



RHODE ISLAND OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT 2017





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Kasim J. Yarn, Rhode Island's
Director of Veterans Affairs,

I am honored to present the 2017 Annual Report for the Office of Veterans Affairs. What an amazing 2017! Rhode Island continues to send the clear message, ***“Every day is Veterans Day.”*** This report provides an overview of our efforts to serve those who’ve served, through our New Veterans Home, the Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and the Veterans Resource Center in Warwick.

Some highlights include:

- ◆ *WaterFire Salute to Veterans with ceremony, resource fair, and full lighting.* The goal of this wonderful annual event is to use WaterFire to educate and raise awareness about our Veterans and the services available to them and their families. It also serves as a way to celebrate, honor, and thank the men and women who served for the sacrifices for our country and our community.
- ◆ *Rhode Island officially opened the state’s new Veterans Home with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Veterans Day.* Located on the 110-acre site of the existing home in Bristol, this state-of-the-art Veterans Home opened with 208 beds. Over 400 construction workers and trades people built a home worthy of the Veterans it serves. Peregrine Group, a Veteran-owned, Rumford-based real estate advisory firm, led the design and construction of the project on behalf of the state. Brewster Thornton Group Architects, a Providence-based, women-owned enterprise, designed the new home. Providence-based Gilbane Construction used its considerable expertise to serve as the project's construction manager. Designed and built to retain a residential feel, the new Veterans Home contains six distinct “neighborhoods” within the 256,000-square-foot building. Each neighborhood has a private family dining room that will allow families to visit and eat with their loved ones, and a “living room” area with a fireplace so residents can sit and relax, read, or socialize with others. Importantly, residents will now have their own living space, a single room that includes a personal bathroom with a shower. Rhode Island is one of the first states to use this new “community living” concept for Veterans’ long-term care, dispensing with the traditional, institutional model.
- ◆ *Rhode Island launched RIServes—the nation’s first statewide coordination network for Veterans, service members, and their families.* RIServes gives service providers access to a variety of resources in legal, housing, employment, medical, financial management, clothing and household goods, education, transportation and more to assist our Veterans. As we continue to fill gaps for those underserved, RIServes allows us to identify needs and find resources through an enhanced coordination of care to improve outcomes for those who’ve served.

In closing, I will continue to bang the drum that our success is defined by our ability to work in a collaborative way and to effectively communicate our efforts to serve those who wore our nation’s uniform. These efforts will allow us and our network of community partners to **“collectively impact”** and improve the health and well-being of our Veterans and their families.

The mission of the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs is simple. We serve the Ocean State's 65,740 Veterans and their families. We continue to accomplish this task through the operations of: (1) the Rhode Island Veterans Resource Center in Warwick, (2) the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Exeter, and (3) the new Rhode Island Veterans Home in Bristol.

Who We Serve

- ◆ **65,470 Veterans live in Rhode Island**
- ◆ **49,391 served in wartime**
- ◆ **3,272 WWII**
- ◆ **6,574 Korean Conflict**
- ◆ **21,725 Vietnam Era**
- ◆ **60,436 Male Veterans**
- ◆ **5,034 Female Veterans**

The Office of Veterans Affairs holds its mission sacred. We will continue to improve and refine our approach to serving Veterans and their families of all eras. Our alliance with community partners, nonprofit organizations, and the federal government continues to grow stronger each day, allowing us connect more Veterans to the resources they need.



"Boots on the Ground" Memorial, created by one of RIOVA's community partners, Operation Stand Down RI



Director Yarn with members of the General Assembly and Veterans from Bristol after hosting a "town hall" meeting to discuss Veterans' issues.

2017 was the first full year under Governor Raimondo's new Director of Veterans Affairs. While we have work to do, progress has been made on a number of fronts this year. A few major milestones for us include:

- ◆ The hiring of a new Cemetery Administrator, Jim Bessel, to oversee operations at the cemetery and ensure Veterans and their families are well cared for and receive the honor, respect, and dignity they have earned.
- ◆ The creation of the Veterans Services Grant program, which provides community partners the opportunity to apply for grants to address the needs of Rhode Island's Veteran population.
- ◆ The completion of the new Rhode Island Veterans Home in Bristol, a new, state-of-the-art facility that is a model nationally on how to deliver skilled nursing care for our Veterans.
- ◆ RIServes, a statewide, collaborative network of care, led by our Veterans Resource Center, which serves as a coordination center for numerous community partners throughout the state and helps ensure there is "no wrong door" for Veterans and their families seeking resources.

A Welcome Home to our Heroes



On Veterans Day, Governor Gina M. Raimondo presided over a traditional ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the official opening of the new Rhode Island Veterans Home. Completed in October, the project has been over a decade in the making. Because of the strong, persistent advocacy of our Veterans community, our state recognized the need for a new home for those Veterans who need skilled nursing care. With their input, we were able to design and build this State-of-the-art facility for the brave men and women who served our country.

This new home provides a resident-centered design with individual rooms, neighborhood-based dining and activity centers, and community-wide amenities including a library, dining options, physical/occupational therapy improvements, and a beautiful chapel. The 260,000 square-foot facility is anchored by a “Main Street” in the central commons building, with six interconnected “neighborhoods.” It is located on the same 100-acre parcel that has served as the home for Rhode Island’s Veterans since 1891.

Upon arrival, guests travel down the tree-lined entry drive and are greeted with views of the relocated historic water tower, which has served as a focal point on the campus’s founding. The new facility takes up almost 45 acres. The property has been redeveloped with additional walking trails, passive and active recreation opportunities, and new landscaping. By siting the new home on the western side of the property, over 50 acres of forested land on the eastern side have been preserved. The entry drive intersects a campus ring road, which provides one-way access around the perimeter of the buildings and to each of the “neighborhoods’ connected to the main commons building. Continuing on entry drive, guests arrive at the main entry plaza, highlighted by a beautiful flag display and ample room for drop-off and pick-up of residents.

A State-of-the-Art Facility



The new Rhode Island Veterans Home is built upon the premise of interconnected service and accessibility. It is designed around the concept of “neighborhoods,” which house groups of residents in a closer and more personal setting. Each neighborhood is divided into two “cottages” that provide a home-like feel while directly linking them to services and amenities in the near vicinity. Each cottage features a series of single-occupancy rooms for residents, a fireplaced lounge, a game room, spa, outdoor recreation area, and full-service kitchen and dining area. For residents seeking variety, other “neighborhoods” are just a quick walk down the interconnected hallways.

In addition to the improved amenities and increased living space, residents enjoy other perks as well. The Veterans Home operates with a “resident-based” focus, aiming to provide those who live here with a sense of being at home instead of an institution. Each individual neighborhood is staffed with 24-hour caregivers. Residents now have more control of over their meal times and medication schedule. Front porches and enclosed outdoor patios encourage recreational enjoyment during the warmer months.

Linking together each of the six neighborhoods is a central hub known as the Commons. The Commons houses a community lounge, gathering hall, chapel, game room equipped with a pool table, and the Bistro Café. Close by, in an area known as “Main Street,” residents have access to have many services like a storefront, walk-in banking service, pharmacy, gym, library, and a barber shop.





The Rhode Island WWII Monument at the cemetery.

The Office of Veterans Affairs operates and maintains the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery (RIVMC) in Exeter as a dignified, solemn resting place for Rhode Island Veterans and their eligible spouses or dependents. Situated on 280 acres, our state's Veterans cemetery showcases our state's everlasting appreciation for those who served this country honorably.

Interments Averaging 107 internments a month, the RIVMC remains one of the busiest state Veterans cemeteries in the nation. Last fiscal year, the cemetery conducted 1,292 committal services. Its staff consists of 16 employees, 12 full-time and four seasonal.

