

Annual Report 2020

Reference MSAR #s: 5564 & 5667



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
George Owings, Secretary
Robert Finn, Deputy Secretary



Cover photo credits: (clockwise)

1. Keith Brown and Russell Ware, MDVA Cemetery Program
2. Charlotte Hall Veterans Home donation drive, members of the Maryland Legislative Veterans Caucus, Legislative Black Caucus, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home and MDVA Staff
3. Shawn Treherne, Ronald Miller, Jamaine Palmer, Harry Harvey, MDVA Cemetery Program
4. Adaptive Boating Month Proclamation, CRAB Executive Director Paul Bollinger, MDVA Secretary George Owings, MD DNR Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford, CRAB Board of Directors President Brad LaTour and MDOD Secretary Carol Beatty (CRAB: Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating)
5. Tanya Hope and Michael Cantrell, MDVA Service Program Bel Air Office
6. Rufonda Moss, MDVA Administrative Assistant and members of the Tuskegee Airman

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Secretary's Message

On behalf of Governor Hogan and Lt. Governor Rutherford and the entire team at the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), I am pleased to present this year's Annual Report. The following report provides the opportunity to share our successes and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for our Maryland Veterans and their families.

The MDVA manages five key programs with one mission, to serve our veterans and families by ensuring they have access to the benefits and services to which they are entitled as a result of military service. Our mission is accomplished in a number of ways as evidenced by this report.

With the COVID-19 health pandemic, 2020 has been a year unlike any other. In March, the majority of MDVA staff began full time telework and adjusted how they serve our veterans and their families. Regardless of the health crisis, we have continued to assist veterans virtually and when safe, in person.

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home has worked tirelessly alongside St. Mary's County Health Department, the Maryland Department of Health, Maryland National Guard and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain the highest standard of safety for its residents and personnel. We are thankful for HMR of Maryland and for their frontline healthcare workers who provide care for our veterans and their spouses.

The Department hosted its first combined state and county veteran commissions summit in January and has virtually maintained a close connection to local commission leaders. Even while working in a hybrid virtual and in person capacity, we stayed consistent with claims filed in 2019 for compensation and pension.

Two additional service program offices have opened inside Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration service centers. We are currently in the process of acquiring land from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to one day build a second veterans home in Carroll County.

The pages that follow highlight the ways in which MDVA adjusted its mission to ensure the health and safety of veterans, their families and our personnel which continuing to serve our community.

The Department is hopeful as we approach 2021 and we look forward to another year of serving those who served.

Sincerely,

George Owings, III

Maryland Veterans: Data Snapshot



4,170	Service and Benefits Program submitted claims (FY20)
1,330,901	Outreach and Advocacy Program contacts (FY20)
\$138,538	Maryland Veterans Trust Fund total grants (CY20)
307	Charlotte Hall Veterans Home resident average census
3,159	Cemetery Program interments (CY20)

Population

350,423	Veteran population (4)
7.5%	Percent of the total population
50,418	Female veteran population
14%	Percent military retirees

Age Distribution

18-34 years	9%
35-54 years	28%
55-64 years	20%
65+ years	43%

Race Distribution

White	61%
Black or African American	30%
Hispanic or Latino	5%
Asian	2%
Other	2%

Period of Service

Gulf War	57%
Vietnam	30%
Korea	5%
World War II	2%



DEMOGRAPHICS (2019)



SOCIAL INDICATORS

Education (2019)

< High school	6%
High school	23%
Associate's	31%
Bachelor's+	40%

Financial (2019)

Median income	\$58,000
Living in poverty	5%
Unemployment rate	2.2%

Suicide deaths per 100,000 (2018)

Veteran suicide death rate	22.7
Population suicide death rate	13.4

Homelessness (2019)

Total sheltered	411
Total unsheltered	79
Total homeless veterans	490
Veteran treatment courts	4

Current as of 2018

Veterans receiving VA disability compensation	87,300
Veterans receiving VA pension	3,140
Enrollees in the VA Healthcare System	152,000



