

2018

# Annual Report



**Rhode Island Office of  
Veterans Affairs**

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**560 Jefferson Blvd, Suite 206  
Warwick, RI 02886**





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# Message from the Director

**Kasim J. Yarn**



I am honored to present the 2018 Annual Report for the Office of Veterans Affairs. It is remarkable that we were able to sustain and improve on the dramatic results from 2017. Across the state, our team draws strength and inspiration from a shared mission of serving our Ocean State Veterans and their families.

Highlights include:

- Transforming Veterans Affairs to better serve those who've served.
- Improving how Rhode Island fulfills its obligation to Veterans at the latter stages of life.
- Maintaining a meaningful, consistent outreach program to hear from our Veterans.

And we continue to engage through other initiatives around mental health and coordinated referrals.

As a response to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order, "Reaffirming and Expanding Rhode Island's Commitment to

Persons with Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders," our office participated in state-wide efforts to identify the stigmas that pose substantial barriers to the effective delivery of behavioral healthcare to Veterans. Simply put, it's OK not to be OK. We are determined to help.

One of the strengths of being a small state is our ability to come together as a community to serve others. By delivering efficient and effective programs to service members, Veterans, and their families, our Office works every day to address the challenges facing our community, capture and apply best practices, and serve as a platform to facilitate new relationships between these individuals and the organizations committed to serving the needs of America's Heroes.

I want to thank our partners. We could not achieve our mission of serving RI Veterans and their families without the support and commitment from the private, public, and non-profit organizations who put Veterans first.

# RIServes

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## Building the Network

RIServes is our coordinated referral network. Launched in December 2017, it addresses the number one challenge facing Rhode Island's Veterans: navigating the myriad of resources and services available. With RIServes and its statewide reach, Rhode Island's Veterans and their families now have a better way to access the benefits they have earned.



***“We must do everything we can to serve those who served us. With RIServes, we’re taking the next step. This network brings together federal, state, local, and community agencies to work on behalf of our Veterans and their families so no one gets left behind.”***

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- Governor Gina Raimondo

With 46 partner-providers, the network continues to provide an innovative service delivery model for our state's service members, Veterans, and their families. Because of the courage and commitment of our partner-providers, we are now more accountable to one another with formalized communication, coordination, and transparency to better serve those who have served us.

Through enhanced coordination, RIServes fills the gaps for those underserved in our community and allows us to work together, as a team, to ensure positive outcomes. Our network speeds up response time, increases access to resources, and provides accountability. With our office serving as the coordination center, we work hand-in-hand with our partner-providers to make sure no Veteran falls through the cracks.

The December 2017 launch of the RIServes initiative marked the beginning of a new era of coordinated care and collective purpose. Through smart referrals, we continue to maximize the resources available for our Veterans while leveraging our strengths and sharing best practices. This past year, through RIServes alone, we have served 489 individuals with 600 unique service episodes. With our focus on value, credibility, and collaboration, we can make sure the network is sustainable and available to Veterans whenever the need arises.



# RIServes

## A Year of Results

### RISERVES YEARLY SNAPSHOT

SERVING 5 COUNTIES WITH A VETERAN POPULATION OF 61,078 | TOP NEED: **Benefits Navigation**



**489**  
Unique  
Clients



**601**  
Service  
Requests



**46**  
Participating  
Organizations



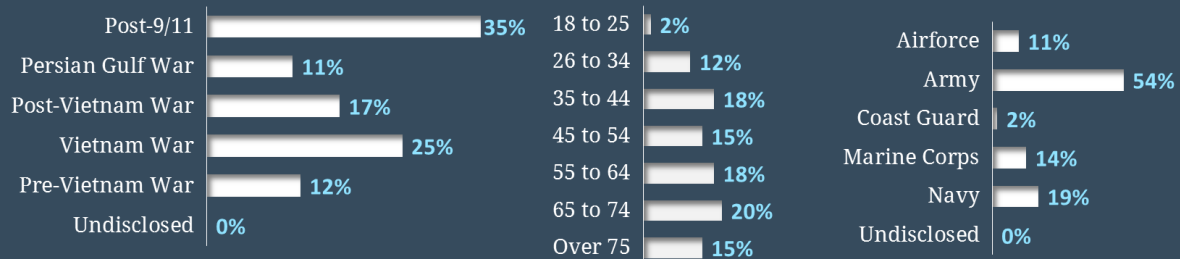
**119**  
Unique  
Network Users



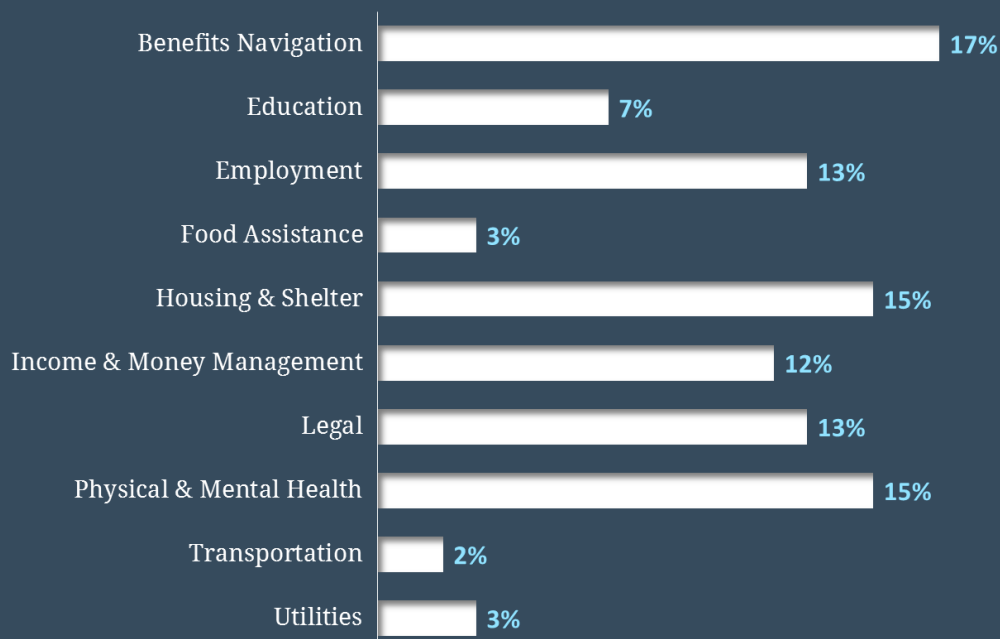
**89% Military Members & Veterans**  
**11% Spouses, Family Members**  
**& Caregivers**