Memorials and Monuments The RIVMC offers all Veterans and their families the option to have the Veteran's name inscribed on the memorial wall or memorial walkway. Notification of the memorial wall/walkway program is sent out each February. Many military units, organizations, and campaigns also have monuments throughout the cemetery to honor their respective Veterans. Monument design, placement, and installation is coordinated with the RIVMC leadership. Some of the new and upcoming monuments include:

- ◆ The completion of United States Air Force Monument on September 9
- ◆ The completion of the Submarine Memorial on September 30
- ◆ The groundbreaking for the Cape Verdean Veterans Memorial on September 30

Ceremonies The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs conducts an annual Memorial Day observance at the cemetery against the fitting backdrop of the World War II Monument. Throughout the year, the RIVMC hosts several events that promote our state's unending gratitude to those Veterans who have so ably served our country. They include, among others:

- ◆ Wreaths Across America
- ◆ 9/11 Patriot Day Remembrance
- ◆ Tolling of the Bells Ceremony
- ◆ Armed Forces Day (Echo Taps)
- ◆ Memorial Day Commemoration



Wreaths Across America
Ceremony 2017

Partnerships In 2017, the Office of Veterans Affairs and the RIVMC continued to build and maintain partnerships with several organizations throughout the state. These relationships not only promote the mission of providing Veterans a dignified resting place, but also strengthen the Veteran community through outreach, fellowship, and a sense of community. The RIVMC Administrator participates as a member of the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission and conducts outreach with the local Veterans' service organizations, including the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Other valued relationships include:

- ◆ Funeral Directors Association of RI
- ◆ Gold Star Families
- ◆ Naval Station Newport
- ◆ Patriot Guard Riders
- ◆ Sons and Daughters of the Revolution
- ◆ The University of Rhode Island
- ◆ Rhode Island Job Corps of Exeter
- ◆ Rhode Island National Guard
- ◆ VA National Cemetery Administration



Wreaths Across America Ceremony



Jim Bessel, the new
Cemetery Administrator

Meet the New Administrator In October 2017, the Office of Veterans Affairs hired new leadership for the cemetery. Jim Bessel, a Veteran of the U.S. Air Force, is a 1988 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and retired as a lieutenant colonel after 21 years of distinguished service. Jim was an Instructor Weapon Systems Officer (IWSO) and retired as a Master Navigator, with over 3,400 flying hours in the F-4 Phantom and the F-15E Strike Eagle. After his service, Jim joined the online merchant Amazon as an Operations Supervisor and helped open its one million square-foot Fulfillment Center in Fall River, MA.

Looking Forward The Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery is seeking a qualified firm to conduct a land survey of undeveloped land, complete mapping of existing burial sites, perform accurate verification of defined areas, and submit a cemetery master plan. This project will serve as a tool for future improvement and expansion. The Veterans Cemetery is also working in partnership with the RI Department of Transportation to build a new staging area to host events and better serve funeral parties.

Serving those who served

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs takes great pride in serving the Rhode Island Veteran population. Below are just a few examples of how our case managers have made the difference in the lives of a Veteran and his or her family (shared with the Veterans' permission).

David DosReis

Case 1

James Barnhill is a 95-year-old WWII Navy Veteran. We were honored to present him with a citation in recognition of his bravery, sacrifice, and service in the Pacific Theatre during WWII with the U.S. Navy. Upon Mr. Barnhill's return from overseas, he continued his education and became the longtime Professor of Drama at Brown University. David presented Prof. Barnhill the citation at his home in Providence in September.



David DosReis presents James Barnhill with a citation

Case 2

In November of 2017, Mr. William Follett came into our office looking for assistance in dealing with a debt of \$2,392 to the VA due to a discrepancy involving the guardianship of Mr. Follett's adult disabled grandchild. Mr. Follett has raised his grandson, who has been disabled since birth. Even though the VA increased the service-connected compensation payments to Mr. Follett because of his dependent grandson, this allotment was reduced because the child was never formally adopted. David assisted Mr. Follett by helping him gather documentation to prove his grandson's disability and show he had been claiming him as a dependent on his tax returns. As a result, the VA reversed its decision.

David Rothermel

Case 1

Thomas Venditelli came to our office in desperate need of assistance. David took on his case and helped guide him through VA benefits process and advised him about available wrap-around services. Learning that he has cancer, enrollment into the Providence VA Medical Center was crucial. David transported Thomas to the VA and helped him establish a primary care provider. David also coordinated transportation through Medicare to establish transportation to and from his chemotherapy appointments. Having served in Vietnam and earning a bronze star, David helped him file a comprehensive service connected disability with the VA Regional Office, using research from Thomas's service records. He is now connected with a financial coach to assist with his financial situation. Thomas had several problems but identified only one during intake. Now he has multiple resources and an overlapping network of support.



David Rothermel attends an outreach event with the RI National Guard

Case 2

Marc Earl Sereby came into the office wondering if he was a Veteran. After ordering a DD-214 from National Archives, RIOVA discovered he was eligible for state Veterans benefits as well as VA healthcare. He now is enrolled in the VA Healthcare System and has received his exemption for property tax based on his disabled veteran status. His information was then submitted to the RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery, where he is now pre-qualified for burial services. This Vietnam Veteran is now utilizing all benefits he has earned for serving our nation.

2017
Jan

RIOVA issues the first Annual Report

2017
Feb

RI Veterans Home Celebrates Residents' Birthdays

2017
Mar

Initial RI Veterans Service Grant Issued

2017
Apr

RIOVA Partners with RI Dept. of Corrections and Dept. of Labor and Training for Veterans Reintegration Program

2017
May

Cornerstone Laying at The New Veterans Home

2017
Jun

Director Yarn met with Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans Services

2017
Jul

Governor Announces Rhode Island's Nation-Leading Drop in Veterans Unemployment Rate

2017
Aug

RIOVA hosts NACVSO Two-Day leadership summit

2017
Sep

Operation Stand Down Weekend

2017
Oct

2017-2018 RIOVA Service Grant Program Launched

2017
Nov

Grand Opening of the New Rhode Island Veterans Home

2017
Dec

Launch of RI Serves, a coordinated network of care for Veterans

January

Veterans Affairs Issues the 1st Annual Report under the new Director

Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs issued the first Annual Report under the newly appointed Director. The report provided information on the office's mission, history and summarize the achievements in the past year.

February

Veterans Birthday Celebrations at the Rhode Island Veterans Home

To honor all of the birthdays of our residents at the Veterans Home, the staff implemented a monthly Ice Cream Social event to recognize the birthdays of each resident that occur in that month. The Ice Cream Socials include ice cream, cake, diabetic alternatives, and live music by talented community members. Director Yarn attended the February social and has made it a permanent fixture on his schedule so that he can share in the birthday celebrations of the Veterans who live at the home.

March

RI Veterans Service Grant Program

Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs launched its first annual Veterans service grant program. With the assistance of the Division of Purchasing, RIOVA awarded five Veteran Services Grants, totaling \$200,000, to four organizations. The awardees sought additional resources for programs designed to improve or enhance services to Veterans in the areas of housing, legal assistance, and transportation. The four awardees were Operation Stand Down Rhode Island (two separate grants for two different programs), the RI Public Transportation Authority, the YWCA's Gateway to Independence program, and the Rhode Island Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

April

RIOVA Partners with Corrections and DLT for Veteran Reintegration Program

RIOVA formed a new partnership with the RI Dept. of Corrections and the Dept. of Labor & Training to focus on successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated Veterans. The program includes case management and the coordination of local resources to ensure an effective exit plan with ongoing support. Some of these resources include access to Rhode Island Manufacturing Association employment opportunities, financial literacy classes, hands-on and soft-skills training, and access to Work Force Initiatives for classes in accounting, automotive, CDL training, EMT training, etc.

May

Cornerstone Laying Ceremony at the New RI Veterans Home

The Cornerstone Laying ceremony celebrated a milestone for the new RI Veterans Home as it moved closer opening its doors for our Veteran-residents. Governor Gina M. Raimondo hosted the traditional ceremony, where she was joined by Director Yarn, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin, and other federal, state, and local officials. The Rhode Island Grand Masonic Lodge of Freemasonry conducted the dedication ceremony, a customary ritual where Freemasons “bless” the cornerstone of a public buildings. Rhode Island voters approved two bond questions allowing the borrowing of up to \$121 million for the new 208-bed home. Half of the project's construction costs will be reimbursed by the federal VA through its state Veteran’s home construction grant program.

