



Annual Report 2020



Rhode Island
Office of Veterans Services

Kasim J. Yarn, Director

Table of Contents

Page	Topic
1	Message from the Director
2	RIServes
6	New Case Manager
7	Year Highlights
9	RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery
11	RI Veterans Home
15	Veterans Services Strategic Plan (VSSP)
23	Budget Reports
26	Directory



Message from the Director

Kasim J. Yarn



I am honored to present the 2020 Annual Report for the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services (RIVETS). This year has all of us facing the reality associated with navigating the uncertainty and anxiety related to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Our office has worked relentlessly to adapt to this ever-evolving environment. The 2020 Annual Report highlights our efforts as RIVETS remains unwavering in our commitment to our Veterans and military families during these unprecedented times. Across the state, our team draws strength and inspiration from a shared mission of serving our Ocean State Veterans and their families. Governor Raimondo directs me to be the Beacon of Leadership to ensure our Veterans and military families are treated in the manner, and with the respect, they deserve.

Throughout the pandemic, we've all had to deal with elements of chaos around us. And, despite these challenges, we can all pause, self-reflect, and ask for help because: "It's Ok Not to Be Ok." Six years ago, Governor Raimondo's Overdose Prevention & Intervention Taskforce started the mission to destigmatize mental health and substance use, and our community of partners continues this important work. Rhode Island Veterans have served this great nation honorably, and in return, we serve them. Through RIServes, they have access to resources which help support them in every way, including mental health needs. Veterans can call and speak to one of our case managers, who are fellow service members, and get the support they need. Our constant refrain is, "You are not alone, don't suffer in silence." Civilians may not be aware of the unique challenges that separating from military service and returning to civilian life can present – #WeStandTogether.

To our military families and caregivers: You have been continually asked to give more and more. You are truly heroes to our heroes, playing important roles in the health and well-being of your Veteran loved-ones.

To our community partners: When our Veterans and military families called, we collectively answered with an orchestra response that provided a vivid illustration of how we truly love America's Heroes!

Despite the many changes and challenges presented in 2020, this year has grounded us not in what we've lost, but what we have. The blessing of family, dear friends, colleagues, community partners, the healthcare heroes who are carrying us through this crisis, and all the essential workers on whom we depend. I am grateful for these blessings.

RI Serves

What is RIServes?

RIServes is a statewide interconnected network of Veterans' benefits. Easily accessible to the general public, the system serves as an entry point for Veterans, a service area for providers, and a coordination center for the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services. In short, RIServes consolidates the formerly dispersed array of resources into a single location.

How do I use it?

Rhode Island Veterans and their families can easily access the network by going to: www.RIServes.org and self enrolling. Alternatively, Veterans can contact the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services for assistance in quickly connecting with all available benefits.

Our goal since the launch of RIServes has been to deliver quality wrap-around service to Veterans and military families throughout Rhode Island. Core to this concept is the idea of what we call the "no wrong door" approach, that is, a Veteran should be able to access any service at any entry point within the network. Whether you're looking for assistance finding employment, going back to school, or just need a new ID to access the commissary, RIServes is here to be your one stop shop for Veterans' benefits.

Just as our service members answer the call to provide aid to their communities, the RIServes team also stands ready to assist, even during times of crisis. To date, we've partnered with many local food banks, non-profits, and community action programs to help connect Veterans and their families with emergency relief during the COVID-19 pandemic.



US. Military delivers food during the COVID-19 Crisis

RI Serves

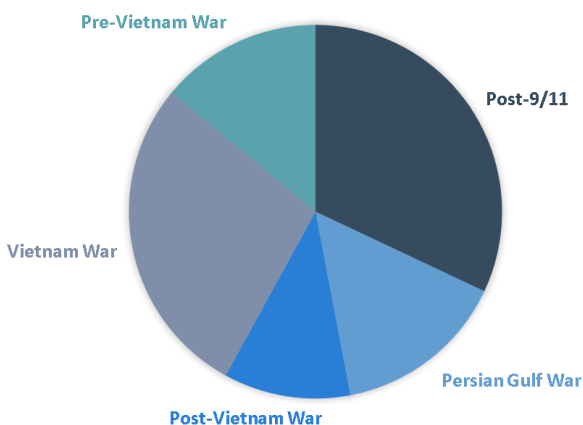
At the Office of Veterans Services, we firmly believe Rhode Island Veterans benefit most when we are responsible stewards of resources. Data available through RIServes helps guide policy decisions, informing our investments and outreach efforts ensuring we are delivering programming in line with people's needs.



