



**800-562-2308**

[www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov)

## How Washington State Supports Its Veterans And their Families

<b>Demographics:</b>	670,000	Veterans
	60,000	Active Duty Troops
	28,000	National Guard and Reserve
	2,000,000+	Family members

### Programs for Washington's Veterans

1. **Veterans Service Centers and Field Services Network** – The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) operates Veterans Service Centers in Olympia, Seattle, and Bremerton. In addition, two Veterans Community Services Coordinators are available in the northwestern and central regions of the state. WDVA also contracts with Veterans Service Organizations throughout the state to ensure veterans and their families can receive services in their own community. Veterans or family members can call 1-800-562-2308 to be referred to a benefits specialist or service officer near them.
2. **Outreach to Separating Servicemembers** - The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs uses the **discharge document, DD214**, to establish contact with all who claim Washington State as their intended state of residence upon discharge. Washington's Governor sends a welcome letter; the WDVA Director follows up 90 days later reaffirming the Governor's offer for assistance and includes contact numbers.
3. **Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) and Reintegration Action Plan** pilot partnership with military bases. State employees from WDVA and Washington Employment Security Department (ESD) are embedded in the WTB and the Transition Assistance Office to provide services such as coordination with other states for a seamless service member handoff, VA claims work, and counseling before the service member is discharged. This program is currently in place at Fort Lewis/McChord AFB and will be expanded to the Navy in 2008.
4. **Multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding** with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, Federal VA, Employment Security, Veterans Services Organizations, and several other entities to conduct "Family Activity Days" for drilling units. The Family Activity Days bring **services** (not just briefings) on claims assistance, Federal VA enrollment, jobs or job upgrades, financial assistance, and readjustment counseling, directly to the unit (typically within 90 days of return). This process was the first in the nation and is now being implemented in other states.

5. The **Operation Military Kids** coalition represented by WDVA, the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, US Department of Education, Washington State University, active duty, reserve / national guard representatives and Washington businesses, is working together to serve military kids. The deployment of parents, brothers, sisters and other loved ones affects performance and demeanor both in school and in our communities. Focusing on kids enables us to serve the family as a whole, contributing to a better adjusted family.
6. The **Veterans Innovations Program** was established by the state legislature in 2006 and provided \$2 million to implement two parts of this program.
  - a. The **Defenders Fund** was created to provide assistance to Operation Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom Washington National Guard and Reserve veterans experiencing financial hardship. This is a one-time grant for a maximum of \$1,000.
  - b. The **Competitive Grant Program** was created to assist veterans beyond their initial emergency assistance. It focuses on activities that help veterans or their spouses to obtain living wage employment. It also pays for training before Federal VA benefits begin, as well as licenses or certifications that result in employment.
7. The **Veterans Family Fund (VFF)** is a business-community venture proposed by a group of citizens from Vancouver, WA that was unveiled on November 8, 2007. Simply stated, a person or business can open a VFF Certificate of Deposit with a minimum of \$100.00 for six months. At the end of six months, the investor retains one-half of the interest and the other half is automatically deposited into an account designed to provide assistance to military families. Funding is anticipated to be available for this program in Spring 08.
8. The State Legislature provided for priority inclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom Washington National Guard and Reserve veterans in the **Basic Health Plan** to ensure that there are no gaps in health care while veterans wait for VA benefits or when VA facilities are not conveniently located.
9. A state-funded **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Program** includes 33 professionals counselors located throughout the state, who care for 3000 veterans and family members at no cost and with no visit limit. Some of these counselors also see clients under federal VA Vet Center contracts. Approximately 50% of our clients are family members (including kids) and over 200 are active duty. PTSD providers' direct numbers and referral by the PTSD Program Director can be found on the [www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov) webpage. Other services include: **Consultation and in-service support to K-12 schools** with children of war zone deployed parents; **In-service training to faculty and counselors of higher education** in support of war veterans returning to school; And **training for mental health professionals** who plan to work with war veterans and their family members.
10. The **Veterans Conservation Corps** works with over 70 habitat restoration programs such as salmon recovery, replanting forests, and restoring streams. The program was designed for veterans with PTSD. Veterans with war trauma issues are showing great progress as these constructive activities distance them from the destructive nature of war.  
**Environmental Certificate Training Program** - Returning military veterans can pursue a career in environmental restoration/conservation, receive a monthly stipend of \$1,000, and use other education benefits such as their GI bill and Washington's veteran tuition waivers, as part of a new program being co-sponsored by the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

11. **WDVA contracts with Veterans Service Organizations** and provides training to their members statewide, so they are able to provide claims preparation in their immediate communities. The role of the service officer is to take the veteran or spouse by the hand and assist him/her in navigating the complex claims system, avoiding unnecessary delays due to incomplete applications.

