



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

August 6, 2025 at 1:00 PM
Dept. of Corrections HQ, 1920 Technology Parkway, Mechanicsburg

AGENDA

1:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / MOMENT OF SILENCE

COUNCIL INTRODUCTIONS

LEADERSHIP COMMENTS

AWARDS

- GAC-VS Veteran Advocate of the Quarter

OLD BUSINESS

- Review and approval of the minutes from May 7, 2025

UPDATE SINCE LAST MEETING

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Transportation

- Introduction of Panelists
- Panel Discussions

-----short break-----

- Panel Q & A

REMINDERS

3:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting is scheduled for:
November 5, 2025, at 1:00PM
Location: TBD



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 6, 2025, 1:00–2:51 p.m.
Department of Corrections, Mechanicsburg

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES IN ATTENDANCE

BG (PA) Maureen H. Weigl, Chairwoman, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs	Marc Ferraro, DMVA
Tammy Ferguson, Member at Large	Laurel Harry, Dept. of Corrections
Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large	Heidi Secord, Dept. of Agriculture
Gwen Zander, Dept. of Human Services	Jeffrey Wallace, State Civil Service Commission
Joe Shamonsky, Dept. of Health	Leora Appleby, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Danielle Spila, Dept. of Transportation
Dan Kuba, Dept. of Labor & Industry	Constance Snavely, State Veterans Commission
Nicole Faraguna, Dept. of Conservation/Natural Resources	James “Woody” Hogan, PWVC

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Carrie Rowe/Emily Butler, Dept. of Education	Latika Davis-Jones, Drug & Alcohol Programs
Kory Auch, Office of Administration	Tim Shaeffer, Fish & Boat Commission
Tom Foley, Governor’s Policy Office	Micah Snead, Member at Large
Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts	Tina Kotsalos, Dept. of Banking & Securities

OTHERS PRESENT

Dennis Miller, CDVA – Montgomery County	Denise Boehm, VISN 4
Keisha Kerr, VISN 4	Nicole Lynn, VISN 4
Heather Hewitt, PCCD	Jessie Pierce, PDA, PA Council on Aging
Sierra Bilous, DHS	Rick Hamp, DMVA
Kim Kreiser, DMVA	Janette Krolczyk, DMVA
Jayden O’Neill, WCU	Rebecca Yeagley, DMVA
Bryce Backer, WCU	Michelle Copeland, DMVA
Jeff Kauffman, WCU	John Schwartz, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse
Bill Cress, VISN 4	Bob Kleinhample, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse
Kate Kleinert	Scott Chesson, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse
Seth Benge, DMVA	Ed Cherry, DMVA
Bill Reed, VOPA	Jordan Purcell, VOPA
Liz Boateng, AOPC	Dr. Michele Bratina, WCU
Angela Watson, DMVA	Kristin LaVanish, DOE
Chris Clark, DMVA	Keith Graham, DMVA
Jessica Penn Shires, DOC	Stephanie Meyer, DHS
Elizabeth Cooper, DMVA	Joe Batt, DMVA
Gina Mason, DMVA	Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, DMVA
Andrew LaFratte, DOS	Paul Amigh, DOH
Taylor Dippery, DMVA	Chelsea Ellsworth, DMVA

Fred Burke, DDAP	Megan Fisher, PDA PACE Clearinghouse
Beth Pooler, PDA	Stephen Parag, PDA PACE Clearinghouse
Maria Tagliaferri, DMVA	Brendan Auman, DCED
Tom Applebach, CDVA – Lehigh County	Norm Marden, OAG
Kristi Brawley, PSU	Michael Carrington, DOC
Samantha Bessell, LCCAP	Sarah Herr, DMVA
Lisa Grayson, PA Bar Assn.	Ralph Roach, L&I
Ally Murr-Curry	Lucinda Piper, DOH
Zackary Portser, DMVA	Joe Butera, DMVA
Sara Small, Veterans Multi-Service Center	Karen Olson, DMVA
Erica Moore, DMVA	Brian Natali, DMVA
Michael Belcher, DMVA	Lisa Kaye, CDVA – Monroe County
Catherine Bichler, wesoldieron.org	Erin Burkett, wesoldieron.org
Justin Cohen, Veterans Chapel	Randy Wright, DOL VETS