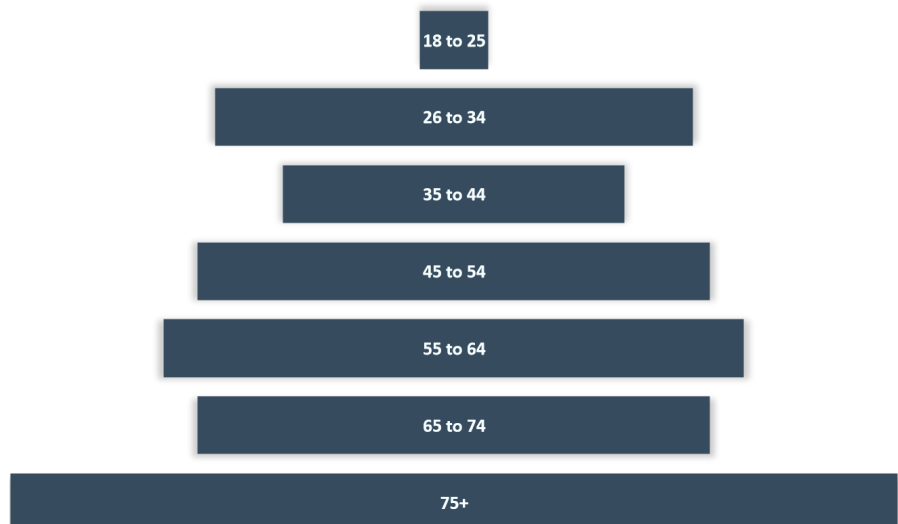
Service Breakdown

Benefits Navigation	47%
Education	2%
Employment	5%
Income, Food, Clothing Support	16%
Housing & Shelter	8%
Legal	6%
Physical & Mental Health	6%
Transportation	3%
Utilities	2%
Wellness & Recreation	1%

RISERVES CLIENT SERVICE ERAS



RISERVES CLIENT AGE DATA



RIServes

The RIServes network offers a robust suite of benefits accessible for Veterans. Beyond the more conventional needs, such as healthcare, employment, and education, the network also includes resources for wellbeing and social enrichment. The Dare to Dream Ranch is one of those partners working to increase the quality of life of our Veterans.

Dare to Dream

Dare to Dream Ranch offers Veterans and their families the unique experience of equine and animal companionship therapy, aimed at the mitigation of symptoms of anxiety and PTSD. The ranch has a long history of helping Veterans who find comfort in caring for animals and connecting with nature.

Dare to Dream also offers Agritherapy, which teaches Veterans the fundamentals of farming, raising cattle, beekeeping, and training horses, donkeys, and cows.

The Veteran community is quite familiar with the concept of service and the protection of others, and caring for animals on the ranch offers a sense of comfort of duty. The ranch reports a large uptick in request for services during COVID crisis, as many appreciate the opportunity to partake in a naturally socially-distanced therapeutic outdoor activity.



A Veteran partakes in equine therapy



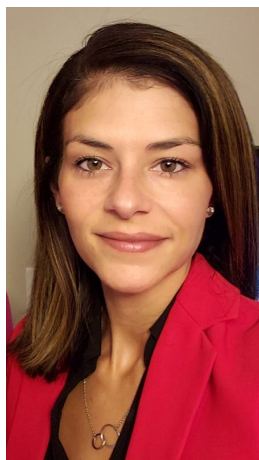
The Agritherapy program teaches the raising of cattle