June

Meeting the Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans Services

Director Yarn hosted a meeting with Francisco Ureña, the Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans Services, and his staff, at the Warwick Veterans Resource Center. The two leaders exchanged information, best practices, and issues of mutual concern. Massachusetts has a robust program for Veterans, including a Veteran Service Officer in most cities and towns, a “welcome home” bonus for returning service members, two Veterans Homes, and two state-run Veterans cemeteries.

July

RI Leads the Nation in Largest Decrease in the Unemployment Rate for Veterans

Governor Gina M. Raimondo hailed a report from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) showing a 1.7 percent decline in the unemployment rate among Veterans, tying RI with West Virginia as the states with the steepest drops.

“We owe our Veterans a debt of extreme gratitude” Raimondo said. “Many leave service with valuable skills and proficiencies that any employer would be lucky to add to their team. As our economy grows, it is our job to give back to those who served us, ensuring they have the support they need. Thanks to the dedication of our Veterans Affairs Director Kasim Yarn and our DLT Director Scott Jensen, more Veterans have an opportunity in Rhode Island.”

August

NACVSO Two-Day Leadership Summit

Kasim J. Yarn, Rhode Island's Director of Veterans Affairs, welcomed the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) to Providence for the two-day National Veterans Advocacy and Leadership Summit. The event connected key leaders from throughout New England with national and local stakeholders to discuss and share the best practices to better assist our nation’s Veterans.

September

Operation Stand Down Weekend

Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs participated in Operation Stand Down's annual Stand Down weekend event from September 17-19. Over 450 homeless and at-risk Veterans attended the event. RIOVA staff was on site for the duration of the weekend, providing assistance with VA claims, housing referrals, benefit overviews, and general case management. On Saturday, Director Yarn accompanied Governor Raimondo to help serve the freshly prepared meals by students at Johnson & Wales University.

October

2017-2018 Veterans Service Grant Program Launch

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs launched its second wave of service grants allowing organizations to apply for financial assistance to address one or more of the 13 Veteran-specific issues identified by Director Yarn. Each organization defined the issue to be addressed and provided a detailed plan on how to solve it.

November

Grand Opening of the New Rhode Island Veterans Home

The new Veterans Home ribbon-cutting ceremony and grand opening took place on Veterans Day, November 11. The state-of-the-art facility serves as a token of our appreciation and gratitude for the service and sacrifice they have made for our Nation. It features six interconnected neighborhoods that offer individual rooms, neighborhood-based dining and activity centers, and accessible nursing stations. The six interconnected neighborhoods are linked together through a central commons building that offers community-wide amenities, such as a dining hall, banking services, physical/occupational therapy, a convenience store, and a chapel.

December

Governor Launches Statewide Coordination Network for Veterans

Governor Raimondo announced the launch of RIServes, a coordinated network of more than 35 agencies and providers that makes it easier for active duty service members, Veterans and their family members to find services they need in Rhode Island. The network launch was announced during an event at the State House on December 11, where she was joined by Director Yarn, the RI National Guard Adjutant General, the AmericaServes and Unite Us project teams, and other state and local officials. RIServes is the 12th network across the country under the AmericaServes national model.

Using Technology and Innovation to Better Serve our Veterans

In 2017, the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs expanded its repertoire of resources to help directly connect Veterans to benefits and services. Having identified some of the challenges Veterans face accessing services, RIOVA is using technology to address and remove these barriers.

DPRIS The Defense Personnel Records Information Retrieval System (DPRIS) allows us to access documents from the digital optical image Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) record management systems of the Military Services. At the state level, this system gives us the opportunity to print military discharge papers (DD214s) and service history. The DD214 tells the service history of each Veteran, and is essential for connecting Veterans with all the benefits for which they may be eligible. Access to this system drastically reduces the wait time for Rhode Island Veterans in need of a DD214 by making them available here in Rhode Island rather than making a request to the National Archives in St. Louis.

DMDC Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) is a database that allows us to have visibility on service members and Veterans transitioning back to civilian life here in the Ocean State. Our case managers utilize the data to provide a “welcome home” to America’s Heroes. RIOVA believes early contact is critical for the establishment of a consistent service pipeline which it aims to provide all RI Veterans.

RIOVA Website The Rhode Island Office of Veteran’s Affairs website continues to be improved, functioning as a repository of Veteran resources in the State. The website also features a custom-designed contact form that directly links constituents to the office. The design of the site caters to the diverse Veteran population, prioritizing ease of access for elderly Veterans while still committing to the robust offering of information for Veterans who prefer to use digital media. Veterans can access the website at www.vets.ri.gov.

RIServes One of the most exciting developments in 2017 has been the creation and launch of a coordinated network of service providers for Veterans. With RIOVA acting as the coordination center, RIServes is a case referral system that links Veterans with providers such as the VA, state agencies, Operation Stand Down, VSOs, the RI National Guard Family Assistance Centers, NAVSTA Newport Fleet and Family Readiness Center, several CAP agencies, most of our colleges and universities, and many other community partners. This network speeds up response time, increases access to resources, and provides accountability to ensure no Veteran falls through the cracks. Please see the “Launch of RIServes” section for more information.


RIServes
Using Technology and Innovation to Better Serve our Veterans

After more than two years of community meetings and planning sessions, the RI Office of Veterans Affairs, in partnership with more than 35 agencies and providers, launched RIServes, a coordinated network of care that makes it easier for Veterans and their Families to find services they need. The launch was announced at the State House on December 11, 2017 with Governor Raimondo, Director Yarn, Major General Callahan of the RI National Guard, the AmericaServes and UniteUs project teams, and our community partners.

RIOVA staff will operate the RIServes coordination center to identify needs, and route clients to the most appropriate care givers based on eligibility and services. Supported by a HIPPA-compliant, web-based technology platform from UniteUs, the new network will connect Veterans with services in areas including health care, housing, education, job training, and legal and financial counseling. RIServes uses UniteUs software to quickly match the client with a service provider and track the entire interaction to ensure quality and timeliness.

The RIServes Network, which is part of the national AmericaServes network administered by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, is a first-of-its-kind statewide approach and will be a key partner in this national model that shares best practices and lessons learned to better deliver services to Veterans and their Families. First launched in New York City, AmericaServes is active in 12 major communities, connecting Veterans to not only local services but to a national community from Seattle to San Antonio and Rochester, NY to Raleigh.

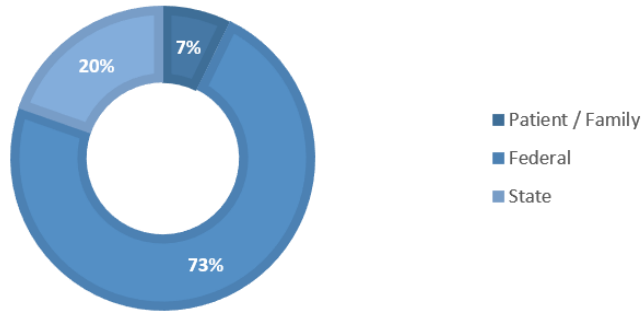
“We must do everything we can to serve those who served us. We made progress last year, but I knew we needed to do more. With RIServes, we’re taking the next step so no one gets left behind.”

~ Gov. Raimondo at the RIServes launch, December 11, 2017.



Navigating resources and care is the number one challenge facing our Veterans. With the RIServes Network, the Ocean State’s Veterans and their Families now have a better way to access the benefits they have earned. Through enhanced coordination, we are able to fill gaps for those underserved and work together as a community in real-time to ensure positive outcomes for those who have served and the families that supported them.