**79% Male | 21% Female**



### SERVICE REQUESTS



# RIServes

## The Road Ahead

Our inaugural year gave us an opportunity to almost double the number of provider-partners in RIServes. We went from our initial cadre of 24 provider-partners to 46 by year's end. Our success this year will be defined by a collective ability to improve outcomes for our Veterans and their families. Now it's time to strengthen these relationships by working towards three objectives:

First, ensure RIServes provides value for our provider-partners. We are all on the same journey to better serve military-connected individuals. Together, we can transform the world of service and care coordination for our state's military-connected members and their families.

Second, enhance the network's credibility in the Veterans space. Success for us comes in the form of widespread acceptance of the RIServes model. To accomplish this, we will continue to establish proficiency in service delivery, maintain transparency, and foster a committed stakeholder culture.

Third, encourage a collaborative approach with all who interact with RIServes. We fully commit ourselves to seek solutions and expertise from every individual involved in the network. Much of the work ahead will be to effectively join what we learn with what we do. Knowledge must translate to action.



*“Rhode Island is tailored made for the RIServes initiative because the size of our state is our strength. The Ocean State epitomizes the Collective Impact concept. Serving our Veterans requires community-wide buy-in and we have that with our coordinated network of service providers.”*

*- Kasim Yarn, RI Director of Veterans Affairs*



# RIServes

## Our Partners

The RIServes network is built upon a “No Wrong Door” approach. Regardless of where a Veteran or military-connected family member goes for help within the network, they will be able to connect with a trusted partner-provider through our coordination center.



The unique collaboration taking place in Rhode Island’s Veterans community through RIServes would not be possible without the support and dedication of our partner-providers. We would like to recognize some of them below:

- Brown University
- Bryant University
- City of Providence
- Community Action Partnership of Providence
- Community Care Alliance
- Community College of Rhode Island
- Comprehensive Community Action, Inc.
- RI Department of Labor & Training
- Johnson & Wales University
- Institute for Veterans and Military Families
- Navy Fleet and Family Support Center
- Operation Stand Down Rhode Island
- Providence College
- Providence VA Medical Center
- Providence VA Regional Benefits Office
- Rhode Island Bar Association
- Rhode Island College
- RI National Guard Family Assistance Center
- Rhode Island Veterans Treatment Court
- RI Office of Postsecondary Commissioner
- Roger Williams University
- Southern Rhode Island Volunteers
- Team RWB Rhode Island
- The Vet Center

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**Thank you!**

# RIServes

## Case Highlights

### Honor Restored



Marron Smith, a Vietnam War Veteran from Providence, came to the Office of Veterans Affairs with a story to tell. It was a burden he had carried for most of his adult life. Called into service at the age of 18, Mr. Smith served nobly and fought bravely in the jungles of Vietnam, only to return to the United States to find an unexpected battle within the ranks at his home station.

Mr. Smith believed his superior officer ordered his subordinates to beat him because of the color of his skin. Following the brawl, the officer ordered the military police to arrest Mr. Smith to “teach him a lesson.” The arrest resulted in his dishonorable discharge with just two months left on his enlistment. After his discharge, Mr. Smith challenged the characterization of service but the Marine Corps denied any form of review.

A dishonorable discharge carries with it not just the burden of social stigma, but also the disqualification of Veteran benefits from the federal VA. He applied for benefits anyway. When the VA denied his application, Mr. Smith tried to navigate the VA’s appeal process. He nearly gave up hope until hearing Director Kasim Yarn on the radio, inviting any Veteran needing help to stop by our office. He took Director Yarn up on his invitation and met with David DosReis, one of our two case managers.

David helped Mr. Smith petition the Marine Corps Review Board to change his discharge status. The Board initially decided not to hear the case because of the amount of time that had passed, but David eventually uncovered a second review board whose sole purpose is to review older cases ineligible for the traditional review. The odds were slim, but David and Mr. Smith pressed on, gathering years’ worth of evidence to support his claim.

Finally, 44 years since his return from Vietnam, the Marine Corps reversed its initial decision and granted Mr. Smith an honorable discharge. Now Mr. Smith can access the VA benefits he earned. Cases such as these continue to motivate David to seek out underserved Veterans throughout the state and welcome them with the respect and compassion they deserve.



# RIServes

## Case Highlights

### Changing Lives

In May of 2018, the Rhode Island National Guard's Staff Judge Advocate Office referred a Veteran to one of our case managers, David Rothermel, for assistance with a federal VA appeal. David Williamson, a Vietnam Veteran, applied for VA service-connected disability compensation for mental health and physical injuries but met with little success.

David met with Mr. Williamson to review his case and previous applications. The amount of paperwork necessary to substantiate a VA claim can be burdensome for many Veterans. Without the right evidence to back up a claim, the VA cannot grant the disability application. After reviewing over 200 pages of documents, David realized a new claim needed to be assembled.



Mr. Williamson's 24 years of military service, including time spent in Vietnam, took a physical and psychological toll. With 12 identified medical issues, David gathered the best evidence, emphasizing the medical records and supplementing it with testimony from his battle buddies from Vietnam. He helped Mr. Williamson with scheduling transportation to and from various medical appointments to get evaluated and substantiate his medical conditions.