RI Serves

Our Partners

- AmpSurf
- Armed Forces Services Rhode Island
- Beachwood Center for Wellbeing Inc.
- Brain Injury Association of Rhode Island
- Brown University
- Bryant University
- City of Cranston
- City of Providence
- Community Action Partnership
- Community College of Rhode Island
- Comprehensive Community Action Program
- Dare to Dream Ranch
- Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Experience Office
- Hire Heroes USA
- HopeHealth Hospice & Palliative Care
- IYRS School of Technology & Trades
- Jewish War Veterans of the USA—Department of Rhode Island
- Johnson & Wales University
- Lone Survivor Foundation
- Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services
- NEADS
- New England Center and Home for Veterans- Rhode Island
- Operation Stand Down Rhode Island
- Pets for Patriots
- Providence College
- Providence VA Medical Center
- Rhode Island Bar Association
- Rhode Island College
- Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Workforce Development
- Rhode Island Transition Assistance Advisor (RI TAA)
- Rhode Island Vet Center
- Rhode Island Veterans Treatment Court
- Roger Williams University
- SENEDIA
- Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
- Shri Service Corps
- Shri Yoga
- Team RWB Rhode Island
- The Center for Mediation and Collaboration Rhode Island
- University of Rhode Island
- Providence VA Regional Office
- Veterans Business Outreach Center of New England
- Veterans Inc.
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Vets4Warriors
- VetSuccess on Campus
- Westbay Community Action, Inc.
- YWCA RI - Gateway to Independence

Women Veterans—Leaders in Service



In 2020, the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services hired Jennifer Marquis-Caruso, an Army Veteran and former Human Resources professional, to serve as its first female Chief of Veterans Affairs. Jennifer's role is to increase awareness of the obstacles female Veterans face, and expand access to resources for this underserved population. She is designated as the Women's Veteran Coordinator for Rhode Island and represents the state in national efforts to offer targeted assistance to female Veterans.

In preparation for the anticipated increase in the female Veteran population, Jennifer is building out the infrastructure necessary for Rhode Island to serve all of its Veterans. Nationally, women comprise roughly 17% of serving military personnel, 10% of the veteran population, and 30% of service academy students. Women are the fastest-growing subpopulation of both servicemembers and veterans.

Jennifer is engaging partners at the Veterans Administration, as well as numerous government and nonprofit entities, to form a monthly advisory council for female Veteran needs.

In addition, she's spearheaded an initiative to expand the RIServes network's list of partners, specifically focusing on increasing the breadth of resources to better include providers who can cover the currently underserved needs gap for female Veterans.

Changing demographics

- The VA projection models anticipate a 22% increase in the number of female Veterans in the next 5 years
- Female Veterans account for 7.9% of the Rhode Island Veteran population, and 9.4% of the National Veteran population
- The average age of female Veterans is 51 compared to an average age of 65 for male Veterans



22% of clients served by
RIServes were female, an increase of
4% from 2019

Year Highlights

It's Ok Not to Be Ok

In September of 2020, Governor Raimondo asked Rhode Island state agencies to coordinate a campaign to provide increased awareness and support for mental health. RIVETS joined the other human services agencies in providing access to resources and guidance for their target populations.



Adjutant General Callahan of the Rhode Island National Guard joined Director Kasim Yarn in the taped Veteran's segment of "It's Ok Not to Be Ok," a video series aimed at providing resources, information, and empathy towards Rhode Islanders who may be struggling with mental health. Both men acknowledged that Veterans are familiar with the concept of sacrifice and service. They reminded Veterans that now it's their turn to be served by the military support infrastructure throughout the state.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Depression are some of the mental health concerns which can disproportionately affect the Veteran Population. It's critical that Veterans are aware of, and connected with, the mental health support system offered by the VA. In addition, the feelings of isolation and lack of structure can often be alleviated through participation in wellness, education, and employment programs which are available.



RIVets teaches a military focused training at a socially-distanced CIT training

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training

In partnership with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), RIVETS designed and delivered a Veteran-focused Crisis Intervention training to a group of nonprofit organizations and community leaders. The goal of CIT trainings is to unite statewide stakeholders and share their specialized knowledge to strengthen their response to mental health crises.

Year Highlights

Beirut Memorial Dedication

RIVETS, in coordination with the General Assembly, Lt. Governor's Office, and the RI National Guard, dedicated a new memorial to the "Rhode Island 9," a group of 9 Rhode Island service members who lost their lives in the 1983 Beirut Bombings.