VA BENEFITS UTILIZATION

Sources: (1) U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs State Summary Sheet, 2017, [State Summaries_Maryland.pdf \(va.gov\)](#) (2) Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University, Measuring Communities, [Home | Measuring Communities](#), (3) U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Suicide Data Sheet, 2018, [Maryland Veteran Suicide Data Sheet \(va.gov\)](#), (4) United Census Bureau, 2019: ACS 1-year Estimates Subject Tables, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Maryland veterans&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S2101&hidePreview=false>

Maryland Veterans: Estimated Veterans By County* and Performance Measures

County	Total Veterans	Male	Female
Allegany	5,880	5,530	350
Anne Arundel	51,070	43,560	7,510
Baltimore	45,640	41,850	3,790
Baltimore City	29,920	26,800	3,210
Calvert	9,190	8,140	1,050
Caroline	3,030	2,090	940
Cecil	7,390	6,750	640
Charles	16,850	14,090	2,760
Dorchester	2,510	2,180	330
Frederick	16,930	15,020	1,910
Garrett	2,250	2,120	130
Harford	19,300	17,180	2,120
Howard	17,710	15,300	2,410
Kent	1,720	1,620	100
Montgomery	40,090	34,280	5,810
Prince George's	57,430	48,180	9,250
Queen Anne's	3,650	3,400	250
Somerset	1,680	1,490	190
St. Mary's	12,890	11,240	1,650
Talbot	3,190	3,070	120
Washington	10,860	9,960	900
Wicomico	6,910	6,220	690
Worcester	9,060	4,410	240

Key Performance Measures for Veterans Represented by Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (Fiscal Year 2020)

Inputs

Potential # of Veterans to be Served 350,000 (projected only)

Number of Veteran Contacts 130,000 (Benefits and Services Program)

Outputs: Claims filed and developed on behalf of service connected disabled veterans 4,170

Outcomes: Total of awards to veterans and survivors represented by MDVA \$32 million dollars

To help address the challenges facing Maryland Veterans as they retire or return home from military service the Department continues to provide safety nets, wherever possible, to enhance services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The Department regularly collaborates with other agencies to advocate on behalf of veterans and their families.

Veterans may present with geriatric, Alzheimer's and dementia issues, as well as the effects of Agent Orange exposure and post-traumatic stress. Additionally, veterans of recent conflicts may present with the impact of traumatic brain injury as well as post-traumatic stress or toxic exposures.

MDVA is tireless in its work to ensure that providers are informed of veteran needs and to be a resource for veterans and their families when they seek benefits and other assistance.

*County level data source, measuringcommunities.org, data may not equate to the estimated MD veteran population 5



Service and Benefits Program

Pictured above, from left: Taryn Hope and Mike Cantrell, Bel Air MDVA Office, MVC Commissioners Joe Smith and Thomas Kimball, Antione Waller, USDVA/VBA Director, Chrissy Nizer, MVA Administrator, Michele Licata, Salisbury MDVA Office, Robert Finn, MDVA Deputy Secretary

The MDVA Service and Benefits Program assists veterans, dependents, and survivors, in obtaining benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), the U.S. Department of Defense and the State of Maryland.

With offices statewide, benefits specialists have access to USDVA claim tracking systems. Access to these systems allows personnel to provide the most accurate information to our customers.

Since October 15, 1979, the Program has served as a repository for DD214s for veterans released from active duty who return to Maryland.

FY20 In Review

130,000 contacts made with veterans, dependents, and survivors

4,170 claims submitted to the USDVA

\$32 million dollars in new/increased and one-time monthly cash benefits to veterans and dependents

91% claim approval rating

2,090 veterans provided MDVA with Power of Attorney

1,429 DD214's provided at the request of veterans

Improving Customer Service: MDVA expands its partnership with the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration

In an effort to make office access more convenient for customers, MDVA proudly announced in 2019 its partnership with the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration.

Early in 2020, the Department opened its second co-located service office at the Salisbury MVA Service Center.