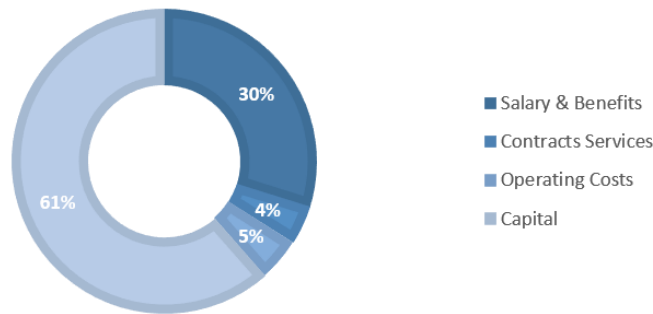
RI VETERANS AFFAIRS FY 2017 REVENUE
TOTAL: \$80,649,468



RI VETERANS AFFAIRS FY 2017 REVENUE

Patient/Family	\$5,870,760.00
Federal	\$58,963,558.00
State	\$15,815,150.00
Total	\$80,649,468.00

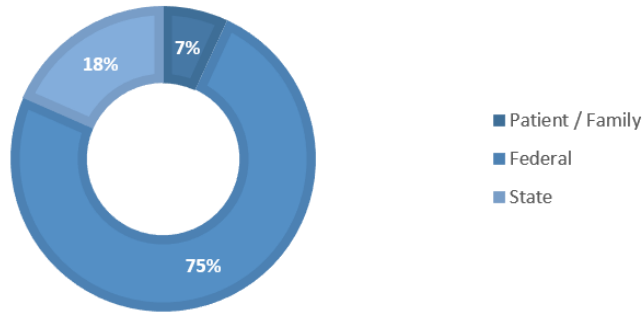
RI VETERANS AFFAIRS FY 2017 EXPENDITURES
TOTAL: \$80,649,468



RI VETERANS AFFAIRS FY 2017 EXPENDITURES

Salary & Benefits	\$24,073,358.00
Contracts Services	\$3,352,177.00
Operating Costs	\$3,663,976.00
Capital	\$49,559,957.00
Total	\$80,649,468.00

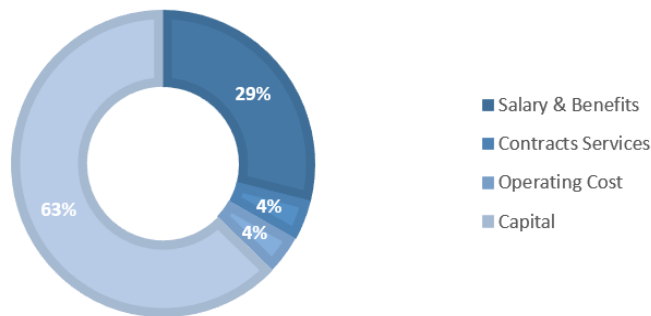
RI VETERANS HOME FY 2017 REVENUE
TOTAL: \$78,928,804



VETERANS HOME FY 2017 REVENUE

Patient / Family	\$5,440,418.00
Federal	\$58,963,557.00
State	\$14,524,829.00
Total	\$78,928,804.00

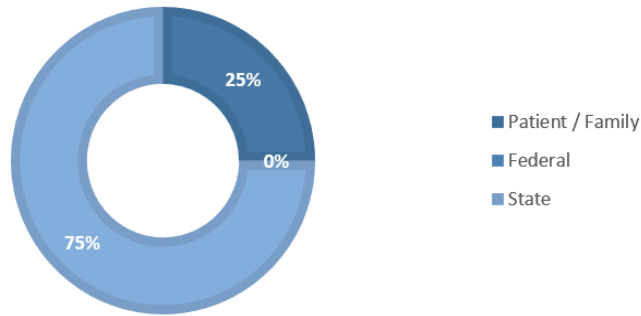
RI VETERANS HOME FY 2017 EXPENDITURES
TOTAL: \$78,928,804



VETERANS HOME FY 2017 EXPENDITURES

Salary & Benefits	\$22,805,711.00
Contracts Services	\$3,350,823.00
Operating Cost	\$3,216,199.00
Capital	\$49,556,071.00
Total	\$78,928,804.00

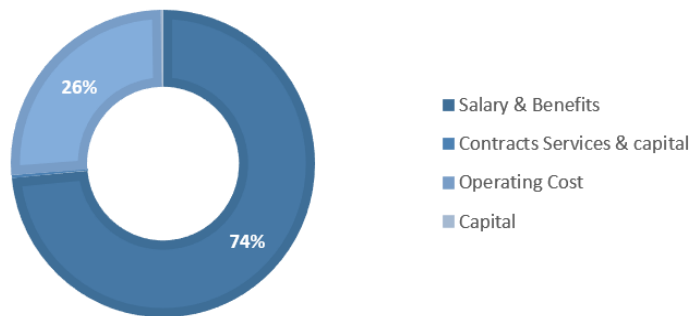
RI VETERANS CEMETERY FY 2017 REVENUE
TOTAL: \$1,720,663



VETERANS CEMETERY FY 2017 REVENUE

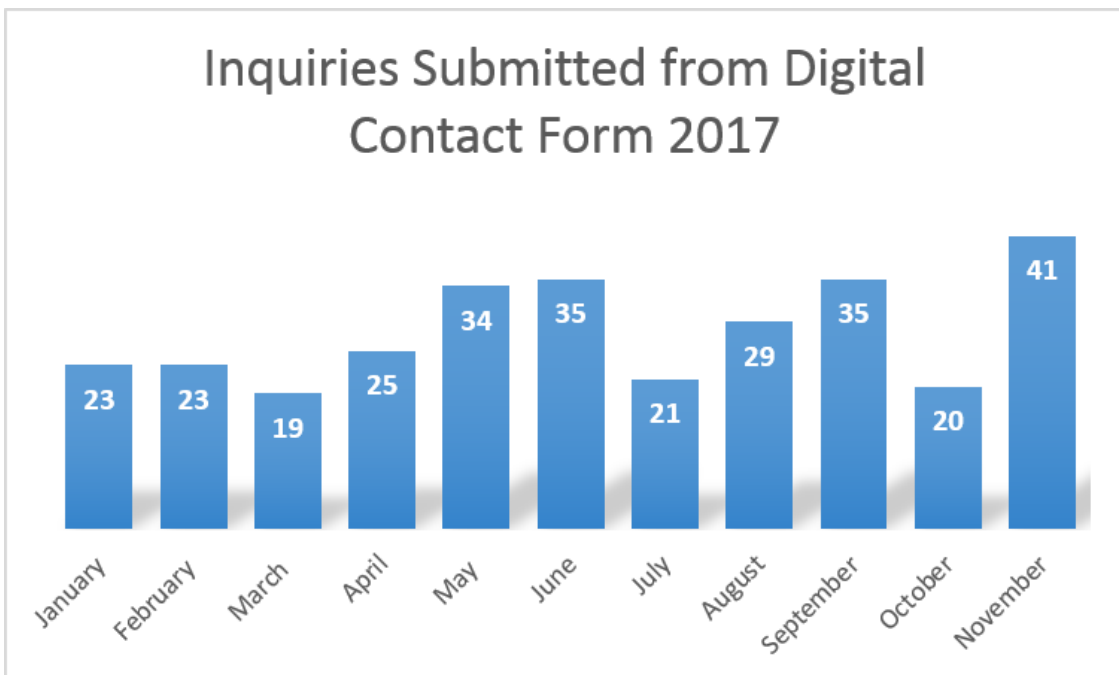
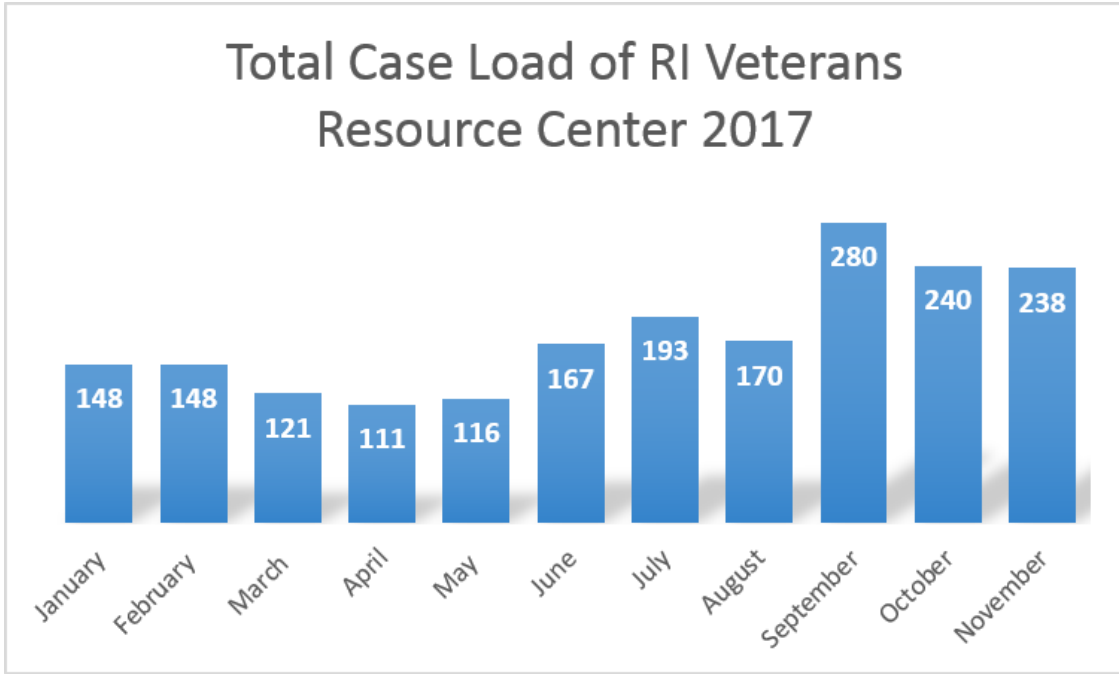
Patient / Family	\$430,343.00
Federal	\$0.00
State	\$1,290,320.00
Total	\$1,720,663.00

