**
- **~200,000 servicemembers transition from military to civilian life annually**
- **Estimated 17 veterans die by suicide each day and 60% of them had no prior contact with the VA**
- **More than 30% of veterans live with a service-connected disability**

NEW YORK STATE

- **New York has fifth highest veteran population nationally**
- **92% male population with increasing female population**
- **23% of NY veterans are minorities**

Innovation in State-Level Veterans Services

HIGH-PERFORMING CRITERIA

- **Organizational arrangement**
- **Leadership continuity**
- **Directors with diverse work experience**
- **Funding stability**
- **Agency independence**
- **Political engagement**
- **Financial stability**
- **Service delivery**

MANAGEMENT AGENDA

- **Stable and effective leadership**
- **Clear understanding of veterans' needs**
- **Improved collaboration across sectors and agencies**
- **Active engagement with policymakers**
- **Adequate and diversified funding**
- **Logical role allocation among stakeholders**
- **Revised strategic plan with specific goals**
- **Tailored communication and outreach strategies**
- **Adoption of innovative practices from other states**

State-Level Administrative Data Sets

Clear and centralized data at the state level allows for a better assessment for veterans needs and can help in allocating funding and resources.



Strategic Roadmap for the New York State Division of Veterans' Services

OHIO

Departmental reorganization
for structural improvements

TEXAS

Cost-sharing approach to
support local services for
financial sustainability

MICHIGAN

Coordinating body strategy for
more effective service delivery



Understanding Veterans in New York

A survey of 1,122 recently discharged or separated service members living in NYS

RAND Corporation

INSIGHTS

- **25% experiencing probable depression**
- **26% probable PTSD**
- **~20% rating their physical health as "fair" or "poor"**
- **~25% were affected by food insecurity**
- **Although 97% had health insurance, many faced unmet healthcare needs, especially in mental health services**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand access to mental health care**
- **Prioritize suicide prevention**
- **Improve outreach to increase awareness of benefits and services**

New York State Department of Veterans' Services

In 2023, New York State elevated its Division of Veterans' Services to the Department of Veterans' Services, marking the creation of the state's first new agency in over 50 years.

Originally founded in 1945 to help World War II veterans transition to civilian life, the Division previously operated under the NYS Executive Department, which oversees services not assigned to other departments. Now a standalone department, it functions as a one-stop-shop for the state's veterans.



New York State Veterans' Services Budget: Five Year Comparison

	NYS Division of Veterans' Services				NYS Department of Veterans' Services
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of Veterans in NY State	718,000	737,765	714,107	688,611	663,437
DVS Offices	55	55	52	50	52
VA-Accredited DVS Employees	95	76	87	87	88
Administration	\$480,000	\$480,000	\$480,000	\$490,000	\$1,006,000
Veterans Benefits Advising Program	\$6,242,000	\$6,242,000	\$6,242,000	\$7,646,000	\$8,077,000
Veterans Education	\$2,025,000	\$2,025,000	\$2,025,000	\$2,118,000	\$2,154,000
Veterans Cemetery				\$4,900,000	\$1,800,000
Aid to Localites	\$12,004,000	\$12,284,000	\$10,859,000	\$13,979,000	\$14,224,000
Special Revenue - Federal	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Special Revenue - Other					\$1,100,000
State Operations Reappropriations	\$4,882,000	\$4,627,000		\$5,293,000	\$5,208,000
Aid to Localities Reappropriations	\$11,920,000	\$12,813,000		\$18,304,000	\$23,110,000
Capital Projects					\$9,000,000
Agency Total	\$38,053,000	\$38,971,000	\$19,626,000	\$53,230,000	\$66,179,000

New York State Veterans' Services Budget: Analysis Findings

- When Veterans' Services transitioned to a standalone department, administrative costs more than doubled, even though the number of employees and offices remained nearly unchanged.
- The Veterans Cemetery, had initial costs for land acquisition and the establishment of the cemetery, which officially opened in 2023. After the initial expenses, ongoing maintenance will require less funding, enabling the DVS to reallocate resources to other priorities.
- Another new initiative, the Capital Projects program provided \$9 million in grants in 2023 to veteran membership organizations.
- From 2019 to 2021, the budget for DVS, specifically allocated for Veteran Benefit Advising, remained unchanged at \$6,242,000; however, in 2022, the budget increased significantly to \$7,646,000, a 22.5% growth, signaling a prioritization of advising programs to assist veterans in accessing benefits such as healthcare, housing, and education. This growth continued in 2023, with the budget rising to \$8,077,000, a 5.6% increase.
- Continued growth underscores an investment in innovative programs designed to address the evolving needs of veterans.

Conclusion

Establishment of the New York State Department of Veterans' Services highlights:

- A major initiative to address veterans' unique needs
- Enhanced service delivery, outreach, and gap closure at federal and local levels
- Persistent challenges identified: underfunding relative to other states and increasing demand for supportive services
- Data-driven policymaking for effective decision-making
- Diversifying funding sources to ensure sustainability
- Strengthening collaboration with government and non-government organizations
- Adopting proven strategies from other states and leverage the new departmental structure
- Goal: Provide veterans with better care, resources, and opportunities
- Improved quality of life for veterans and strengthened contributions to state communities and economy



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