In the following months, two additional co-located offices opened, one in Hagerstown and the second in Bel Air.

The Service Program looks forward in 2021 to opening more co-located offices.

“I am pleased to open our new Salisbury veterans service office,” said MDVA Secretary George Owings.

“Co-locating our veterans service office with the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration will increase visibility and enable us to serve more veterans who call the Eastern Shore home.”



Charlotte Hall Veterans Home

Pictured above:
Charlotte Hall Staff expressing appreciation
for donations received this year

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (Charlotte Hall) is a 444-bed facility in St. Mary’s County. Charlotte Hall provides assisted-living and skilled nursing care for Maryland Veterans and eligible spouses. Residents are usually elderly, and there is a high occurrence of underlying health conditions.

This year, Charlotte Hall has been the most impacted MDVA Program. Three weeks after the State of Emergency declaration, Charlotte Hall experienced its first positive COVID-19 case. Per St. Mary’s County Health Department directives Charlotte Hall closed to admissions. The ensuing months saw an increase in COVID-19 cases among residents and staff and a decrease in census to an August 18 low of 295.

Despite initial PPE shortages, MDVA and Charlotte Hall have received unprecedented support from the Governor’s Office, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland National Guard, St. Mary’s County Health Department, MEMA, FEMA and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This support has ensured Charlotte Hall received PPE and clinical staff to sustain operations.

In April, May and June, staffing missions were supported by the Maryland National Guard, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Integrated Service Network 4, and Washington D.C. VA Medical Center. Each mission provided up to 18 nurses per 12 hour shift for a period of two weeks.

In April, the Board of Public Works approved an Emergency Contract Modification to convert a 42-bed unit at Charlotte Hall, previously recognized as assisted living and not occupied, to a 24-bed Comprehensive Care Program (Skilled Nursing Care) unit with four private rooms to sustain functions related to COVID-19 positive cases.

For the duration of the pandemic, everyone at Charlotte Hall has diligently maintained the health of residents and staff. To mitigate spread of the virus, Charlotte Hall continues to follow all COVID-19 related recommendations issued by the CDC, CMS, Health Department and Governor’s Executive Orders.

COVID-19 tests for staff and residents are administered twice weekly and are sent to the Maryland State Lab. As of mid-December, there have been 212 confirmed COVID-19 resident cases, with 151 recovered and 61 expirations. There have been 116 confirmed staff cases, with 108 recovered and 1 expiration.

Despite the many challenges faced this year, Charlotte Hall completed a number of projects to include 145 security camera upgrades and 43 card readers installations. This new system provides state of the art security monitoring capability and a more secure environment for residents and staff.

**2020 Average Resident
Capacity 68%**



Outpouring of Support to Charlotte Hall Veterans Home

Unprecedented support has been given to Charlotte Hall Veterans Home this year.

Charlotte Hall received a total of \$148,587 in cash to include an anonymous donation of \$35,000 from a resident's family.

Pictured above, the American Legion Jameson-Harrison Post 238 of Hughesville donated \$10,254. Funds were raised at the Post's annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner. (above from left to right: Frank D' Annunizo, Joe Goldsmith, Debbie Copp and Jeff Sheriff)

In addition to cash donations, Charlotte Hall has been the beneficiary of tremendous community support to include donated PPE, boxed lunches, snacks, ice cream, handwritten and video thank you messages, televisions, and many clothing items.

On Monday May 4, members of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus and the Veterans Caucus delivered over \$5,000 in toiletries and personal care items for the residents of Charlotte Hall. The effort was organized by Delegate Mike Rogers of District 31, Anne Arundel County.



(photo at left: Legislative Caucus Members, volunteers, and MDVA Secretary Owings)

Maryland Community Resources Commission awards Charlotte Hall with COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grant

The Maryland Community Resources Commission approved a grant award in 2020 to Charlotte Hall for \$42,303.

Charlotte Hall was recognized for the important services provided to Maryland Veterans. The grant was used to reimburse Charlotte Hall for expenditures related to acquiring PPE.

