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## Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

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May 7, 2025 at 1:00 PM  
Dept. of Agriculture, Harrisburg

### AGENDA

1:00 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**COUNCIL INTRODUCTIONS**

**OPENING COMMENTS**

**AWARDS**

- GAC-VS Veteran of the Quarter

**OLD BUSINESS**

- Review and approval of the minutes from February 5, 2025

**UPDATE SINCE LAST MEETING**

**DISCUSSION TOPIC: Veteran Employment & Entrepreneurship**

- Resources and Programs for Veterans and Employers
- Federal Programs for Transition and Job Placement

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

- Veteran Business Assistance
- Considerations for Women or Minority Veterans

**CLOSING COMMENTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

3:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Next Meeting** is scheduled for:  
August 6, 2025, at 1:00PM  
Dept. of Corrections, Mechanicsburg



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## Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

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MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 7, 2025, 1:00–2:47 p.m.  
Department of Agriculture, Harrisburg

### COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES IN ATTENDANCE

BG (PA) Maureen H. Weigl, Chairwoman, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs	Marc Ferraro, DMVA
Tom Foley, Governor's Policy Office	Laurel Harry, Dept. of Corrections
Tammy Ferguson, Member at Large	Micah Snead, Member at Large
Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large	Heidi Secord, Dept. of Agriculture
Andrew Barnes, Dept. of Human Services	Kory Auch, Office of Administration
Joe Shamonsky, Dept. of Health	Leora Appleby, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Kara Templeton, Dept. of Transportation
Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts	Crystal Houser, Dept. of Labor & Industry
Tina Kotsalos, Dept. of Banking & Securities	Nick Taylor, State Veterans Commission
Nicole Faraguna, Dept. of Conservation/Natural Resources	

### COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Carrie Rowe/Emily Butler, Dept. of Education	James "Woody" Hogan, PWVC
Latika Davis-Jones/Erica Nocho, Drug & Alcohol Programs	Tim Shaeffer/Jonathan Swanger, Fish & Boat Commission
Jeffrey Wallace/Pam Iovino, State Civil Service Commission	

### OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Pipe, Governor's Office	Janette Krolczyk, DMVA
Meghna Patel, Governor's Policy Office	John Noll, DMVA
Jeffrey Wallitsch, DMVA	Kristin LaVanish, DOE
Hazel Diaz, VBOC at PSU	Rebecca Yeagley, DMVA
Cynthia Lendof, DOL VETS	Stephanie Meyer, DHS
Alanna Caffas, Veterans Health Foundation	Alexis Vogan, DOC
Kathy Silvia, Military Women's Memorial	Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, DMVA
Andrew LaFratte, DOS	Chad Curry, Fish & Boat Commission
Taylor Dippery, DMVA	Tom Snedden, Aging
Fred Burke, DDAP	Michelle Copeland, DMVA
Randy Wright, DOL VETS	Keisha Kerr, VISN 4
Bill Cress, VISN 4	Michelle McGinnis, DHS
Tom Applebach, CDVA – Lehigh County	Norm Marden, OAG
Shannon D'Agostino, DOH	Michael Carrington, DOC
Brendan Auman, DCED	Sarah Herr, DMVA
Angel McLaughlin, VOPA	Ralph Roach, L&I
Kristi Brawley, PSU	Lucinda Piper, DOH

Matthew Colian, L&I	Joe Butera, DMVA
Samantha Bessell, LCCAP	Missy Russell, LCCAP
Lana Evans, DMVA	Karen Olson, DMVA
Erica Moore, DMVA	Brian Natali, DMVA
Maria Tagliaferri, DMVA	Lisa Kaye, CDVA- Monroe County
Samantha Cossman, DMVA	Jennifer Spitler, DMVA
Catherine Bichler, wesoldieron.org	Erin Burkett, wesoldieron.org
Michael Belcher, DMVA	Justin Cohen, Veterans Chapel