RI VETERANS CEMETERY FY 2017 EXPENDITURES
TOTAL: \$1,720,663



VETERANS CEMETERY FY 2017 EXPENDITURES

Salary & Benefits	\$1,267,646.00
Contracts Services	\$1,354.00
Operating Cost	\$447,777.00
Capital	\$3,886.00
Total	\$1,720,663.00



RISERVES METRICS

(LAUNCHED NOVEMBER)

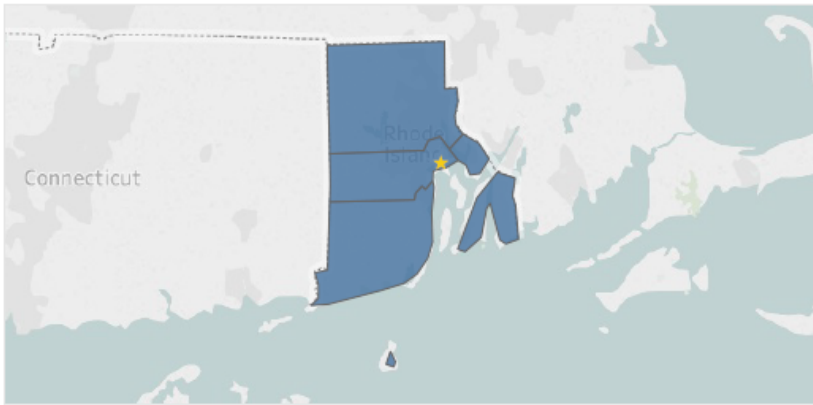
State
Rhode Island

Network Name
RIServes

Year
2017

Month
November

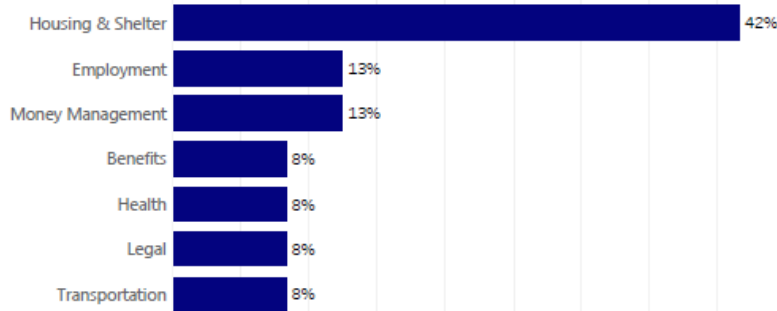
Network Service Areas



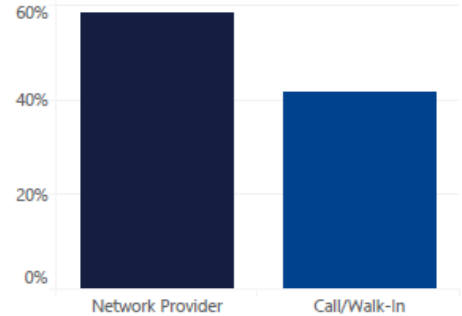
Network Indicators

	Number of Providers	35
	Unique Clients Served	13
	Total Requests	24
	Closed Requests	17
	Successful Outcome	47%
	Average Days from CC Referral to Provider Acceptance	7.693
	Median Days of Overall Service Episode	6.100

Service Requests by Type



Service Request by Source



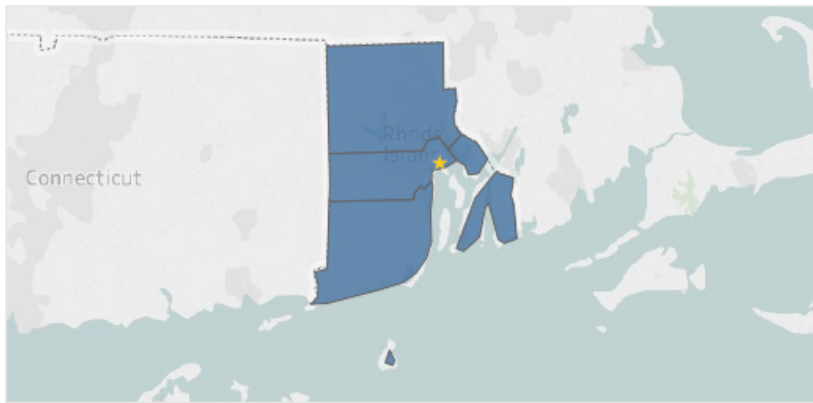
State
Rhode Island

Network Name
RIServes

Year
2017

Month
December

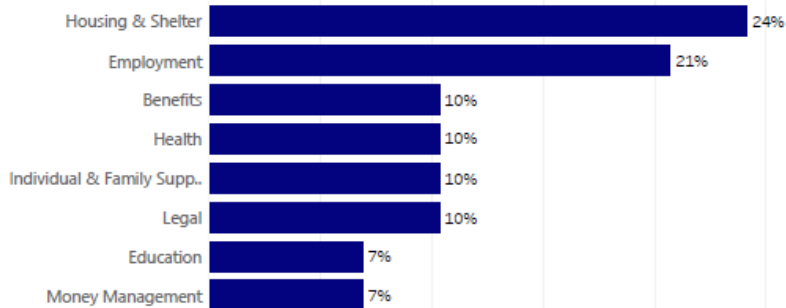
Network Service Areas



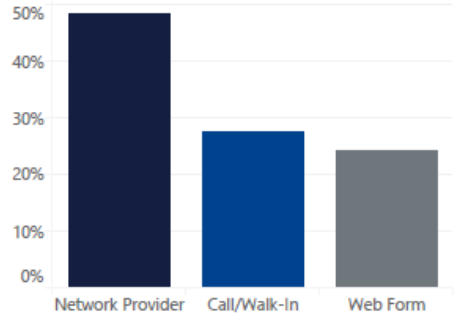
Network Indicators

	Number of Providers	35
	Unique Clients Served	24
	Total Requests	29
	Closed Requests	8
	Successful Outcome	88%
	Average Days from CC Referral to Provider Acceptance	2.326
	Median Days of Overall Service Episode	5.505