A Second Veterans Home is Coming to Maryland

After a long and arduous land search, MDVA is currently in the process of acquiring 140 acres of land from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services in Sykesville for a second veterans home.

The land is located off Slacks Road in Carroll County and will be home to a 120 bed skilled nursing care facility with memory care and dialysis.

The State of Maryland is collaborating with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs State Home Construction Grant Program to bring a second home to Western Maryland. Funding will be split between the State (35% of cost) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (65% of cost).



Cemetery and Memorial Program

Pictured above: Keith Brown, Memorial Program Superintendent and Russell Ware, Cemetery Program Director

The MDVA Cemetery Program maintains five veteran cemeteries, providing a final resting place for Maryland Veterans and their eligible dependents. The cemeteries include Crownsville in Anne Arundel County, Cheltenham in Prince George's County, Eastern Shore in Dorchester County, Garrison Forest in Baltimore County and Rocky Gap in Allegany County. The Cemetery Program also oversees a Civil War Cemetery at Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown.

This year, 3,159 veterans and dependents were interred at our cemeteries. Since the Program's inception in the mid-1970s, more than 111,000 veterans and dependents have been interred. Burial services are conducted and perpetual care is provided to the ever-increasing expansion of gravesites.

The Program ensures an honorable and dignified interment for our veterans and their families. In addition, it sets eligibility requirements, manages day-to-day operations and maintains interment records. Interment services are provided Monday through Friday and cemeteries are open to the public 365 days a year. There was an average of 3,328 interments annually over the past five years.

Cemetery Program personnel rose to the challenge this year, instituting new procedures to ensure the health and safety of families, visitors, and personnel. PPE was quickly acquired, operations were modified to allow for telework, meetings were held virtually, and new protective procedures allowed for a swift return to (almost) normal operations.

In addition, this year the Program re-established contact with the State Anatomy Board and has resumed interment of unclaimed veterans.

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

New operating procedures:

- Reel and hose irrigation plan developed
- Equipment lease program instituted
- Caretaker hiring process streamlined
- Grounds maintenance plan written
- In house lawn care initiated

Training programs implemented:

- Property disposal
- Heavy equipment operations
- Crypt burial procedures
- Prepped for chemical spray licensing

Staffing:

- Motor equipment operator and grounds supervisor hired at Cheltenham
- Grounds supervisor and four caretakers hired at Garrison Forest
- Two caretakers hired at Rocky Gap

Many physical improvements to include:

- Committal shelter and shop renovations at Crownsville
- Protective awning and cover for gravesite locator installed at Eastern Shore
- Committal shelter roof leak repaired at Eastern Shore
- Prepared Rosewood property for fencing and gate, spoils moved from Garrison forest to the property
- New concrete sidewalk and plaza area at Garrison Forest
- Tree and shrub pruning and fence line cleared of debris at Rocky Gap
- Lighting and electrical upgrades at Rocky Gap
- Landscape timbers and rock beds installed to eliminate rain splash on building siding at Rocky Gap



Volunteers making a difference at the WWII Memorial

Pictured above:
Veterans Day Community Service Project,
World War II Memorial, Annapolis

On Saturday November 7, approximately 75 volunteers participated in a District 30 Delegation Veterans Day Community Service Project. The event, coordinated by Senator Sarah Elfreth, Delegate Shaneka Henson, Delegate Dana Jones and Delegate Seth Howard, helped restore the beauty of the World War II Memorial and Gold Star Families Monument. Volunteers removed more than 1,400 pounds of leaves, grass clippings and brush from the area.

MDVA is responsible for the care and maintenance of five memorials. Other memorials include the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Memorial, and a shared memorial in Baltimore City, the War Memorial Building.

Two additional volunteer projects at our memorials took place this year. A clean up project coordinated by Michael Dudlin was held November 21 at the Korean War Memorial in Canton. On December 5 a clean up project lead by Fort Meade's U.S. Army Sergeant Yohannis was held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

In August, the Korean War Memorial also saw the installation of new lighting.