The Rhode Island delegation welcomed Undersecretary for the Navy Gregory Slavonic for the dedication ceremony. They were joined by the families of the Rhode Island 9. The memorial is a product of years of planning and stands as testament of Rhode Island's appreciation for the sacrifices our service men and women have made.



RIVets, alongside state and local leaders dedicate the Beirut Memorial to the Rhode Island 9



RIServes Joins with UniteRI

RIServes has become the statewide standard for connecting Veterans with benefits. In 2020, RIServes joined with UniteRI, a benefits navigation and coordinated care platform mirroring RIServes but accessible by the larger Rhode Island population.

UniteRI includes a number of healthcare and human services focused groups who serve the entire state. The network provides them with similar functionality to RIServes, while also directly granting them access to RIServes when one of their clients is identified as a Veteran or family of a Veteran. Together, the networks can communicate and generate referrals to one another.

Through this partnership, the combined network has grown to include 166 service organizations, and the collective userbase has grown to 742 unique users.

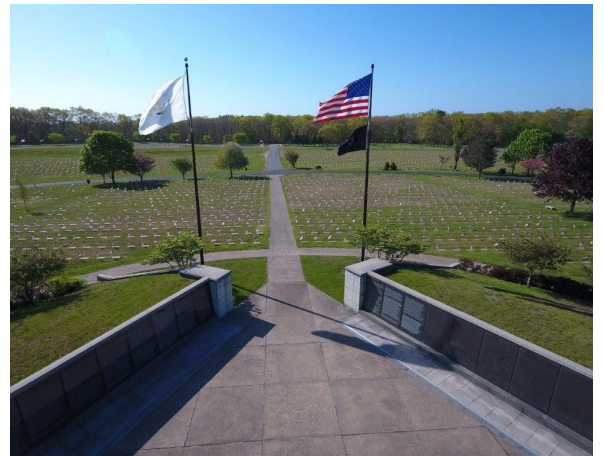
Veterans Memorial Cemetery

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services operates and maintains the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery (RIVMC) in Exeter. It is 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.



Memorials & Monuments

The RIVMC offers all Veterans and their families the opportunity to inscribe the Veteran's name on the memorial wall or memorial walkway. Notification of the memorial wall and walkway program is sent out to families each February.



In addition, many military units, organizations, and campaigns have established monuments throughout the cemetery to honor and celebrate their respective Veterans. The monuments' design, placement and installation is coordinated with the RIVMC leadership team.

Currently, two new projects are in the design and fundraising stage. The first will honor Gold Star Families, and the second will monumentalize the contributions and sacrifice of Native American servicemembers.



Veterans Memorial Cemetery



Governor Raimondo speaks at the 2020 Memorial Day Ceremony

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of the Cemetery's functions changed in 2020. Among them is the holding of ceremonial events. This year, the RIVMC team conducted the Memorial Day Ceremony virtually and in a physically distanced manner, while being broadcast on live television. Elected officials and staff conducted the ceremony at the World War II Memorial and joined together in honoring our fallen service members.

Operations & Future Plans

The RIVMC continues to be one of the busiest state Veterans cemeteries in the nation. During Fiscal Year 2020, the cemetery conducted 1185 committal services. The staff consists of 16 employees, which includes 12 full-time personnel and four seasonal workers.

The RIVMC began construction on a new Columbarium Wall complex in the fall of 2020. This is the first of a multi-phase project, supported by \$1.3 million in federal grants, that will eventually build 40 walls containing 14,000 niches and will allow RIVMC to continue fulfilling niche cremation placements for over 50 years.

Our partners

- 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
- Home Depot of North Kingstown
- Year Up Rhode Island
- VA National Cemetery Administration
- National Grid Saluting Branches

Rhode Island Veterans Home

The Rhode Island Veterans Home (RIVH) serves as a testament to our State's appreciation for all the men and women who served. The 260,000 square-foot facility was rebuilt from the ground up to provide state-of-the-art amenities and officially opened in 2017. The Home provides housing and care for Rhode Island's Wartime Veterans, and it is located on the same 100-acre parcel that has served as the home for Rhode Island's Veterans since 1890. The mission of the Veterans Home continues to be the delivery of high quality nursing care, responsiveness to resident health and safety needs, and the commitment to providing the highest quality of life for our Rhode Island heroes.