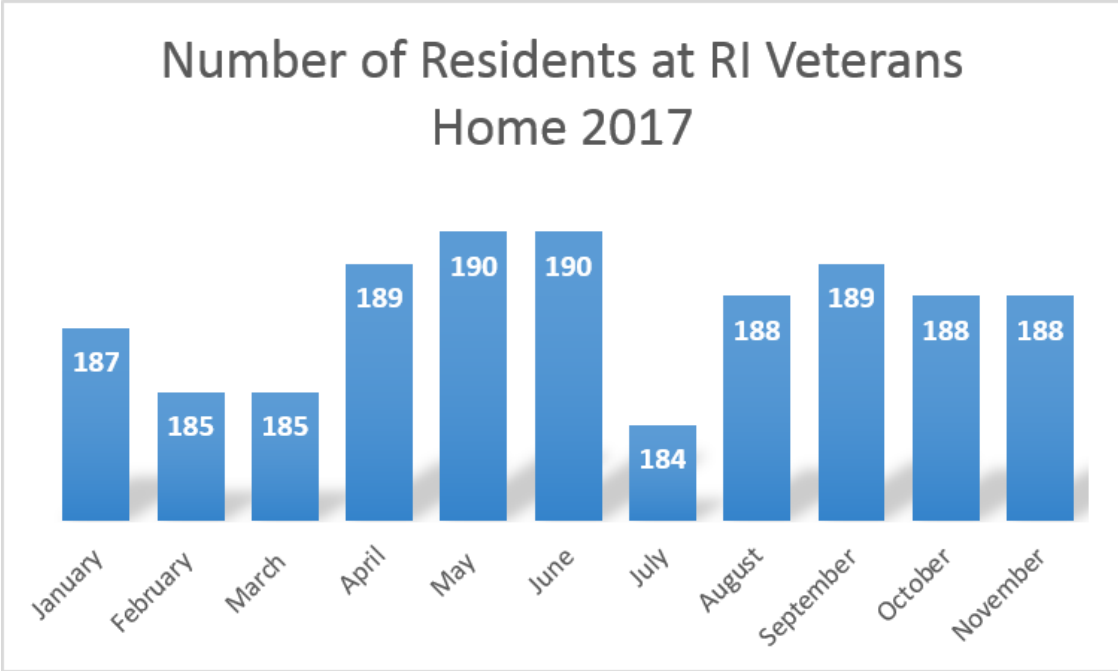
Service Requests by Type



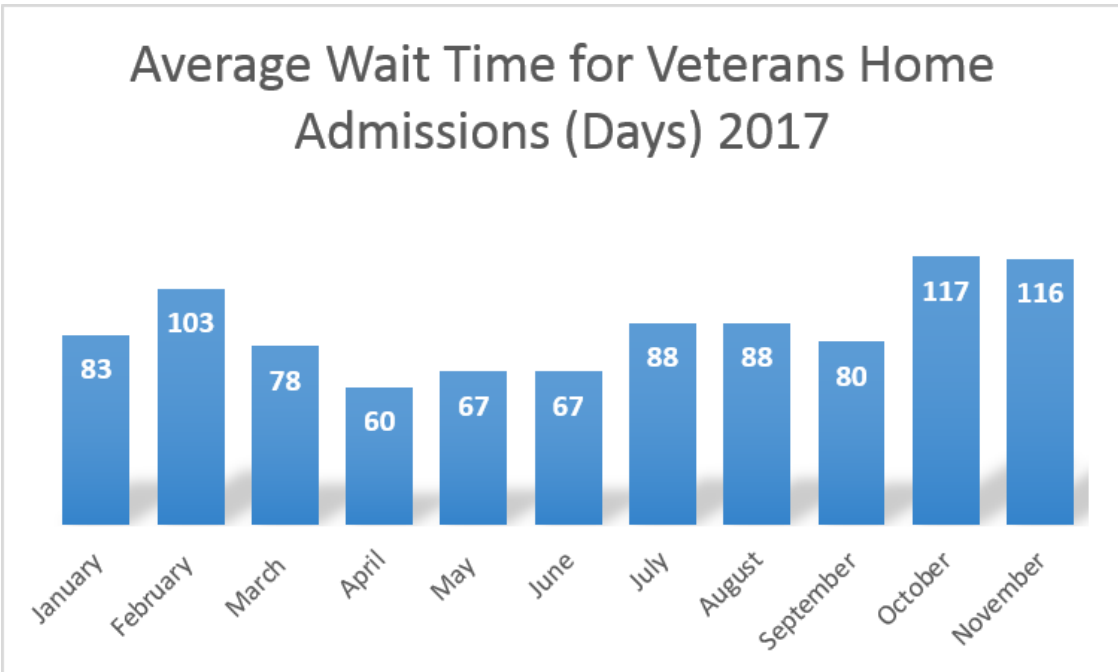
Service Request by Source



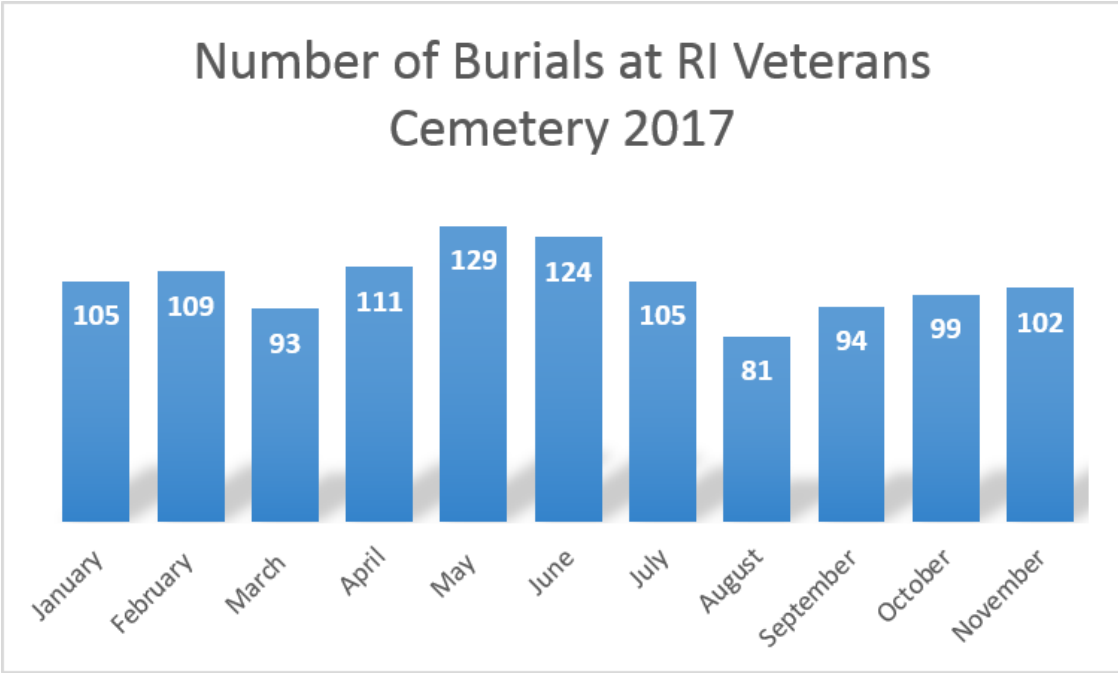
Number of Residents at RI Veterans Home 2017