David then used this evidence to craft Mr. Williamson's appeal to the federal VA, challenging the VA's previous findings and making the case for a 100% disability rating. In November, the federal VA responded favorably to Mr. Williamson's appeal. The VA reversed its prior decisions and rated Mr. Williamson as 100% disabled.

With David's help, this Veteran's 29-year battle with the VA claims process finally ended with a positive outcome. At long last, Mr. Williamson could fully retire at the age of 75 with honor and dignity, a small but significant example of how we can improve the lives of those who served us so nobly.

# Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

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

## Operations

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Averaging 97 internments per month, the RIVMC remains one of the busiest state Veterans cemeteries in the nation. During Fiscal Year 2018, the cemetery conducted 1,168 committal services. Its staff consists of 16 employees, 12 full-time personnel and four seasonal workers.



## Memorials & Monuments

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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.





# Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

## Ceremonies & Accomplishments

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. In 2018, over 500 attendees listened to eighth-grade student Bella Garces read her VFW award-winning essay, “America’s Gift.” The cemetery also hosted Wreaths Across America on December 15, 2018. Over 400 attendees gathered for the ceremony and assisted in laying over 3,000 wreaths in sections of the cemetery. Throughout the year, the RIVMC hosts several events to promote our state’s unending gratitude to those Veterans who have so ably served our country. They included the 9/11 Patriot Day Remembrance, the tolling of the Bells Ceremony, and Armed Forces Day (Echo Taps).



The Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery continues to make improvements to attain National Shrine status. Last year, RIVMC placed three new cemetery regulation signs at the entrances and kiosk building, replaced 26 aging trash receptacles, and placed 10 adornment policy signs to comply with National Cemetery Administration guidelines. RIVMC is modernizing its fleet of vehicles and machinery, purchasing a riding lawn mower and a headstone crushing attachment for a backhoe. As it does every year for Memorial Day weekend, the RIVMC distributed over 65,000 flags to 83 different Veterans Organizations and cemeteries for placement on Veteran graves throughout the state and coordinated with 400 volunteers to help place 30,000 flags on RIVMC gravesites for Memorial Day. As part of a continuing effort to improve the grounds, cemetery staff removed a derelict building; trimmed, cut down, and planted numerous trees through the generous support of the Saluting Branches program, and repaired flag poles.



# Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

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## Partnerships & Future Plans

This past year the Office of Veterans Affairs and the RIVMC continued to develop and maintain partnerships with several organizations. These relationships not only promote the mission of providing Veterans a dignified resting place, but also strengthen our commitment to Veterans and their families 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
- National Grid Saluting Branches

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The Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery continues to expand its operations to accommodate an increasing need. The largest focus going forward will be the creation of a new columbarium wall. The existing niches will be filled within four years.

The cemetery grounds will also be expanded. Once the ongoing land survey is completed, a master plan will provide for expansion within existing lands. With this expansion, preliminary studies indicate the cemetery will be able to continue operations on the existing land for another 75 years.

In addition to these major improvements, the cemetery is also tracking the following goals in Fiscal Year 2019:

- Constructing a Gold Star Families Memorial
- Establishing an Invisible Wounds of War Memorial
- Repairing and replacing damaged and mismatched section markers
- Building new panels on Memorial Walkway and repairing the Memorial Wall Plaza
- Replacing the roof of the Maintenance Facility
- Modernizing maintenance equipment with a new boom truck and ride-on lawn mower

# Rhode Island Veterans Home

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On Veterans Day, Governor Gina M. Raimondo presided over a ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the official opening of the new Rhode Island Veterans Home. Completed in October 2017, the project was over a decade in the making. Because of the strong, persistent advocacy of our Veteran community, our state recognized the need for a new skilled nursing home for those Veterans in need. With their input, we designed and built a state-of-the-art facility for the brave men and women who served our country.



Upon arrival, guests travel down the tree-lined entry drive and are greeted with views of the relocated historic water tower. The tower is original to the state's first Veterans Home and serves as the focal point for the campus. The entry drive intersects a campus ring road, which provides one-way access around the perimeter of the building and to each of the "neighborhoods" connected to the main commons building.

Continuing on the entry drive, guests arrive at the main plaza, highlighted by a beautiful flag display with each of the service branches represented and ample room for drop-off and pick-up of residents.

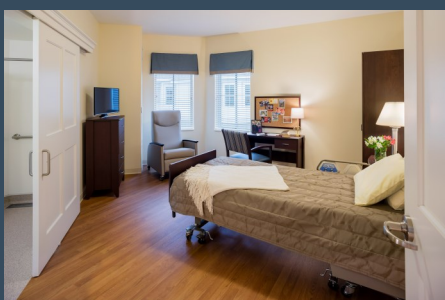
The new facility encompasses almost 45 acres. The surrounding property was redeveloped with additional walking trails, passive and active recreational opportunities, and new landscaping. By siting the new home on the western side of the property, over 50 acres of forested land on the eastern side have been preserved.



# Rhode Island Veterans Home

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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, more personal setting. Each neighborhood is divided into two “cottages,” which provide a home-like feel while directly linking them to the 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.



This resident-centered design features individual rooms, neighborhood-based dining and activity centers, and community-wide amenities such as a library, various dining options, physical/occupational therapy improvements, and a beautiful chapel.



The 260,000 square-foot facility is located on the same 100-acre parcel that has served as the home for Rhode Island’s Veterans since 1891. It is anchored by a “Main Street” in the central commons building that connects to each of the six interconnected “neighborhoods.” Each individual neighborhood is staffed with 24-hour caregivers.

Residents now have more control over their meal times and medication schedule. Front porches and enclosed outdoor patios encourage recreational enjoyment during the warmer months. With these improvements, the residents now have a sense of being at home instead of an institutional facility.