The Rhode Island Veterans Home is built upon the premise of interconnected service and accessibility for Veterans and their visiting families. The design concept focuses around “neighborhoods,” which are groups of resident housing providing a closer and more personal sense of community.

Each neighborhood is divided into two “cottages,” which provide a home-like feel while directly linking residents to services and amenities in the near vicinity. The cottages feature 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. The Home features a main plaza, shopping and activity centers, as well as other neighborhoods which are just a quick walk down the interconnected hallways. For families, robust parking options just outside the facility are provided.

Rhode Island Veterans Home

The Rhode Island Veterans Home is built to foster a sense of community for the residents and staff. Fortunately, the Home is also surrounded by a supportive community. Each year, groups from around Rhode Island volunteer their time and offer generous donations to the residents of the Veterans Home. The COVID pandemic put a pause on many of the volunteer activities normally held within the facility, but some organizations still found ways to lift the spirits of our residents.

Lowes Hero Project

Lowes donated a set of 6 patio heaters, propane tanks, and mats to the Veterans home. This allowed the residents to spend more time outdoors during the Fall season, and for family visitation to be held outdoors to accommodate social distancing. A total of 6 heaters were donated, allowing full use of each of the outdoor activity areas.

The Lowes team also created hand-made wood engraved plaques for each branch of the US military for display in the main lobby.



Donated patio heaters allow residents to enjoy outdoor activities throughout the year



The donated donuts celebrate Veterans day with messages of appreciation

Dunkin' Donation

For Veterans Day, Dunkin' created a set of custom donuts showcasing their appreciation for our Veterans. They were delivered to the Home for residents and their families to enjoy.

Dunkin followed this by conducting a fundraiser for the Veterans Home in December, donating 50 cents for each coffee sold in their nearby Warren location.

Rhode Island Veterans Home



Paul Murgo, Interim Licensed Nursing Home Administrator

On July 1st, 2020, Paul Murgo was appointed the Interim Licensed Nursing Home Administrator at the Rhode Island Veterans Home. Mr. Murgo brings with him over 20 years of combined healthcare administration experience in both the public and private sector. His leadership has helped shape the disciplined safety practices that help to keep the residents safe and healthy. Paul has taken bold action to tackle unique challenges faced by those in long term care settings, especially given the additional risks faced by residents who are often older and medically fragile.

Paul joined the team upon the retirement of General Rick Baccus. General Baccus dedicated his entire life in service to our country. His willingness to stay on through the initial challenges we faced in combatting COVID-19 is much appreciated.

Though the focus of this year has been the health and safety of residents at RIVH during the COVID pandemic, there have also been enhancements to the facility and operations.

In partnership with the University of Rhode Island, an on-site greenhouse was completed, featuring a gardening program run by URI Master Gardeners. The program teaches residents how to grow and care for food and other plants. In addition, the Master Gardeners also donated poinsettias, bringing holiday cheer to the residents and staff during the 2020 season.

Fifteen seasonal employees, eight full time attendants, and two registered nurses have been approved to be hired on to the care team at Veterans Home. In addition, the housekeeping contract has been re-negotiated resulting in savings while maintaining excellent levels of service.

Transition efforts are underway to convert shift scheduling and medical records to a new, modern digital system.



The new RIVH greenhouse



Poinsettias donated by URI Master Gardeners

Rhode Island Veterans Home

Throughout the year, the staff of the Rhode Island Veterans Home have worked diligently to ensure health and safety, while maintaining quality of life for the Veteran residents.

Though the facility did not have an active case of COVID until April, screening and quarantine procedures have been in place since March. These protocols slowed admissions while shifting the focus toward keeping the current population safe and healthy.