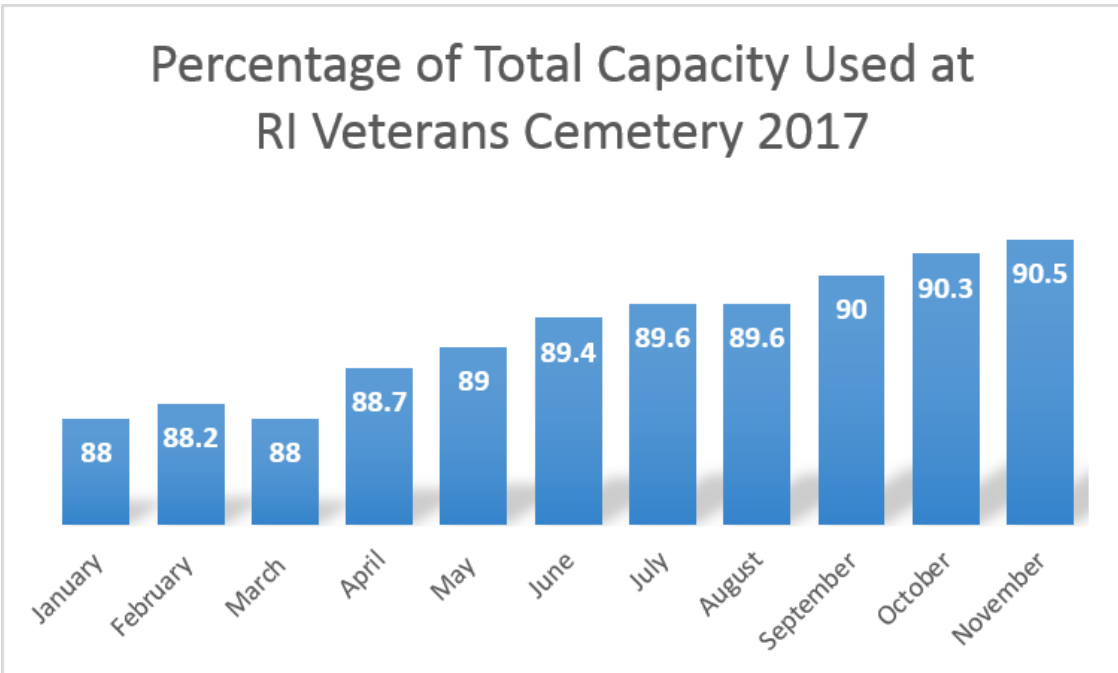
Average Wait Time for Veterans Home Admissions (Days) 2017



Number of Burials at RI Veterans Cemetery 2017



Percentage of Total Capacity Used at RI Veterans Cemetery 2017



Executive Summary

In 2013, the General Assembly recognized a gap in resources and information necessary to effectively support and address the needs of Veterans. To close this gap, lawmakers gave state agencies an opportunity to improve and reshape their ongoing collaboration to better coordinate, leverage, and ultimately enhance existing state, federal, and private Veterans' services. Representatives of several state agencies came together to create a Veterans Services Strategic Plan (VSSP) to meet the General Assembly's intent.

Our Challenges

The implementation of the VSSP has been and will continue to be conducted through (1) task force/working groups with state agencies (e.g., DOC/VA/DLT/DCYF task force for incarcerated Veterans); (2) RIServes coordinated network of providers; and (3) community outreach with state agencies, nonprofits, and municipalities, among others. Given the diverse demographics of our Ocean State Veterans, the work is focused on thirteen categories of Veterans services, which sets up the framework of the VSSP.

- ◆ Veterans Disability Benefits
- ◆ Veterans Education
- ◆ Veterans Employment/Training
- ◆ Veterans Family Members/Caregivers
- ◆ Veterans Financial Planning Services
- ◆ Veterans Homelessness
- ◆ Veterans Living in Poverty
- ◆ Veterans Legal Services
- ◆ Veterans Long Term Care
- ◆ Veterans Mortuary Affairs
- ◆ Veterans Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) / Agent Orange Effects / Burn Pits Health Effects
- ◆ Veterans Transitional Assistance
- ◆ Veterans Transportation

The RI Office of Veterans Affairs (RIOVA) recognizes that our reach is only limited by our ability to work together. Our time, dollars and creative energy must be wisely invested on our delivery of the 13 Veteran Service Categories, while leveraging municipality, state, and federal capabilities.

Our Mission

Our mission is simple: Serve the Ocean State's 65,470 Veterans and their families. We execute this mission through (1) the RI Veterans Home, (2) the RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and (3) the RI Veterans Resource Center. The Veterans Home in Bristol provides quality nursing and domiciliary care to our Veterans. The Veterans Memorial Cemetery, situated on 280 acres in Exeter, is a dignified and solemn resting place for RI Veterans and their eligible spouses or dependents. The Veterans Resource Center serves as the coordination center for the RIServes, the provider network that serves Veterans and their families, and a place that Veterans can go to get questions answered and assistance on how to access earned benefits.

Our Vision

The RI Office of Veterans Affairs serves as a central hub to assist and direct access to community, state, and federal resources to those who have served in the Armed Forces, as well as their families.

Our Values

- ◆ Maintains thorough knowledge of individual and social factors contributing to personal problems that affect the Veteran, active duty service members, and their families.
- ◆ Remains current on issues and trends impacting the work and mission of the office.
- ◆ Works together collegially with stakeholders using a collaborative approach to achieve the mission.
- ◆ Forms strong and successful partnerships, locally, regionally and nationally to address Veterans' issues

➔ These core values will guide us as we seek to improve outcomes for Veterans and their families.

Our Desired End State

Set conditions to ensure every Veteran has an opportunity to make it in Rhode Island by reducing homelessness, poverty, and unemployment among Veterans; increasing Veterans' access to healthcare; and maintaining quality, responsive customer service at the RI Veterans Home and RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan =

Mission + Vision + Values + Operational Approach



Operational Approach



DECISIVE POINTS: (1) RI Veterans Home, (2) RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery, (3) Prov. VA Medical Ctr, (4) Military Installations in RI, (5) 39 Municipalities (6) VA Benefits Regional Office, (7) National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), (8) Various Veteran Affairs Advisory Councils, (9) RI House & Senate Finance Committees, (10) Governor's Office

13 Veteran Service Categories

Below is a brief description and current status of the 13 Veteran Service Categories in Rhode Island:

- Veterans Disability Benefits.** The federal Department of Veterans Affairs provides service-connected disability benefits. The RI Office of Veterans Affairs assists Veterans with benefits counseling on the application and appeals process. In addition, RIOVA works with Veterans not eligible for VA disability compensation by connecting them with programs for the general population such as SSDI and the General Public Assistance, administered by the state's Executive Office of Health & Human Services and the Department of Human Services.

 - Coordination and outreach will be strengthened with the launch of RIServes network of provider care.
- Veterans Education.** Rhode Island's state colleges and universities waive tuition for Rhode Island National Guard members. They also provide free tuition for Service Connected Disability Veterans rated at 10% or higher. Wayto-goRI.org provides educational planning to Veterans. In addition, the VA administers the GI Bill, which provides funds for tuition.

 - #RIPromise has expanded additional educational opportunities with state-sponsored tuition support.
 - Not all post-secondary schools provide the maximum level of Yellow Ribbon program support.
 - Although the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation program (VocRehab) is effective, state schools need more funding/support for vocational and technical trades to make such opportunities available for those who are not eligible for VocRehab.

3. **Veterans Employment/Training.** The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs has established a partnership with the Department of Labor & Training's veteran employment counselors to identify appropriate employment and training opportunities for Veterans. Other programs RIOVA has leveraged for Veterans include the Governor's Workforce Board and the federal VA's Vocational Rehabilitation program.
 - License/certification transfer and reciprocity between states continues to limit opportunities for Veterans and their families moving to or returning home to Rhode Island.
 - As a result, many state agencies, such as the Department of Health, have adopted policies to assist Veterans and transitioning service members through their unique licensure and certification processes.

4. **Veterans Family Members/Caregivers.** The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs can help family members and caregivers navigate the benefits system and identify community agencies that offer caregiver support. The Federal VA offers caregiver assistance, and the Vets Center provides caregiver and family counseling.
 - Having enough caregiver support resources remains a challenge. RIOVA will work to increase the number of providers who serve the needs of caregivers and families.
 - Family members of Veterans who have licenses and certifications from other states are not transferable them to Rhode Island. RIOVA will continue to identify best practices from other jurisdictions

5. **Veterans Financial Planning Services.** The RI Department of Labor & Training offers vocational finance planning for its clients and the RI National Guard and Naval Station Newport have financial counselors available for their service members. Providence VA offers free tax preparation.
 - Private entities that offer free financial coaching to Veterans have been identified to complement the resources offered by our RIServes partner providers.
 - All Veteran employment and training programs have financial counseling available.