# Rhode Island Veterans Home

## Partnerships, Achievements, & Future Plans

The Veterans Home continues to partner with numerous organizations to provide support and recreational activities for the resident Veterans. The organizations include:

- RIVH Family Council
- Disabled American Veterans
- Reserve Officer Association
- Reserve Officer League
- Military Order of Foreign Wars
- American Legion
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Vietnam Veterans of America



The Veterans Home has met the following key measures during 2018:

- Achieved an occupancy rate of 97% for nursing beds
- Maintained an average census of 188 nursing residents and three dormitory residents
- Maintained a list of pending applications, averaging 54 per month
- Averaged 145 days from application to Home Admission

In the year ahead, the Rhode Island Veterans Home plans to sustain its occupancy rate of nursing beds, while increasing the occupancy rate of the dormitory units for at-risk Veterans. In addition, the final phase of construction will conclude with the completion of the remaining landscaping projects.

# World War I Centennial Commission

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## An Era Remembered



Congress created the **United States World War One Centennial Commission** in 2013. Members of the 12-member commission were appointed by the President and the leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as representatives of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the National World War I Museum and Memorial.

All living former Presidents agreed to serve on the commission as honorary chairmen.

The commission was tasked to plan, develop, and execute programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the Centennial of World War I.

The commission's mission:

- Developing educational programs targeted at a variety of audiences, with the goal of teaching Americans about the country's most forgotten war.
- Organizing activities, events, and symposia to commemorate America's involvement in "the Great War."
- Establishing a National WWI Memorial in Washington D.C., and bring attention to the thousands of World War I memorials in communities across the country.
- Serving as a clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of information related to the Centennial Commemoration.

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### **Governor Gina M. Raimondo signed Executive Order 17-04 to provide oversight on our state's centennial events.**



This temporary commission linked statewide efforts to the National World War I Centennial Commission established by the 112th U.S. Congress and President Obama in 2013. The charter concluded on Veterans Day of 2018.

The RI WWI Centennial Commission served as the lead organizer for the state's commemorative events and coordinated the activities of individuals and institutions to tell the story of the Great War. The aim of our state's commission was to raise awareness of and give meaning to the events that took place a century ago using educational experiences and programming for all ages.



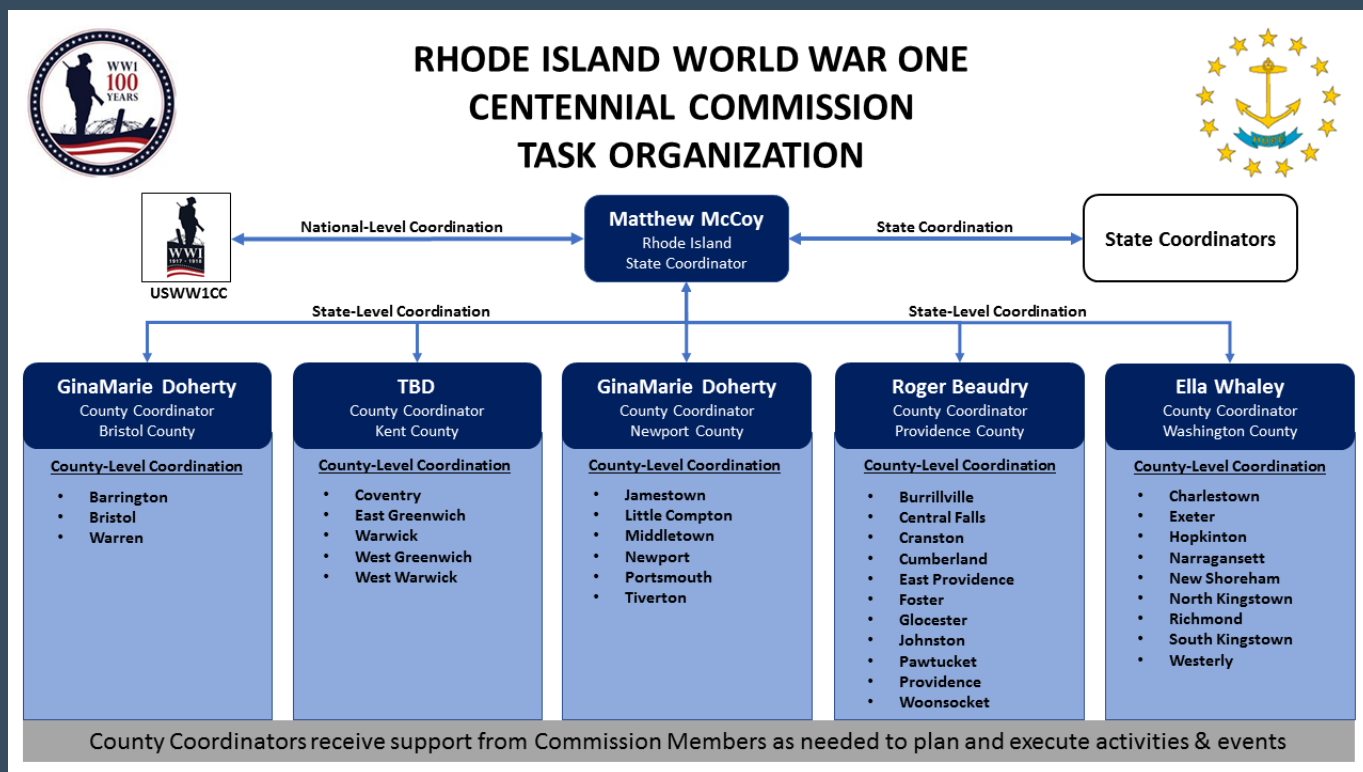
# Rhode Island WWI Centennial

## Establishment

The Governor's Executive Order 17-04 charged the Rhode Island World War I Centennial Commission with the following responsibilities:

- Work with the USWWICC to plan and oversee the execution of the State of Rhode Island's WWI centennial commemorative activities and events
- Coordinate with the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs to solicit grant and charitable funds or in-kind contributions from public and private individuals and organizations to fund projects and programs
- Advise state and local leaders on the suitability and practicality of hosting qualified WWI events commemorating Rhode Island's involvement in the war
- Create an educational program to raise awareness of Rhode Island's role throughout WWI
- Deliver to the Governor and the General Assembly a report detailing the Commission's activities in attracting events and accounting for the year's events

The establishment of the Commission called for an organizational chart to be formed, representing a statewide coverage plan. Matthew McCoy, the state's Coordinator for the Commission, established the structure below:



# Rhode Island WWI Centennial

## Milestones



The RI WWI Centennial Commission raised funds to restore and rededicate two historic plaques at the Miantonomi Monument Tower, a WWI monument in Newport. The monument honors the 56 servicemen from Newport who lost their lives during the Great War.