<p><b>CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OPENING REMARKS</b></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>Marc Ferraro, Executive Deputy Secretary for the DMVA, thanked attendees and emphasized the Council's new methods of communicating successes, which will require membership support. He announced that the Lickdale outreach center would open by May 30.</p>
<p><b>AWARDS</b></p>	<p>Ms. Keisha Kerr was recognized as the GAC-VS Veteran Advocate of the Quarter for her work as the VISN 4 HUD-VASH Geriatric Specialist and her instrumental assistance in housing veterans with complex needs.</p>
<p><b>APPROVAL OF FEB 5, 2025, MINUTES</b></p>	<p>The minutes from the February 5, 2025, meeting were unanimously approved after a motion by Mr. Nick Taylor and a second by Mr. Kory Auch.</p>
<p><b>UPDATE SINCE LAST MEETING</b></p>	<p>Ms. Krolczyk shared an overview of the work done since last quarter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued discussion on veteran homelessness and landlord incentives for HUD-VASH voucher use.</li> <li>• Creation of an Interagency Council on Homelessness, influenced by GAC-VS advocacy.</li> <li>• Completion of a collaborative white paper on veteran homelessness.</li> <li>• Development of outreach/training materials focused on women veterans.</li> <li>• Drafting of a veteran-employer educational flyer by DMVA and L&amp;I</li> <li>• Veterans' Trust Fund information was shared with school, public, and academic libraries statewide.</li> <li>• Updated Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign materials for 2025.</li> <li>• February "Safeguarding our Veterans" CEU training had 277 participants; the next session is set for June 18.</li> <li>• A quarterly veteran testimonial will be highlighted to demonstrate Council impact.</li> <li>• An annual video, to be selected by poll, will be featured at the November meeting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DISCUSSION TOPIC</b></p>	<p>Veteran Employment and Entrepreneurship</p>

<p><b>RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS AND EMPLOYERS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms. Crystal Houser thanked BG (PA) Weigl and DMVA for recognizing three Pennsylvania employers making significant efforts to hire and retain veteran workers. This is the second year DMVA recognized employers as part of the annual Veteran Workforce Development Awards event.</li> <li>▪ Ms. Houser discussed programs that job seekers or employers could utilize to assist veterans. Across Pennsylvania, skills gaps are present in various industries. Apprenticeships allow job seekers to earn while they learn, and the Apprenticeship and Training Office at L&amp;I can assist employers in creating these programs.</li> <li>▪ Apprenticeships have five key factors: 1. They are paid positions. 2. The positions are on-the-job training. 3. Individuals receive related technical instruction. 4. Mentorship opportunities are included. 5. Individuals receive industry-recognized credentials. The GI Bill can be utilized with an apprenticeship, and veterans utilizing Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&amp;E) services are eligible.</li> <li>▪ Employers may qualify for the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit if they hire individuals from target groups, including veterans, and apply within 28 days of hiring. The new employee must work a certain number of hours within the first year.</li> <li>▪ Five categories of tax benefits exist for hiring a veteran with different needs, posing significant financial benefits for the employer. Companies need to connect to the online PA CareerLink system to apply.</li> <li>▪ Ms. Houser shared details of the Federal Bonding Program as another business incentive for those who hire at-risk or hard-to-place job seekers. This could include reentrants, those who have filed for bankruptcy, those in recovery, those with a dishonorable military discharge, or anyone the employer feels would be considered at risk.</li> <li>▪ The Federal Bonding Program is free and requires no paperwork and no waiting. Bonds are issued immediately, are viable for six months, and offer \$5,000 coverage. Employers can call 800-345-2555 or email <a href="mailto:RA-BWPO-TaxCredits@pa.gov">RA-BWPO-TaxCredits@pa.gov</a> for assistance.</li> <li>▪ DMVA and L&amp;I are collaborating on a flyer for employers, sharing the benefits of hiring veterans and available resources. Employers may not track applicants with prior military service, so these materials may encourage businesses to collect that information.</li> <li>▪ BG (PA) Weigl stressed the value of tracking applicants' military backgrounds and sharing program information across agencies.</li> <li>▪ Ms. Houser's team meets regularly with groups of employers to provide education on various programs they may not be familiar with. Information is available on the L&amp;I website, but the team is happy to perform outreach with interested groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR TRANSITION AND JOB PLACEMENT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mr. Randy Wright listed programs the Department of Labor oversees, including the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), placing DVOP and LVER positions at CareerLink locations, the TAP program, the VR&amp;E program, the USERRA program, and the HIRE VETS Medallion program.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms. Cynthia Lendof briefed the audience on the Off-Base Transition Training (OBTT) program. Pennsylvania was one of the first states to sign on to OBTT, which launched as a pilot in 2022. The program contains 13 free employment workshops for veterans and families.</li> <li>▪ The most attended workshops were job fair strategies and on-the-spot interviews. Over 7,400 virtual and in-person workshops have been held in Pennsylvania, with 39% of participants having separated from the military over 10 years ago.</li> <li>▪ Workshops have been set up at various locations and anyone working to help veterans find employment can reach out to Ms. Lendof’s team for OBTT training added to a job fair or veteran event.</li> <li>▪ A suggestion was made for OBTT programs to partner with agencies like Banking &amp; Securities to combine efforts and provide multiple educational programs in a single event.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VETERAN BUSINESS ASSISTANCE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms. Hazel Diaz explained the Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC) at Penn State is the first center in Pennsylvania, with 31 in existence across the nation.</li> <li>▪ Workshops exist to walk veterans through the entrepreneurial process of starting or growing a business.</li> <li>▪ The VBOC’s legal clinic aids veteran business owners and entrepreneurs through contracts and other challenging processes, like obtaining an LLC, which is free for veterans and families in Pennsylvania.</li> <li>▪ Ms. Diaz works with local farmers who wish to partner with restaurants for a farm-to-table experience, which is a focus area for the VBOC.</li> <li>▪ Partners at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) assist with business planning from concept to market research and mentorship. Other partnerships help obtain veteran certification and help navigate government contracts.</li> <li>▪ Older veterans may want to sell small businesses if family members do not wish to take over. The VBOC can assist with succession planning to find another veteran willing to learn about and purchase the business.</li> <li>▪ Two-day “Boots to Business” workshops and one-day “Reboot” sessions are available through the Small Business Administration. Future sessions may include agriculture topics as many veterans have small farmettes or homestead farms that can be developed into small businesses.</li> <li>▪ Pennsylvania is well-situated for business due to its population, proximity to large cities, and comparatively low business startup costs.</li> <li>▪ An eastern and western coordinator will be hired to increase reach across the commonwealth.</li> <li>▪ The Business One-Stop Shop (BOSS) was created to compile all business resources for Pennsylvania. This small team contains experts on every facet of business and looks forward to collaborating with anyone needing their assistance. The BOSS website maintains resources for veteran businesses and employer services.</li> <li>▪ Ms. Leora Appleby encouraged the sharing of veteran-specific resources with BOSS to help assist those businesses more efficiently.</li> </ul>