The Cemetery and Memorial Program is thankful for the contributions made by countless volunteers each year. Despite challenges faced by the COVID-19 health pandemic, locations were able to serve as host sites for Veterans Day ceremonies as well as for the Wreaths Across America campaign.

Federal grants support the expansion of MDVA veteran cemeteries

MDVA Cemetery expansions are almost exclusively grant funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration.

Most recently, Cheltenham received a \$15 million dollar federal grant to expand the Cemetery. Phase I activities are almost complete and included new burial plots, pre-placed crypts, roadway loop for new burial sections, pond renovation, and many other improvements. Phase II is slated to commence in January 2021 and will include several large scale construction projects, including a new administration building.

Garrison Forest received a \$7.4 million dollar federal grant to expand. The final expansion to the original acreage included pre-placed burial fields, new columbaria, roadway expansion, landscaping and other improvement projects.

An additional \$700,000 dollars in state funds were received to install a new water distribution system at Garrison Forest. State funds also supported raise and re-alignment projects at Cheltenham, Rocky Gap, and Crownsville.



Pictured above: MDVA Secretary George Owings, Joy Ashcraft, MD's Commitment to Veterans, Dana Burl, MDVA, Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford, Chairman KT Tyler, MD Veterans Commission

Outreach and Advocacy Program

The MDVA Outreach and Advocacy Program (Outreach) is charged with developing innovative ways to seek out and inform veterans about benefits, services, and incentives that are available from federal, state and local governments.

With the transition to telework status this year, Outreach staff capitalized on virtual meetings in order to continue reaching veterans, their families and those who serve them. In one day, staff are able to reach all corners of the State to provide information on MDVA programs and other veteran benefits. In FY20, Outreach staff attended 108 events but in the first six months of FY21 alone, staff have attended 137, proof that even with telework status, veterans are being reached.

Local county veteran commission meetings continue on a regular basis and a growing number of organizations are hosting virtual veteran benefits symposiums and education sessions. In FY20, Outreach made 4,561 face to face contacts, and between July-December of this year, staff have made 3,528 contacts.

The electronic newsletter continues to be very popular as evidenced by subscription growth and open rates. The subscriber rate increased from 136,347 at the end of FY19 to 146,201 at the end of FY20. In addition, the open rate for FY20 was 1,132,118.

Outreach has also seen Facebook growth. Facebook "followers" increased from 3,445 at the end of FY19 to 3,718 at the end of FY20. New this year were a Blog, Twitter and YouTube Channel.

Maryland launches "Ask the Question" Campaign in November 2020

On November 13, MDVA staff had the opportunity to brief Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford on statewide service member, veteran and families suicide prevention efforts. (see photo above)

Following the briefing, the Lt. Governor, MDVA and MD Department of Health, announced the launch of the "Ask the Question" Campaign. This education and awareness campaign encourages human services professionals to begin asking at intake, "have you or a loved one ever served in the military?"

The campaign is modeled off successful initiatives already underway in other states, including Connecticut, New Hampshire and Virginia. Web based resources are provided to professionals, including training on military cultural competency, suicide risk screening and prevention, and veteran related resources.

MDVA is working with other state government agencies to encourage adding the question to their intake processes as well. The campaign will continue into 2021 with the goal to see the question incorporated into more customer entry points across Maryland.

FY2020
1,330,901 Outreach Contacts



Pictured above:
Secretary Owings speaks at the January
Joint Veteran Commissions Summit

Trust Fund and Initiatives

Maryland Veterans Trust Fund Record year in grants to veterans in need

Since 2010, the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (Fund) has helped hundreds of veterans who have fallen on difficult times. The Fund has provided eviction prevention assistance as well as helped with overdue mortgage and utility bills.

This year, the Fund provided approximately \$140,000 in grants to veterans in need. This is an increase of more than \$50,000 over the previous calendar year.