The RI State Archives opened a three month educational WWI exhibit: *“Over There - Over Here: Rhode Islanders in the Great War”*

The City of Providence hosted a “Salute to Veterans” WaterFire event, and the Commission provided a WWI storytelling booth



### TO WIN OR LOSE ALL

William S. Sims and the U.S. Navy in the First World War



NAVAL WAR COLLEGE MUSEUM

The United States Naval War College in Newport opened a new WWI exhibit *“To Win or Lose All”*

State Coordinator Matthew McCoy visited a WWI graveyard in France to honor Rhode Island’s fallen



# Year in Review

## 2018

March 2018: The Women in the Military Appreciation Event at the Rhode Island Veterans Home



Partnering with the federal VA, RIOVA hosted the Women in the Military Appreciation Event in March 2018. The occasion brought together state and local leaders to honor the service of women in the military.

The event kicked off with remarks from elected officials and keynote remarks from Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea.

A number of Veterans groups attended the events to provide information, resources, and answer questions about the services available to women Veterans.



June 2018: RIOVA Case Managers receive the VFW's Community Service Award

The Department of Rhode Island Veterans of Foreign Wars honored case managers David DosReis and David Rothermel of the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs with the Community Service Award.

The award is given to those in the community who demonstrate a commitment to helping Veterans find access to the help and resources they need.





# Year in Review

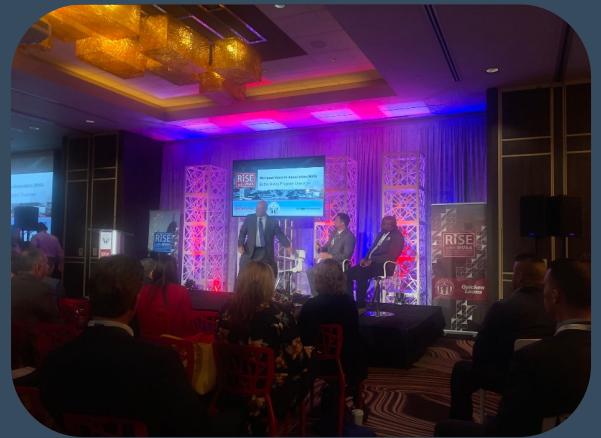
## 2018

### September 2018: RIOVA attends the National Veterans Workforce Development Conference

Hosted in Detroit, Michigan, the National Veterans Workforce Development Conference brought together state Veterans affairs offices from across the country.

With a focus on connecting Veterans with gainful employment, the conference offered information and resources on transitioning from military life to private sector employment.

The conference also highlighted strategies and best practices for employers aiming to increase their number of hired Veterans.



### October 2018: RIOVA attends the AmericaServes Community of Practice National Conference



The RIOVA team represented Rhode Island's coordinated network of care, RIServes, at the AmericaServes conference in Dallas, Texas. This national learning symposium brought together all 16 AmericaServes communities from across the nation to share best practices and reduce variance around coordinated care for our military connected members and their families.

# Veterans Services Strategic Plan (VSSP)

In 2013, the General Assembly directed the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs to work with other state agencies and community partners to develop, maintain, and annually update a statewide Veterans services strategic plan ("VSSP") for the delivery of services for Veterans and their families.

## Our Mission

We serve the Ocean State's 61,078 Veterans and their families through the operation of (1) the RI Veterans Home, (2) the RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and (3) the RI Veterans Resource Center. The Veterans Home in Bristol provides skilled nursing care to our Veterans. The Veterans Memorial Cemetery is a dignified and solemn resting place for Rhode Island Veterans and their eligible dependents in Exeter. The Veterans Resource Center in Warwick serves as the coordination center for RIserves, our referral network to connect Veterans and their families to benefits and resources.

## Vision

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

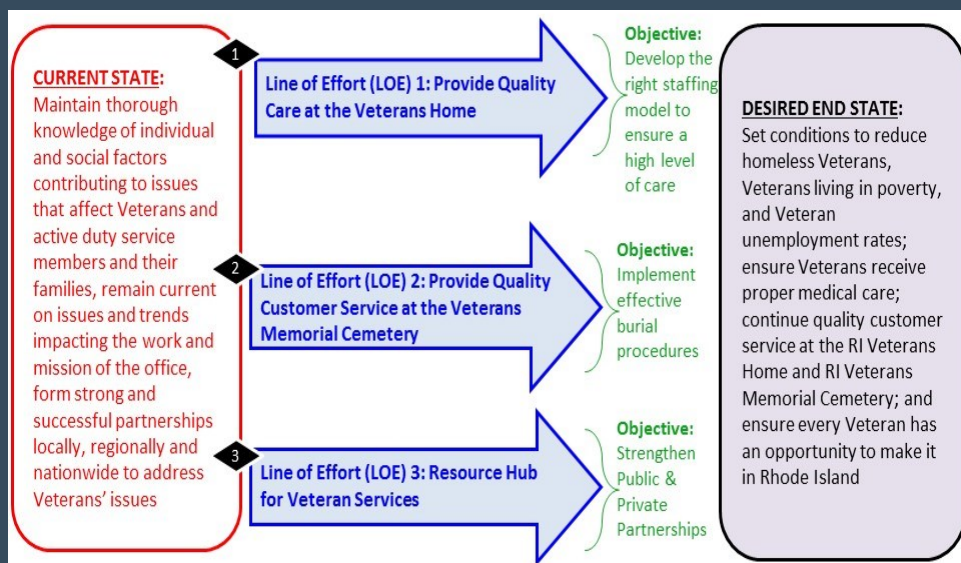


## Values

- Maintain thorough knowledge of individual and social factors contributing to issues that affect Veterans, service members, and their families.
- Remain current on issues and trends impacting the work and mission of the office.
- Use a collaborative approach with stakeholders to achieve the mission.
- Form strong partnerships - locally, regionally and nationally - to address Veterans' issues.