WDVA also established a one of a kind performance system for service officers. The challenge is to prepare a claim with no gaps so that the Federal VA review and approval process is seamless, eliminating multiple requests for information or claims denials. Our service officer network receives approval with nine of every ten issues presented to the Federal VA. Before this system was implemented, only four out of ten issues were approved.

12. **Veterans Service Organizations Auxiliary member training.** WDVA is training VSO auxiliary members on veterans' benefits in an effort to expand outreach, particularly in rural communities. These dedicated auxiliary members provide veterans and their families with more opportunities to hear, understand, apply for and obtain the benefits they earned.
13. **The Incarcerated Veterans Re-Entry Services (IVRS)** was implemented in King County in 1996. Veterans who are referred to this program get reduced sentences in exchange for drug and alcohol treatment and mental health services, housing and employment. This program's recidivism rate is currently at 10% while those not on the program reoffend at a rate of 45%. This program was implemented in Pierce County in early 2007, Clark County started a program February 2008, and we expect for Whatcom County to be on board in early spring 2008.
14. **State Veterans Homes.** WDVA operates three long term care facilities with a combined 650 beds located at Orting, Spokane and Port Orchard (Retsil). These facilities accept veterans and eligible spouses.
15. **The State Veterans Cemetery in Spokane County** will have a groundbreaking in May 2009 and will have its first interment ceremony in May 2010.
16. Collaboration with **DSHS Children's Administration** for veteran cultural competency training opportunities and identifying and serving veteran families in crisis. This will result in referrals to WDVA for parents to undergo PTSD/readjustment counseling in order to regain the parental competency goals established by DSHS. Kids will then be able to safely move from foster care back into the family unit.
17. Collaboration with **DSHS Aging and Disability Administration** to identify veterans and spouses on Medicaid and other social services programs. We apply for all possible benefits resulting in costs shifting to the federal government and allowing DSHS to reinvest the savings on other needy non-veteran citizens.
18. **Building 9 for Veterans** is a transitional housing model designed to provide safe and stable housing for both male and female homeless veterans who are committed to returning to employment and/or independent living. The model provides structure in a respectful, clean and sober environment with individual and group chemical dependency counseling, employment services and life skills groups. Building 9 for Veterans provides assistance, encouragement, and needed support services to foster lasting stability. It also assists veterans in reaching personal goals and breaking the cycle of homelessness.

19. **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project for Women (HVRP-W)** – HVRP-W provides services to homeless women veterans in King, Snohomish, Pierce, Kitsap, and Thurston counties by offering a structured, individually designed case management plan to make veterans employable and secure by providing food, transportation, residential stability and employment services. Through outreach, assessments, and enrollment into the program, women veterans are provided services and activities that will develop or increase job readiness.
20. **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project – Rural (HVRP-R)** – HVRP-R provides services to homeless veterans in 22 rural counties of Eastern WA, as well as 8 counties in Northeastern OR, 10 counties in Northern ID, and 2 counties in Eastern MT, in collaboration with the three Federal VA Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) programs in this region. HVRP resources will maximize the Federal VA efforts in work-readiness, skills development, job preparation, and employment placement. This collaborative effort sets the path for homeless veterans to reintegrate into the labor force and obtain sustainable independent living, while filling many gaps in the community continuum of care model.
21. The **Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP)** is responsible for managing the financial affairs of 615 clients. These clients were declared incompetent by the Federal VA or Social Security Administration to manage their financial affairs. This program is a very successful homeless prevention program, as WDVA can guarantee a landlord or creditor a consistent flow of payments regardless of the client's credit history.
22. **Veteran Owned Business** – The Washington State Veteran/Service member Owned Business Registry was established by SB 5253 during the 2007 Legislative Session. This Registry is one way that our state and its citizens can honor veterans by promoting their businesses and products statewide. Government Agencies and Corporations have access to a statewide list of Veteran/Service Member Owned Businesses for contracting opportunities and Individuals and Families have easy access to a list of those businesses in their communities. In addition to being on a comprehensive list, those businesses receive a window cling decal – specially designed for this program – and have access to downloading the decal for use on business letterhead or other promotional materials.
23. The **Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC)** is a seventeen member Governor appointed advisory board. This board meets quarterly at locations throughout Washington State and advises the Governor and director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs on veterans issues.
24. **Implementation of Women Veterans Program** - The Women Veterans Advisory Committee began meeting in June 2007. The Committee has several stated goals including performing outreach to improve women veterans' awareness for services and benefits and providing assistance in accessing those benefits.
25. **Armed Forces License Plates** - Each branch of service, including the Washington National Guard has its own plate design. Each time a plate is sold or renewed, \$28 is directed to a special account which can be used to maintain the Eastern WA State Veterans Cemetery and provide supportive services to homeless veterans. 9,028 plates have been sold as of January 2008.