<p><b>CONSIDERATIONS FOR WOMEN OR MINORITY VETERANS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms. Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta explained the educational outreach material outline created since the last quarterly meeting, touching on three main topics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 1. How to upgrade a military discharge for those involuntarily separated after reporting military sexual trauma, assault, or harassment. Upgrading is important to utilize VA benefits and healthcare.</li> <li>➤ 2. Expanded VA services for women not offered in years past.</li> <li>➤ 3. Entrepreneurship and education programs like Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (VWISE) at Syracuse University, which teaches free business fundamentals.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Many resources exist to help women veterans gain skills and become more competitive. Those reentering society from incarceration or coming out of homelessness need more help with self-sufficiency.</li> <li>▪ Finalized educational outreach materials will be shared with Veteran Service Organizations, Veteran Service Officers, and outreach personnel. Materials may also assist gentlemen performing intake or outreach to broach sensitive topics with women veterans. Once a need is identified, a hand-off can be performed to discuss details more comfortably.</li> <li>▪ Discussion covered the complexities of qualifying for VA Healthcare and the extent of services available depending on numerous factors. Establishing a relationship with the VA is highly encouraged to determine needs and ensure necessary assistance is provided.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LINKS SHARED THROUGH CHAT or AFTER MEETING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Off-Base Transition Training information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <a href="#">Off-Base Transition Training (OBTT)   U.S. Department of Labor</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC) at Penn State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <a href="https://vboc.psu.edu">https://vboc.psu.edu</a></li> <li>➤ For assistance, email <a href="mailto:vboc@psu.edu">vboc@psu.edu</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ PA Business One-Stop Shop contact information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <a href="mailto:Business.dced@pa.gov">Business.dced@pa.gov</a> or call 833-722-6778</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>CLOSING COMMENTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ BG (PA) Weigl would love to see a VWISE program in Pennsylvania, as they have not operated within the commonwealth in many years.</li> <li>▪ A suggestion of an apprenticeship program through L&amp;I to assist DMVA, DHS, and DOH regarding CNAs was offered.</li> <li>▪ BG (PA) Weigl suggested the possibility of Lunch and Learn sessions after a quarterly meeting to continue discussing major topics.</li> <li>▪ DMVA began discussing a Pilot program for hard-to-place veterans, and a meeting will be set to continue further collaboration.</li> <li>▪ VETCon 2025 will occur October 22-25<sup>th</sup> in Valley Forge. Invitations for agency secretaries should go out by mid-May. Correspondence will come from Chad Rettew from PNGAS. The 2025 conference will feature a Shark Tank event.</li> <li>▪ Ms. Krolczyk reminded everyone to review the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ DMVA website: (<a href="http://www.dmva.pa.gov">www.dmva.pa.gov</a>)</li> <li>➤ GAC-VS Webpage: (<a href="#">Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services (pa.gov)</a>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	Veterans Registry is where service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers can sign up for the “Together We Serve” publication. ( <a href="http://www.register.dmva.pa.gov">www.register.dmva.pa.gov</a> ).
	<b>Next Meeting:</b> <b>August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 1:00–3:00 p.m.</b> Department of Corrections, Mechanicsburg
<b>ADJOURNMENT</b>	The meeting adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