The RIVH was fortunate to work alongside the Congregate Setting Support Team (CSST) embedded within the Rhode Island National Guard. The CSST worked with the RIVH staff to assess the facility and develop an action plan in response to the pandemic. Once the plan was implemented, the Veterans Home went four months without a resident COVID-19 infection. The RIVH maintained minimal resident cases even while the virus surged in surrounding communities and nursing facilities.

Keeping Veterans who are residing in the Home connected with their families was a necessity that the RIVH committed to implementing from the start. Visitations continued, with a series of strict policies requiring visitors to schedule an appointment, undergo a full symptom screening and temperature check, and then be escorted to a physically-distanced meeting area while utilizing a full set of PPE. When possible, visitation was held in an outdoor setting. As an alternative, the RIVH staff also utilize teleconference technology to allow residents to video chat with their families.

When the facility is free of positive cases, the staff is able to accommodate 180 visits per month for the residents, with a similar number of virtual visits through video chat to supplement. The Home follows all Rhode Island Department of Health guidance when opening or closing the building to in-person visitation.



A RIVH resident enjoying a virtual visit with his family.

During the pandemic, the Veterans Home is able to utilize the facility design to designate two neighborhoods as quarantine units. One can be used for new admissions and residents returning from the hospital, as a precautionary quarantine measure. The second neighborhood can be used in the event of a positive case, and allows residents without severe symptoms to remain in this dedicated neighborhood while they recover.

Frequent staff testing, as advised by the Rhode Island Department of Health, continues to be used to ensure any asymptomatic staff are quickly identified and instructed to quarantine.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

VSSP

In 2013, the General Assembly directed the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services (RIVETS) 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.

RIVETS serves the Ocean State's 62,151 Veterans and their families through the operation of the Rhode Island Veterans Home, the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and the Rhode Island 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 RIVETS, our referral network which connects Veterans and their families to benefits and resources.

The RI Office of Veterans Services acts 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.

Our 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.**

By remaining faithful to our values, and continuing to provide quality care at the Veterans Home, quality customer service at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and acting as a resource hub for Veterans Services, RIVETS is able to focus on our objectives and desired end state.

We are setting conditions to ensure every Veteran has an opportunity to flourish and be successful in Rhode Island by reducing homelessness, poverty, and unemployment among Veterans; increasing Veterans' access to healthcare; and maintaining quality, responsive client services at the Rhode Island Veterans Home and the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

Planning & Goals

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 and working groups with state and federal agencies (e.g., Veterans Administration, Department of Corrections, Department of Labor and Training, Department of Children, Youth and Families, Department of Human Services, the Task Force for Incarcerated Veterans, and others); (2) RIServes, our coordinated network of community providers; and (3) community outreach with state agencies, non-profits, Veteran service organizations, and municipalities.



Given the diverse demographics of our Ocean State Veterans, the work focuses on 13 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 Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services recognizes our reach is only limited by our ability to work together. Our time, resources, 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.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

13 Service Categories

1. Veterans Disability Benefits:

The federal Department of Veterans Affairs provides service-connected disability benefits. The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services assists Veterans with benefits counseling, application and appeals processes. In addition, RIVETS 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 continues to streamline the benefits navigation 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 Forever GI Bill, which provides funds for tuition.

- RIVETS has increased its level of student Veteran advocacy amongst the state college campuses, and partnered with private higher education providers to deliver better access to resources for their Student Veteran population.

3. Veterans Employment/Training:

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services continues to partner with the Department of Labor & Training's Veterans employment counselors to identify appropriate employment and training opportunities for those who've served. RIVETS also works with the Governor's Workforce Board, Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation and the federal VA's Vocational Rehabilitation program.

- Through collaboration with the Governor's Office, General Assembly, and state agencies, RIVETS continues to work towards the adoption of effective practices for the transfer of military and spouse licenses in good standing and substantially equivalent; licensure through endorsement; temporary licensure; and expedited licensing.

4. Veterans Family Members/Caregivers:

Through RIServes, the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services 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.

- RIVETS awarded grants to nonprofit organizations to provide social services to family members.
- RIVETS has expanded the RIServes network to include more services accessible to family members.
- RIVETS 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.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

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 service members. The Providence VA offers free income tax return preparation and community partners like Operation Stand Down RI help with financial planning.