## 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.



# VSSP

## Planning & Goals

### Our Plan

Representatives of several state agencies came together to create a Veterans Services Strategic Plan (VSSP). The execution of the VSSP is conducted through (1) task force/working groups with state agencies (e.g., DOC/VA/DLT/DCYF/DHS task force for incarcerated Veterans); (2) RIServes, our coordinated network of community providers; and (3) community outreach with state agencies, nonprofits, Veteran service organizations, and municipalities. Given the diverse demographics of our Ocean State Veterans, the work focuses on thirteen service categories:

- 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 PTSD, Agent Orange Health Effects, and Burn Pits Health Effects
- Veterans Transitional Assistance
- Veterans Transportation

The RI Office of Veterans Affairs (RIOVA) recognizes our reach is only limited by our ability to work together. Our time, dollars, and creative energy must be wisely invested. By leveraging municipal, state, and federal capabilities, we can have a collective impact for Veterans and their families throughout the 13 Veterans service categories.





# VSSP

## 13 Veterans Service Categories

The VSSP is built upon addressing the needs of Veterans and their families through the 13 categories identified below:

### 1. 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 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.

- RIServes has streamlined the benefits process.

### 2. 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. In addition, the federal VA administers the GI Bill, which provides funds for tuition.

- #RIPromise has succeeded in supplementing educational opportunities for Veterans.
- RIOVA has increased on-campus presence of better provide service to Veteran students.

### 3. Veterans Employment/Training:

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs has established a partnership with the Department of Labor & Training's Veterans employment counselors to identify appropriate employment and training opportunities for those who've served. RIOVA also works with the Governor's Workforce Board and the federal VA's Vocational Rehabilitation program.

- Through collaboration with the Governor's Office, General Assembly and state agencies, Rhode Island is working towards the adoption of best practices for the transfer of military and spouse licenses in good standing and substantially equivalent; licensure through endorsement; temporary licensure; and expedited licensing processes.

### 4. Veterans Family Members/Caregivers:

Through RIServes, the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs can help family members and caregivers navigate the benefits system and identify agencies that offer caregiver support. In addition, the federal VA offers caregiver assistance and the Vets Center provides caregiver and family counseling.

- RIOVA awarded grants to nonprofit organizations to provide social services to family members.
- RIOVA has undertaken a multi-agency effort to address issues that impede military spouse employment. The State of Rhode Island recognizes the importance and impact of family readiness on military readiness.

# VSSP

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## 13 Veterans Service Categories

### 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. The Providence VA offers free income tax return preparation.

- RIOVA identified partners for the RIServes network to offer free financial coaching to Veterans.
- All Veteran employment and training programs have financial counseling available as a supplementary service.

### 6. Veterans Homelessness:

Rhode Island is making progress with developing a shared vision with community leaders to identify and implement concrete steps to overcome barriers to permanent housing that certain Veterans face.

- RIOVA Director is an active member of the Rhode Island Continuum of Care Committee (RICOC) and was appointed as co-chair of the RICOC Veterans Committee.
- RIOVA awarded grants to nonprofit organizations to provide social services to Veterans experiencing homelessness.

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### 7. Veterans Living in Poverty:

While there are no Veteran-specific anti-poverty programs at 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 increased supportive services to give homeless and at-risk Veterans access to the needed assistance through the RIServes network.
- RIOVA awarded grants to nonprofit organizations to provide social services to Veterans and family members experiencing poverty.
- RIOVA Director is an active member of the Rhode Island Continuum of Care Committee (RICOC) and was appointed as co-chair to the RICOC Veterans Committee.

# VSSP

## 13 Veterans Service Categories

### 8. Veterans Legal Services:

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. Roger Williams Law School launched the 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.

- RI Legal Services has partnered with RIOVA to join the RIServes network.
- The RIDOC partnership for incarcerated Veterans is a success story in its work to ease their reintegration into the community following release.
- RIOVA awarded grants to nonprofit organizations to provide legal services to 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 who are not eligible for the RI Veterans Home or VA long-term care options.

- In collaboration with the RI Department of Health and the Providence VA Medical Center, RIOVA is looking to expand services in both Providence and Washington counties.
- RIOVA is committed to optimizing the health and wellbeing of Veterans with multiple chronic conditions, life-limiting illness, frailty or disability associated with chronic disease or injury.

### 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 funding for basic funeral services for those Veterans who do not have the means to pay for them and are not eligible for the RIVMC.

- Land survey was completed that will expand the life expectancy of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery by 75 years.
- RIOVA is working with the VA National Cemetery Administration for best options for expansion.



# VSSP

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## 13 Veterans Service Categories

### 11. Veterans Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) / Agent Orange Effects / Burn Pits Health Effects:

As a response to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order 18-03, the Governor's Office convened two working groups, one focused on youth and the other focused on adults. The Governor tasked the working groups with proposing strategies for improving the behavioral healthcare (BH) system.

- RIOVA partnered with the Hospital Association of Rhode Island to fight the stigma associated with mental health illness, which presents substantial barriers to the effective and timely delivery of behavioral healthcare.
- Both case managers at the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs are certified for the detection and prevention of suicide and domestic abuse.

### 12. Veterans Transitional Assistance:

Through an information-sharing partnership with the Department of Defense, RIOVA instituted an outreach program to recently-separated service members. A 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. The military also 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.