<p>CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND LEADERSHIP REMARKS</p>	<p>The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) was called to order at 1:00 p.m.</p> <p>Ms. Janette Krolczyk welcomed participants and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence.</p> <p>Mr. Marc Ferraro thanked everyone for joining the discussion and shared that the new Lickdale Veterans Outreach Center is open.</p> <p>BG (PA) Maureen Weigl emphasized continued success with the discussion-based format and updated the audience on Housing Pilot Crisis conversations and details of the upcoming VETCon in October.</p>
<p>AWARDS</p>	<p>Mr. Bill Cress was recognized as the GAC-VS Veteran Advocate of the Quarter for his work as the VISN 4 Network Homeless Coordinator and his constant support and expertise.</p>
<p>APPROVAL OF MAY 7, 2025, MINUTES</p>	<p>The minutes from the May 7, 2025, meeting were unanimously approved after a motion by Ms. Leora Appleby and a second by Mr. Marc Ferraro.</p>
<p>UPDATE SINCE LAST MEETING</p>	<p>Ms. Krolczyk shared an overview of the work done since last quarter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 421 participants completed the <i>Safeguarding our Veterans</i> CEU training. ▪ The first meeting of the Housing Crisis Pilot Program occurred in July. ▪ The first GAC-VS Testimonial Article on Arts Residency and Music Therapy has been posted to the webpage. ▪ A new Women Veteran brochure has been added to the DMVA site. ▪ Delaware County adopted the Veterans Trust Fund jury donation option. ▪ DMVA and PennDOT discussed enhanced outreach and communication at Welcome and Driver's Licensing Centers. ▪ Public scam-prevention (vertical) table tents are available online to download.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ November success video topic selected: <i>Veteran Treatment Court Expansion.</i>
DISCUSSION TOPIC	Veteran Transportation
PANEL DISCUSSION	<p><u>Question 1:</u> What surveys or studies have been done to assess transportation needs in Pennsylvania, and are there specific areas of need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Danielle Spila detailed the public transportation fixed-route and shared-ride systems. There are 52 transit agencies offering transportation in all 67 counties, but challenges exist in rural and low-density areas. ▪ Ms. Nicole Lynn explained that the Federal VA uses the VetRide software to map economical routes for those needing service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A VISN 4-wide transportation gap analysis is underway, providing insights later this year. ▪ Mr. Dennis Miller shared Montgomery County’s transportation program services a large rural area, providing about 750 one-way trips a year, which will cross county lines if needed. ▪ Ms. Gwen Zander outlined the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) at the Department of Human Services. The MATP serves Medicaid recipients but varies by county. Subsidies cover 85% of the fare for seniors and disabled clients. ▪ Ms. Keisha Kerr shared feedback through the HUD-VASH program at the VA, revealing older veterans in wheelchairs experience challenges with accessible transportation options. ▪ Ms. Jessie Pierce explained that over 20,000 older Pennsylvanians, caregivers, and community members were surveyed to develop the Aging Our Way, PA plan. Data showed challenges with transportation to/from medical appointments, awareness of options, and option navigation. <p><u>Question 2:</u> What operational programs target transportation needs for vulnerable populations, and can they support those populations as they increase in the coming years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Kerr shared that her position (VISN 4 HUD-VASH Geriatric Specialist) was created two years ago to specifically address the growing needs of an aging veteran population in Pennsylvania. ▪ Ms. Zander mentioned that it will be difficult to predict future transportation needs. Those aging at home may need more assistance compared to those in congregate housing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Educating the public is a constant effort. All types of access points, including user-friendly technology, will help spread awareness. ▪ Ms. Spila stated that PennDOT understands the current needs will only increase. PennDOT’s current transportation programs are in deficit spending, requiring creative solutions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs were utilized differently 40 years ago when they were first established. Residents are also driving longer, meaning they need more assistance when they finally stop driving themselves.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some residents use transportation services for intense medical visits like dialysis or cancer treatment, and do not want to wait an hour after their treatment to wait for a ride home. ▪ Ms. Pierce shared that the Aging Our Way, PA plan assists the elder population by considering their needs as an opportunity to honor them as they age with dignity. ▪ Ms. Lynn expressed that the VA is laying the groundwork for future veterans needing more services. A shared struggle exists, knowing demand will increase. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quantifying needs and locations may impact funding for services and outreach. ▪ Ms. Zander discussed how the MATP could potentially partner with the VA to assist veterans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ VA hospitals are not currently Medicaid-funded providers, but efficient use of shared resources can be discussed further if regulatory flexibility exists. <p><u>Question 3:</u> How can DMVA help? Are there ways that DMVA could share your messaging or work collaboratively with you in ways that we currently do not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Zander shared that 3% of Medicaid enrollees use MATP. Conclusions reveal the public is unaware of existing programs or they may not be convenient. ▪ Ms. Spila and Ms. Zander have collaborated in recent years to create one online statewide application for transportation programs through PennDOT and DHS. ▪ Community linchpin turnover causes replacements to build programmatic awareness from scratch. Consistent outreach and education are key to serving the public. ▪ PennDOT maintains 10 years of compiled shared-ride data and is willing to use this information for collaborative conclusion drawing. ▪ Ms. Pierce shared the Department of Aging is reassessing PA LINK, intended to function as a one-stop shop for resources for older adults. A prominent transportation portion of the portal will help educate consumers and providers alike. ▪ Sister agencies can assist by sharing transportation information to individuals assisting older adults or those with disabilities.
<p>Q & A / COMMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCNR is working to connect mass transit to state lands, knowing some residents cannot reach these locations. ▪ A state-wide transportation online resource hub is needed. Public transportation resources exist by county when utilizing the QR code on the PennDOT flyer provided. ▪ DHS and DMVA have been working on PA Navigate which may evolve into a one-stop shop for all resources, which will take time. PennDOT is hoping to put more transportation information on the 211 system. ▪ A transportation-focused benefit navigation training for the Area Agencies on Aging was suggested.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transportation program eligibility includes subsidies for seniors (over age 65), Medicaid recipients, and people with disabilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ A question arose about veterans who have a federal VA disability rating possibly being deemed eligible for various state disability programs, even if the rating was under 100%. ▪ Enough programming may exist throughout Pennsylvania, but the matter of convenience may be a bigger issue. ▪ MATP occasionally denies transportation requests, and this data set can be analyzed to determine unmet community needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ VISN 4 is now capturing transportation denials by reason and zip code for their gap analysis and strategic planning ▪ Technology can pose challenges for older residents, so a multi-factor approach is needed to communicate options and enrollment. PennDOT call centers are vital and will remain an assistive option. ▪ Some veterans in Pennsylvania receive medical care outside the commonwealth, which may be an area of unmet need. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Paratransit providers travel across state borders to some degree but may not go everywhere they are needed. Public transportation is also not the answer for every circumstance. ➢ Exceptional transportation instances exist through the MATP, which may serve as an option that can be adopted elsewhere. ▪ Some residents are unable to leave their houses to utilize transportation options. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Liability and insurance restrictions prevent providers from crossing a threshold. Ambulance services are a solution in some of these instances. ▪ Drivers are constantly in need. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ PennDOT transit agencies and VA medical centers have difficulty recruiting drivers. ▪ Housing and transportation challenges are often interconnected, so home modification programs could be utilized to assist in some cases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Keeping older adults and those with disability challenges in their homes longer while providing them with transportation is a proactive, cost diversion from more expensive or intensive services later. ▪ Those interested in becoming volunteer drivers to transport veterans can visit their local VA hospital webpage and register under “volunteer services”.
<p style="text-align: center;">LINKS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aging Our Way, PA Department of Aging Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ▪ shared-ride-transportation-study-phase-1-report-2025.pdf
<p style="text-align: center;">REMINDERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore resources and prepare for the next quarterly meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ DMVA website: (www.dmva.pa.gov) ➢ GAC-VS Webpage: (Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services (pa.gov))