- RIVETS 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 significant progress and has developed a shared vision with community leaders to identify and implement concrete steps to overcome barriers to permanent housing faced by Veterans.

- RIVETS 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.
- RIVETS awarded grants to non-profit organizations providing social services to Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- RIVETS spearheaded a multi-agency working group to address homelessness and affordable housing in Rhode Island.

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 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child care assistance, and limited amounts of monetary assistance. Community partners such as Operation Stand Down RI, Veterans, Inc., Gateway to Independence, and the RI Coalition for the Homeless help Veterans who are unable to afford housing and other services.

- RIVETS increased supportive services to give homeless and at-risk Veterans access to needed assistance through the RIServes network.
- RIVETS awarded grants to nonprofit organizations to provide social services to Veterans and family members experiencing poverty.
- RIVETS is working to strengthen the partnership with The RI Department of Human Services (DHS) to better serve Veterans and military families who require food assistance.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

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.

- The RIDOC partnership for incarcerated Veterans continues to be a success, working to ease the reintegration into the community following release.
- RIVETS awarded grants to non-profit organizations providing legal services to Veterans.

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 helps to fund basic funeral services for those Veterans who do not have the means to pay for services and are not eligible for the RIVMC.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is awarding a grant for 100 percent of allowable costs associated with the expansion of the Columbarium Wall complex at the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The grant will fund the construction of 1,400 columbarium niches, landscaping, irrigation, and supporting infrastructure.

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, RIVETS works with the state's Medicaid agency to determine other long-term care options for those Veterans who are not eligible for admission to the RI Veterans Home nor VA long-term care options.

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



Veterans Services Strategic Plan

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, two working groups, one focused on youth and the other focused on adults, were tasked with proposing strategies for improving the behavioral healthcare system.

- The "It's OK not to be OK" segment for Veterans and active duty military personnel was a tremendous success, offering testimony and re-emphasizing the vast resources available.
- Director Yarn was featured in a RI Broadcasters Association campaign for "It's OK not to be OK" which aired during Mental Health Awareness Month and can be viewed at this link <https://bit.ly/3exkV9l>

12. Veterans Transitional Assistance:

Through an information-sharing partnership with the Department of Defense, RIVETS 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 RIVETS, 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.

- During normal operations, Naval Station Newport conducts a week-long TAP class and has partnered with Director Yarn to provide a brief to each new convening class.



13. Veterans Transportation:

Working with the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services, RIPTA has supported a pilot program to learn more about the transportation needs of veterans. Utilizing a Veteran Supportive Services Grant, RIPTA distributed passes to approximately 89 RI Veterans providing free, unlimited travel on 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).

- RIPTA is committed to continuing this work with the Office of Veterans Services to find more ways to assist the transportation needs of Rhode Island's Veterans.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

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 providers— 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, behavioral health, 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.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan

The RI Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) OHA serves older Rhode Islanders (age 55+), adults living with disabilities, and family caregivers, connecting them to resources and information that promote healthy aging and advocating for strong laws and policies that protect and empower them to age healthfully, happily and safely.

The RI National Guard (RING) RING's deployment rate is consistently in the top five per capita nationally. RING 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 services 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.

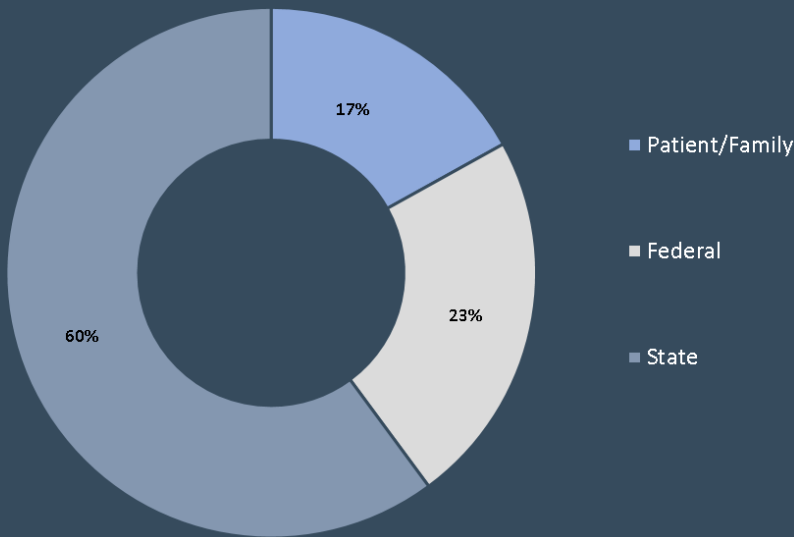


Our mission is made possible by the partnerships we hold with so many organizations throughout the state of Rhode Island.