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### 13. Veterans Transportation:

In June 2017, working with the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Affairs, RIPTA launched a pilot program to learn more about the transportation needs of veterans. Using funds from a Veteran Supportive Services Grant, RIPTA distributed free passes to approximately 200 Veterans in Rhode Island. The passes provided the participating Veterans with free, unlimited travel on RIPTA's fixed-route buses. RIPTA is conducting a survey to gauge Veterans' transportation use and needs based on the pilot program. This grant also enabled RIPTA to offer free service to all Rhode Island Veterans (with proof of eligibility).

- In 2018, RIPTA was awarded additional grant funding based on the results of the pilot program.
- RIPTA is committed to continuing this work with the Office of Veterans Affairs to find more ways to assist the transportation needs of Rhode Island's Veterans.

# VSSP

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## Partnerships

Our success is defined by our ability to work in a collaborative way with our partners. These efforts allow us and our network of community partners to make a collective impact on improving positive outcomes for our Veterans and their families. To achieve our desired end state, the following partners have been crucial in effecting positive change for those we serve (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 by promoting the state's long-term economic health and prosperity. The Commerce Corporation offers several 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 of 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 promoting strategies and programs to prevent and fight disease and protect the health and safety of all Rhode Islanders.

**The RI Department of Human Services (DHS)**. DHS is the lead agency to serve 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**. The Office of Secretary 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.

# VSSP

## Partnerships

**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 older Rhode Islanders.

**The RI National Guard (The Guard).** The Guard's deployment rate is consistently in the top five per capita nationally. 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 and their transportation needs.

**The RI Veterans Treatment Court.** The 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 maintain a productive, safe lifestyle within the community.

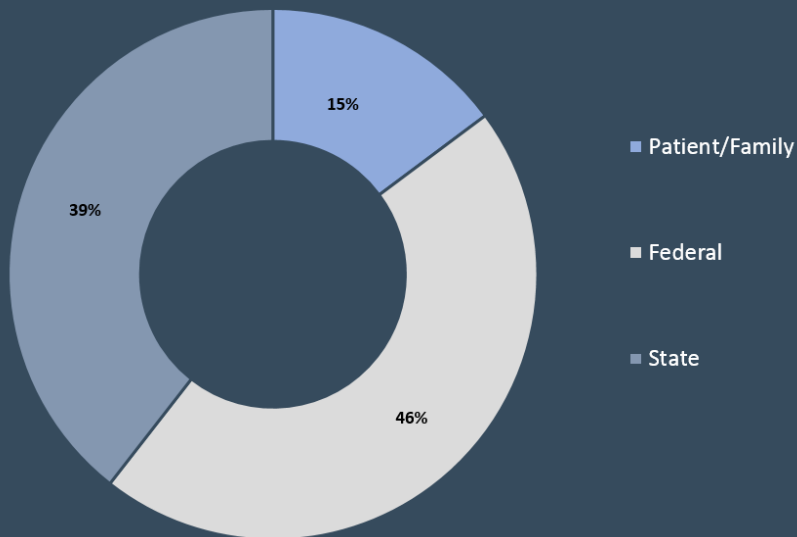




# Budget Reports

## RI Office of Veterans Affairs

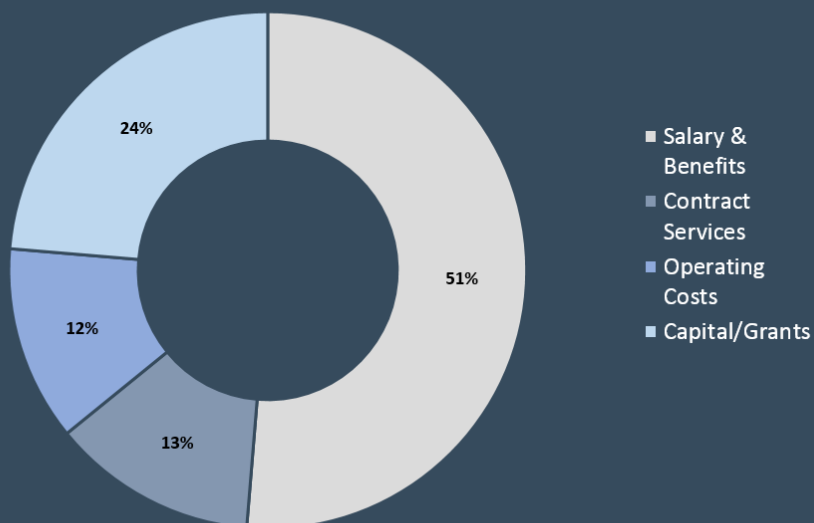
### RI VETERANS AFFAIRS - FY 2018 REVENUE



#### RI Veterans Affairs FY 2018 Revenue

Patient / Family	\$7,026,533.00
Federal	\$21,687,756.00
State	\$18,699,918.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$47,414,187.00</b>

### RI VETERANS HOME - FY 2018 EXPENDITURES



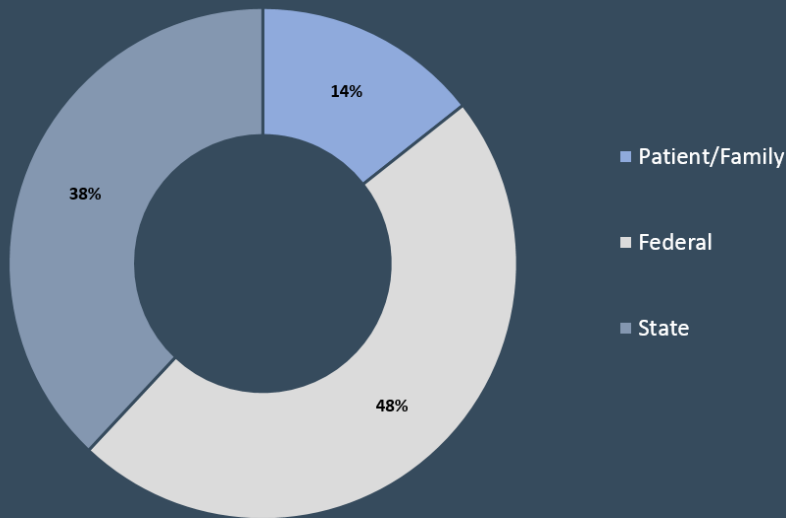
#### RI Veterans Affairs FY 2018 Expenditures