The Fund continues to receive individual and organizational donations. This year, a record \$61,000 in player donations was received from Maryland Live Casino.

The following casinos also provided donations to the Fund:

Perryville	\$7,310
Rocky Gap	\$5,372
Horseshoe	\$3,498
Ocean Downs	\$642
National Harbor	\$168

**The Fund received \$105,174
from our partners at**



(up \$7,000 from 2019)

January 2020 MDVA hosts joint veteran commissions summit

On January 17, lead by the Outreach and Advocacy Program, MDVA hosted the first Joint Veteran Commissions Summit.

For the first time ever, the four Maryland State Commissions concerning veterans came together with MDVA leadership, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) leaders and representatives from County and Local Veteran Commissions.

The Summit included MDVA briefings, USDVA briefings and updates from the four Maryland State Commissions. In addition, there was time for regional discussions and networking.

Since January virtual meetings with local leaders have continued. Presentations on the USDVA homeless program and intimate partner violence awareness program have been provided.

Leaders have received presentations on VSO best practices as well as Purdue University's Military Family Research Institute's Measuring Communities service member, veteran, and families local data search engine.

To continue the momentum, the goal for 2021 will be to hold bi-monthly virtual or in-person meetings.



Pictured above: Deputy Secretary Robert Finn and MDVA Outreach Director, Dana Burl present grant checks to Hero Dogs (left) and Warrior Canine Connection (right)

May 2020

MDVA accepts invitation to co-lead the Maryland based Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Families (SMVF)

The Maryland Department of Health and MDVA are leading the Maryland based Governor’s Challenge along with 27 other states to develop and implement a statewide suicide prevention plan. The Challenge, sponsored by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), convened an interagency military and civilian team of leaders to develop a plan to prevent suicide among SMVF.

The action plan, submitted in September to SAMHSA and USDVA will guide the development of the Comprehensive Statewide Veterans Suicide Prevention Plan as required by Senate Bill 521 (2019).

The short term plan is due by July 1, 2021 to the Maryland General Assembly and Governor. MDVA’s Outreach Program is assisting the Department of Health in the writing of this plan.

The Outreach Program continues to participate in numerous policy academies provided by SAMHSA and will be attending the virtual action plan implementation academy in January 2021.

The Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program

and Fund continues to provide grants to participating organizations who place service dogs with qualifying veterans.

This year, grants were given to Hero Dogs totaling \$15,000 and to Warrior Canine Connection totaling \$10,000. The year end Fund balance was \$34,794.

Two equine therapy programs applied for the program, Maryland Therapeutic Riding and Bridges at Worthmore.

Two meetings of the **Veterans Services Specialist Program in State Government** were held this year. Due to COVID-19 meetings were suspended until the Fall of 2020. One meeting was held in January and a second in November.

November’s virtual meeting focused on suicide prevention and liaisons received the USDVA SAVE Gatekeeper Training. The training, provided by the Nikole Jones, Suicide Prevention Coordinator with the VA Maryland Healthcare System, focused on risk factors associated with suicide and prevention resources available within the VA system.

Additional education sessions will be scheduled in 2021 to make up for missed meetings this year.



Pictured above: October meeting of the Maryland Veterans Commission, Commissioners present and guests

Boards and Commissions

Maryland Veterans Commission

This commission meets quarterly and advises the Secretary on issues related to veterans, including veteran related legislation.

Commissioners represent the Department at commemorative events, present Governor’s Proclamations on special days to include Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The Commission has the following active sub-committees: Maryland Veterans Burial Entitlement, Medical Cannabis Applications for Maryland Veterans, Combating Opioid Abuse, and Incarcerated Veterans.

