



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

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VA Summer of Service 2015 May 2015

Background

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a sacred commitment to care for those “who have borne the battle” and their families. This year, VA has made progress on the many challenges we face in delivering care and benefits to Veterans and their families:

- Nationally, VA completed more than 46.8 million appointments between June 1, 2014, and March 31, 2015.
 - In March 2015, VA completed 97 percent of appointments within 30 days of the Veteran’s preferred date.
- The claims backlog has been reduced from peak of 611,000 in March 2013 to 155,000 as of May 15, 2015. This represents a 74 percent reduction in 24 months.
- VA, together with federal, state, and local partners, reduced the estimated number of homeless Veterans by 33 percent as noted in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2014 Point-in-Time (PIT) Estimate of Homelessness.
 - In FY 2014 alone, VA provided services to more than 260,000 homeless or at-risk Veterans in VHA’s homeless programs.
- VA is working to reorganize the department for success, guided by ideas and initiatives from Veterans, employees, and all of our stakeholders. This reorganization is a part of the MyVA initiative and is designed to provide Veterans with a seamless, integrated and responsive customer service experience.

VA Summer of Service Key Facts

VA recognizes there is more work to do to serve Veterans. This summer, VA is renewing our commitment to America’s Veterans, and we’re asking for our partners’ help in honoring that commitment.

It is clear to VA that we cannot fulfill this commitment without help from

- Partners in our community, such as VA volunteers, community members who volunteer at organizations serving Veteran needs, and Veteran Caregivers.

- Partners within our own organization—VA employees going above and beyond in their service to Veterans, working overtime, and volunteering in their communities.
- Public and private sector partners such as non-profits, Veterans Service Organizations, Governors and Mayors, other government agencies, small businesses, and corporations.
- Our partners in Congress, with whom we are committed to working closely to fully resource programs for Veterans.

The Department has an outstanding volunteer program, one that will be highlighted throughout the country this summer. **VA is committed to engaging with 100,000 volunteers by the end of August.** Here are a few of the activities that our volunteers are a part of:

- Providing Veteran transportation.
- Hosting bingo nights, which help Veterans engage in social activities and make connections with other Veterans in their communities.
- Putting together recreational outings, which promotes community engagement, links Veterans to community recreation resources, and facilitates healthy living activities to enhance overall quality of life.
- Cleaning our National Cemetery grounds and headstones.
- Providing support at National Cemetery Public Information Centers and providing assistance at medical facility Information Desks.
- Helping to facilitate community gardens, bringing an element of home and community to the healthcare environment, and provide opportunities to enhance therapeutic recreation programs for Veterans.
- Senior companions to elderly Veterans.

You can help by visiting <http://www.volunteer.va.gov> to find out what your local VA medical facility or National Cemetery needs from volunteers.

VA has strong relationships with private sector companies and non-profit organizations across the country that help support Veterans and VA's programs every day. Our partners help provide support for community gatherings and national events such as Welcome Home events, Homeless Veteran Stand Downs, and Adaptive Sports events. **This summer, VA is committing to growing our partnerships with new MOUs and expanding current agreements to reach more than 15,000 Veterans and family members.**

VA has nearly 350,000 employees, and despite a hiring effort that brought more than 11,000 net new employees onboard over the past year, the Department still needs more health care providers, claims specialists, medical support assistants, and cemetery

directors. **VA's partners can help by getting the word out this summer: VA is a great place to work, with one of the best missions, serving the best clients—Veterans. For more information, those interested can visit <http://mycareeratva.va.gov/> or <http://www.usajobs.gov>.**

VA is expanding services to help better serve Veterans this year, thanks to help from Congress.

- VA needs Congress' help with passing new legislation that supports VA efforts to meet the growing needs of Veterans of all eras.
 - Fully fund VA's budget in fiscal year 2016, eliminating proposed cuts that would impact access to care for 70,000 Veterans.
 - Pass legislation streamlining VA's authorities to rapidly secure agreements with community providers for the benefit of Veterans
 - Pass legislation that would streamline the appeals process for claims.
- As part of VA's Summer of Service, members of Congress can encourage their staff and constituents to
 - Volunteer at their local VA medical facility or National Cemetery.
 - Seek commitments from local businesses to hire Veterans in the community.
 - Encourage medical professionals and other job-seekers to consider opportunities at VA to work in service to Veterans.

VA takes its commitment to care for the Nation's Veterans and their families very seriously, and this summer we invite all of you to join in that commitment. Community by community, state by state, our Nation can work together to serve Veterans during the VA Summer of Service.

- **Look for VA at community events and engage our employees and partners.**
- **Reach out to your local medical facility or National Cemetery to find out what you can do to help.**
- **Check out #VASummerOfService on [Vantage Point](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and join VA in caring for America's Veterans.**

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