Salary & Benefits	\$24,521,761.00
Contract Services	\$5,870,808.00
Operating Costs	\$6,231,518.00
Capital / Grants	\$10,790,100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$47,414,187.00</b>

# Budget Reports

## RI Veterans Home

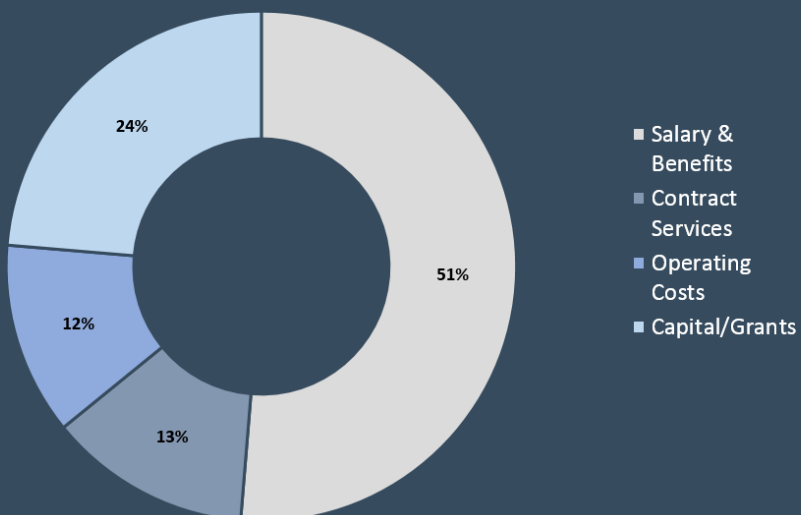
### RI VETERANS HOME - FY 2018 REVENUE



### RI Veterans Home FY 2018 Revenue

Patient / Family	\$6,556,749.00
Federal	\$21,687,735.00
State	\$17,317,003.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$45,561,487.00</b>

### RI VETERANS HOME - FY 2018 EXPENDITURES



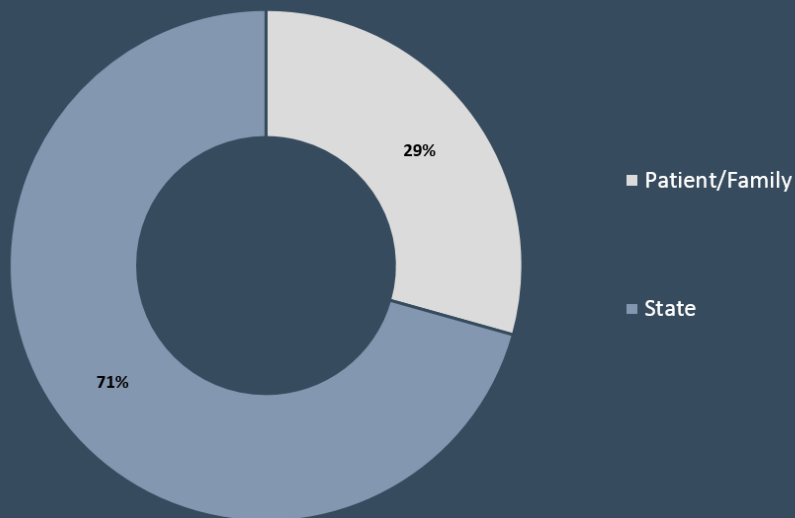
### RI Veterans Home FY 2018 Expenditure

Salary & Benefits	\$23,362,455.00
Contract Services	\$5,845,702.00
Operating Costs	\$5,557,335.00
Capital / Grants	\$10,775,995.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$45,561,487.00</b>

# Budget Reports

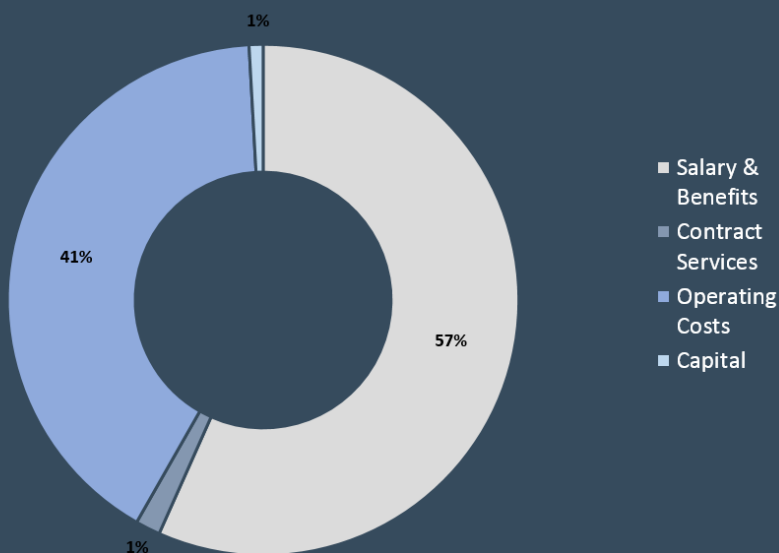
## RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery

### RI VETERANS CEMETERY - FY 2018 REVENUE



RI Veterans Cemetery FY 2018 Revenue	
Patient / Family	\$469,787.00
Federal	\$1,130,408.00
State	\$1,600,195.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,600,195.00</b>

### RI VETERANS CEMETERY - FY 2018 EXPENDITURES



RI Veterans Cemetery FY 2018 Expenditure	
Salary & Benefits	\$906,799.00
Contract Services	\$25,104.00
Operating Costs	\$654,186.00
Capital / Grants	\$14,106.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,600,195.00</b>



# Directory

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## 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

## Connect with us

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**SERVING VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, & THEIR FAMILIES**



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