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor to five-year terms. The Governor also names the Chair. In addition to the eight congressional districts, the following organizations or categories are represented:

- American Ex POW’s
- American Veterans AMVETS
- Catholic War Veterans
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Jewish War Veterans
- Korean War Veterans Association, Inc.
- Marine Corps League
- Maryland Officer’s Association
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- National Association of Black Veterans
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Pearl Harbor Survivors Association- (honorary nonvoting member)
- Polish Legion of American Veterans
- The American Legion
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- Iraq/Afghanistan War Veteran
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Women Veterans
- Member at Large (Chair)



Maryland Veterans Commission Welcomes New Chairman

The Maryland Veterans Commission welcomed its new Chairman on July 20, 2020. Chairman KT Tyler, previously served as a Commissioner representing the National Association of Black Veterans.

Former Maryland State Delegate Clarence “Tiger” Davis announced the appointment during the July Commission meeting.

Chairman Tyler served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1993-2003.

Former Chairman Fred Shinbur served as Chair from 2008 until this July.

(pictured above, from left, MDVA Secretary George Owings, Chairman KT Tyler, former Chairman Fred Shinbur, former Delegate Clarence “Tiger” Davis)

Maryland Veterans Home Commission

This Commission advises the Department on issues related to State veteran homes. They interact with veterans and other organizations to disseminate information concerning Charlotte Hall Veterans Home.

The Commission has fourteen members and meets quarterly. Eleven members are named by the Governor with Senate advice and consent to five-year terms. Three members serve ex-officio, representing the Governor, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

War Memorial Commission

This Commission shares custody and supervision of the War Memorial Building and the War Memorial Plaza with the City of Baltimore. Maintenance costs are equally shared by the State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore.

The Commission meets quarterly and consists of ten members who serve five-year terms; five are appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with the Governor's approval, and five by the Mayor of Baltimore.

Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission

The MDVA Secretary or his/her designee is appointed and serves as a member of this Commission. The Outreach Program Deputy Director currently represents the Secretary.

Maryland Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention

The MDVA Secretary or his/her designee is appointed and serves as a member of this Commission. The Outreach Program Director represents the Secretary.

Governors Workforce Development Board

This Board is the Governor's chief policymaking body for workforce development. The MDVA Secretary or his/her designee is appointed and serves as a member of this Board. The Outreach Program Deputy Director represents the Secretary.

Maryland Interagency Council on Homelessness

The MDVA Secretary or his/her designee is appointed and serves as a member of this Council. The Outreach Program Director represents the Secretary.

Governor's Customer Service Initiative

Despite the teleworking status this year of most personnel, the MDVA Outreach Program facilitated real time customer service training with a focus on the 'new normal' and customer experience during COVID-19. In July, training was provided using Google Meet with personnel having the option to choose between four sessions.

The Department had a 97% training completion by August 2020 with medical leave and lack of internet access being the only mitigating factors preventing a 100% completion rate.

In FY20, MDVA received 91 customer service surveys. Eighty percent of respondents indicated being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their MDVA experience.

This was an 8% increase over FY19 in overall customer satisfaction. Eighty seven percent of customers reported they strongly agreed or agreed that the Department resolved their issue.

In 2021, customer service training will have a focus on wellness and suicide prevention.

“Mike was professional, knowledgeable, and respectful at the most difficult time. He assisted us with his knowledge of the proper way to handle our situation. I will be eternally grateful for his assistance. Thank you Governor Hogan for giving us this assistance.”

(feedback from a customer on their interaction with Michael Cantrell, MDVA Service Program Staff)



Leadership Team

George W. Owings, III
Secretary

Robert Finn
Deputy Secretary

Katie Sonntag
Executive Assistant

Pete Pantzer, Director
Finance and Administration

Phil Munley, Director
Service and Benefits Program

Sharon Murphy, Director
Charlotte Hall Veterans Home

Russell Ware, Director
Cemetery and Memorial Program

Dana Burl, Director
Outreach and Advocacy Program

Mark Hendricks, Grant Administrator
Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs is a State Government Executive Department with a service mission to assist veterans, active duty service members, their families and dependents, in securing benefits earned through military service. Under the Department of Veterans Affairs are five major programs:

- Service and Benefits Program
- Charlotte Hall Veterans Home
- Cemetery and Memorial Program
- Outreach and Advocacy Program
- Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

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