	➤ Veterans Registry is where service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers can sign up for the “Together We Serve” publication. (www.register.dmva.pa.gov).
	Next Meeting: November 5th, 2025, 1:00–3:00 p.m. Location TBD
ADJOURNMENT	The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

NEW ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Ms. Krolczyk will connect Ms. Zander of DHS with Ms. Lynn from VISN 4 regarding a possible MATP-VA connection.	Complete
2	Ms. Krolczyk will share PennDOT’s information flyer with the GAC-VS distro.	Complete
3	Ms. Zander will share an MATP flyer with DMVA to disburse through its channels for outreach and education.	Complete
4	Ms. Krolczyk will connect Ms. Lynn from VISN 4 to Mr. Graham of DMVA to discuss VA discrepancies or challenges by location.	Complete

OLD ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
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WELCOME

August 6, 2025

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

Dept. of Corrections

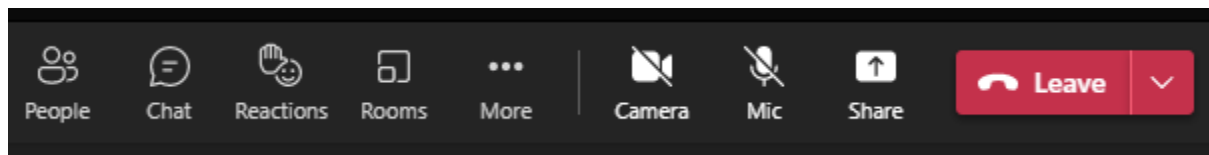
Mechanicsburg

**This meeting, and all content, is being recorded for executive documentation only.
Your continued participation is acknowledgement and approval of recording.**

--We will begin at 1:00pm--



Chat function is used to submit comments or questions



*Please enter your **full name and agency** for attendance purposes





INTRODUCTIONS & OPENING COMMENTS



Mr. Bill Cress

- Mr. Cress, LCSW, serves as the VA Healthcare VISN 4 Network Homeless Coordinator.
- Mr. Cress is integral to serving homeless veterans in Pennsylvania and continually communicates goals and successes from VISN 4 to the GAC-VS.
- He routinely makes himself available to assist DMVA with any of our needs or concerns.





OLD BUSINESS

SINCE LAST MEETING



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

- Held second session of “Safeguarding our Veterans” CEU training in June with 144 participants. (421 participants in 2025).
- DMVA held the first Housing Crisis Pilot Program meeting in July.
- The first GAC-VS testimonial article is on our webpage focusing on Arts Residency and Music Therapy programs at the Veterans Homes.
- Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta’s women veteran brochure page was added to the Women Veteran page on the DMVA site.
- Delaware County jurors donated to our Veterans’ Trust Fund! (7th county).
- DMVA met with reps from PennDOT to strategize how to use communication channels through Welcome Centers and Driver’s Licensing Centers to reach veterans.

SINCE LAST MEETING



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs



- Vertical Table Tents have been produced and added to the DMVA website.
- Our annual GAC-VS video topic chosen: Veteran Treatment Court Expansion



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Veteran Transportation



Panelist Introductions and Questions



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

--SHORT BREAK--



Q & A Session



- **DMVA website: www.dmva.pa.gov**
- **Visit the [GAC-VS webpage](#) for meeting materials**
- **Sign up for the [Veterans' Registry](#) and the “*Together We Serve*” online monthly newsletter**



NEXT MEETING:

November 5 at 1:00PM
TBD