**NEW ACTION ITEMS**

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Ms. Krolczyk will connect Ms. Lendof to Ms. Kotsalos of the Dept. of Banking & Securities to consider partnering on joint events targeting veterans and their families.	Complete
2	Ms. Krolczyk will connect Ms. Diaz and Ms. Secord of the Dept. of Agriculture to discuss small agriculture business development in Pennsylvania.	Complete
3	Ms. Moore to connect with Ms. Diaz (will share the 2026 Veteran Farming Conference information once dates are finalized).	Complete
4	DMVA to organize a conversation regarding an apprenticeship program for CNAs.	Complete

**OLD ACTION ITEMS**

#	ACTION	STATUS
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# WELCOME

May 7, 2025

## Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

Dept. of Agriculture

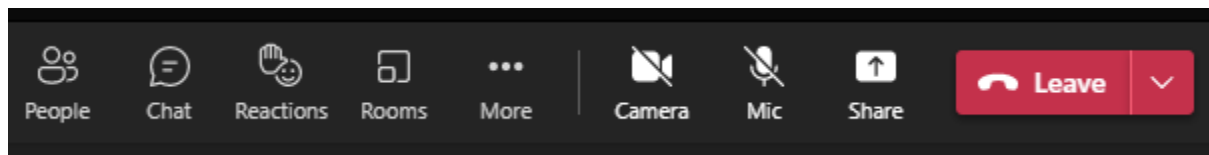
Harrisburg

**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**



## Ms. Keisha Kerr

- Ms. Kerr, LCSW, has been serving the Lebanon VAMC since 2007.
- Ms. Kerr was instrumental in growing the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program and shaping one of the nation's highest-performing HUD-VASH programs.
- She is dedicated to serving the veteran population and provides unwavering support for those needing assistance.





# OLD BUSINESS

## SINCE LAST MEETING



Pennsylvania  
Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs

- Met with Brendan Auman to continue discussing housing needs in PA
    - Connected Brendan and Keisha Kerr to discuss landlord incentives
  - PA Interagency Council on Addressing Homelessness
  - GAC-VS Collaborative Homelessness Paper – Suspense May 9<sup>th</sup>
  - Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta created talking points for outreach initiatives
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- Employer/employee flyer creation between L&I and DMVA
  - Veterans Trust Fund information shared with PDE for disbursement to libraries
  - Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign materials and toolkit refresh

# SINCE LAST MEETING



Pennsylvania  
Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs

- Safeguarding our Veterans training (1 CEU): 277 participants in Feb.



## SAFEGUARDING OUR VETERANS

**Presented by Pennsylvania Department of Military  
Affairs: Michelle Copeland & Janette Krolczyk**

*Wednesday, June 18, from 10:00AM-11:00AM*

*Live Zoom Webinar, 1 Credit*

1. Understand the challenges with assisting veterans in PA and why DMVA seeks assistance from community professionals.
2. Understand Protective Services and the reporting process.
3. Identify the various types of scams targeted toward veterans and older adults.
4. Know which state agencies to contact regarding the Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign, or information/materials on financial literacy.
5. Understand where to find necessary resources based on the veteran or older adult need.



Registration: [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_\\_ExRpWxNR-STssz3NSONTQ#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN__ExRpWxNR-STssz3NSONTQ#/registration)

# SINCE LAST MEETING



Pennsylvania  
Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs

- Quarterly Testimonials
  - Smaller Initiatives and Updates
  - Photos and Personal Verbiage
  
- Annual Video
  - GAC-VS Success
  - Poll of Suggestions has been emailed to members and designees – Suspense  
Date: May 12th



# **DISCUSSION TOPIC**

## **Veteran Employment and Entrepreneurship**



# Resources and Programs for Veterans and Employers



# **Federal Programs for Transition and Job Placement**



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## Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

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**--SHORT BREAK--**



# Veteran Business Assistance



# **Considerations for Women/Minority Veterans**



# **CLOSING COMMENTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**



- **DMVA website: [www.dmva.pa.gov](http://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:**

**August 6 at 1:00PM**

**Dept. of Corrections, Mechanicsburg**