6. **Veterans Homelessness.** Rhode Island must remain vigilant and be proactive to fill any gaps not covered by existing programs.
 - RIOVA continues to work with stakeholders in the community to identify appropriate solutions to reduce homelessness through a working group of leaders and subject matter experts on this issue.
 - Through RIServes, RIOVA seeks to increase supportive services to give homeless and at-risk Veterans a chance to get back on their feet.



7. **Veterans Living in Poverty.** While there are no Veteran-specific anti-poverty programs on the state-level, Veterans are eligible for the same programs available to all Rhode Islanders. For example, the state administers SNAP for food assistance, child care assistance, and limited amounts of monetary assistance. Community partners such as Operation Stand Down RI, Veterans, Inc., Riverwood, and the RI Coalition for the Homeless help Veterans who are unable to afford housing and other services.
 - RIOVA is working with its strategic partner, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, to identify additional partners for the RIServes network to address poverty-related challenges.

8. **Veterans Legal Services.** There are a number of programs that attempt to address some of the legal needs of Veterans. The RI National Guard has a legal assistance program for its members, as does the NAVSTA staff judge advocate's office. The RI Bar Association offers reduced-fee and pro bono assistance through the Armed Forces Legal Services Project, and Roger Williams Law School recently launched a Veterans Disability Appeals Field Clinic to represent clients appealing disability decisions before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals. The RI Veterans Treatment Court continues to serve Veterans with successful rehabilitation and treatment for service-related issues that have led to misdemeanor infractions.
 - RIOVA is exploring a partnership with RI Legal Services within the RIServes network.
 - Works continue to develop the RIDOC partnership for incarcerated Veterans to ease their reintegration into the community following release.
 - Operation Stand Down Rhode Island was recently awarded a \$50,000 grant to provide additional legal services for Veterans.

9. **Veterans Long Term Care.** The Rhode Island Veterans Home and the VA Long Term Care program offer options for Veterans seeking long-term skilled nursing care. In addition, the RI Office of Veterans Affairs works with the state's Medicaid agency for those Veterans not eligible for the RI Veterans Home or VA long-term care options.
 - Aside from the above-referenced programs, there are few long-term care options available to Veterans with limited means given the cost associated with those programs.
 - There is a growing need for adult day care programs. RIOVA is developing partnerships with RI Division of Elderly Affairs and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to address the issue.

10. **Veterans Mortuary Affairs.** The Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery provides a dignified, final resting place for Rhode Island's Veterans and eligible dependents. The cemetery staff works closely with funeral directors and the RI National Guard's Honor Detail to arrange military honors and committal services. The state's General Public Assistance program provides some funding for basic funeral services for those Veterans who do not have the means to pay for them.

11. **Veterans Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) / Agent Orange Effects / Burn Pits Health Effects.** Veterans falling within this category may turn to the Providence VA Medical Center or the Vet Center in Warwick, RI for assistance. Both case managers at the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs are certified for the detection and prevention of suicide and domestic abuse, and they will soon be trained in PTSD identification and de-escalation practices.
12. **Veterans Transitional Assistance.** The RI Office of Veterans Affairs instituted a program in which a case manager contacts recently separated service members through an information-sharing partnership with the Department of Defense. The case manager welcomes the returning service member home, introduces him or her to the services offered by RIOVA, and lets them know that the office stands ready to assist with benefits counseling and resource navigation. There are other programs as well. The military offers the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) to those coming off active duty. The RI National Guard offers transitional assistance to its members returning from deployments. Naval Station Newport conducts a week-long TAP class and has partnered with Director Yarn to provide a brief every Monday morning for each new class.
13. **Veterans Transportation.** This year, Governor launched a pilot program with RIPTA and the RI Office of Veterans Affairs to distribute reduced fare bus passes to qualifying Veterans. In addition, the Providence VA Medical Center helps arrange volunteer transportation for appointments. A shuttle program is also available to transport patients who require VA Medical services at Massachusetts facilities. Veterans who receive Medicaid are also eligible for transportation to medical facilities through Logisticare.
 - RIPTA received a \$60,000 grant to launch a pilot program for Veteran passes.
 - The Governor’s Low Income, Elderly, and Disabled Pass Initiative helped address some of our Veteran transportation needs.
 - Volunteer organizations like Southern Rhode Island Volunteers and Friends in Service to Humanity offer transportation assistance. RIOVA will seek to partner with them to enhance program options for Veterans.



State Agency Partnership Roles & Responsibilities

Our success is defined by our ability to work in a collaborative way and to effectively communicate our efforts to serve those who wore our nation's uniform. These efforts will allow us and our network of community partners to "collectively impact" and improve the health and well-being of our Veterans and their families. In order to achieve our desired end state, below are the roles and responsibilities required of our state partners (listed alphabetically):

- ◆ The RI Commerce Corporation. The Commerce Corporation works with public, private and non-profit partners to create the conditions for businesses in all sectors to thrive and to improve the quality of life for Veterans by promoting the state's long-term economic health and prosperity. The Commerce Corporation offers a number of programs that benefit Veteran-owned businesses.
- ◆ The RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). BHDDH is a key agency to assist Veterans who live with mental illness, substance use disorder and/or a developmental disability by maintaining a system of high quality, safe, affordable and coordinated care across the spectrum of behavioral health care services. It seeks to promote the health, safety and well-being Veterans by developing policies and programs that address the issues of mental illness, addiction, recovery, and community support.
- ◆ The RI Department of Business Regulation (DBR). DBR is responsible for the implementation of state laws mandating the regulation and licensing of designated businesses, professions, occupations, and other specified activities.
- ◆ The RI Department of Health (DOH). DOH is the key agency fighting to prevent disease and protect and promote the health and safety of all Rhode Islanders.
- ◆ The RI Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS is the lead agency to serve some of the state's most vulnerable populations through safety net programs such as SNAP, TANF, GPA, and child care assistance.
- ◆ The RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT). DLT provides workforce development, workforce security and workforce protection for Rhode Islanders. Through federal and state funding, DLT offers Veteran-specific employment, educational, and economic opportunity services.
- ◆ The RI Department of State. RI Department of State engages and empowers Veterans by making government more accessible and transparent, encouraging civic pride, enhancing commerce and ensuring that elections are fair, fast, and accurate.
- ◆ The RI Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA). DEA is the key agency responsible for the development of community-based services and programs that encourage independence and preserve the dignity of the elderly.

- ◆ The RI National Guard (The Guard). The Guard's deployment rate is top five per capita in the nation *annually*. The Guard continues to shape and train its force for future and anticipated change and challenges, while continuously supporting overseas and domestic operations. It will continue to have an active role in the development and implementation of our VSSP.
- ◆ The RI Office of Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC). RIOPC is the lead agency to support the work of the Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education in providing an excellent, accessible and affordable system of higher education designed to improve the overall educational attainment of Veterans.
- ◆ The RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). RIPTA is the lead agency to provide safe, reliable and cost effective transit service with a skilled team of professionals responsive to Veterans, the environment, and committed to transit excellence.
- ◆ The RI Veterans Treatment Court. Veterans Treatment Court successfully rehabilitates participants, on a case-by-case basis, by providing the tools and skills necessary to address Veterans' unique challenges to reintegrate successfully into society and to maintain a productive and law abiding lifestyle within the community.



Rhode Island Veterans Resource Center**(401) 921-2119**

560 Jefferson Boulevard, Suite 206

Warwick, RI 02886

Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery**(401) 268-3088**

301 South County Trail

Exeter, RI 02882

Rhode Island Veterans Home**(401) 253-8000**

480 Metacom Avenue

Bristol, RI 02809

<https://www.facebook.com/RIOfficeofVeteransAffairs/><https://twitter.com/riVeterans>