On behalf of the RIVETS team, we thank every service provider and all of the volunteers who donate their time to helping our Veterans.

Budget Reports

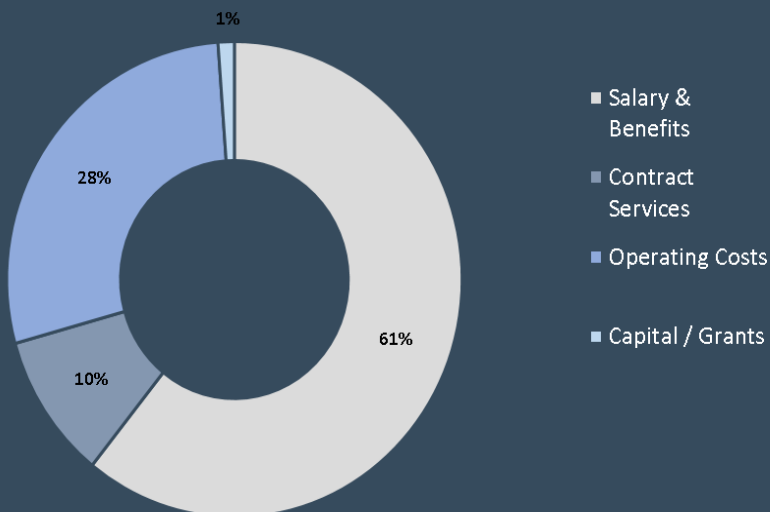
RI VETERANS SERVICES - FY 2020 REVENUE



RI Veterans Services FY 2020 Revenue

Patient/Family	\$	7,456,466
Federal	\$	10,097,927
State	\$	26,460,794
Total:	\$	44,015,187

RI VETERANS SERVICES - FY 2020 EXPENDITURES



RI Veterans Services FY 2020 Expenditures

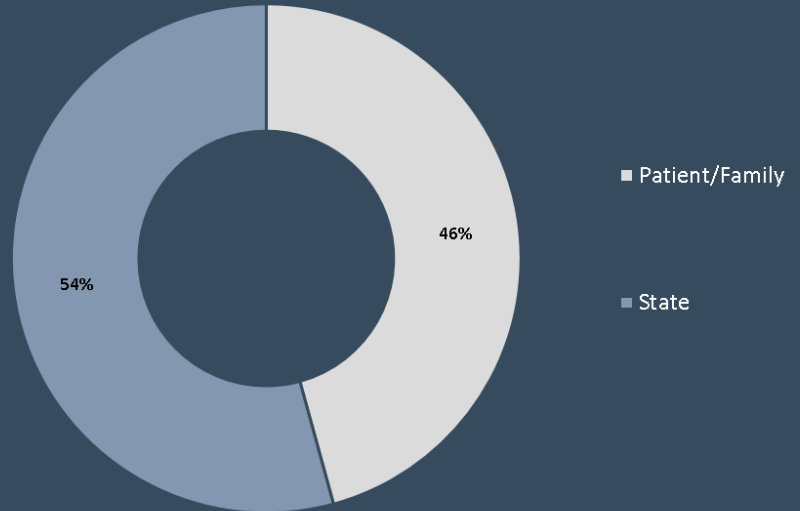
Salary & Benefits	\$	26,737,594
Contract Services	\$	4,369,254
Operating Costs	\$	12,400,807
Capital / Grants	\$	507,532
Total:	\$	44,015,187

Budget Reports

RI VETERANS CEMETERY - FY 2020 REVENUE

RI Veterans Cemetery Revenue

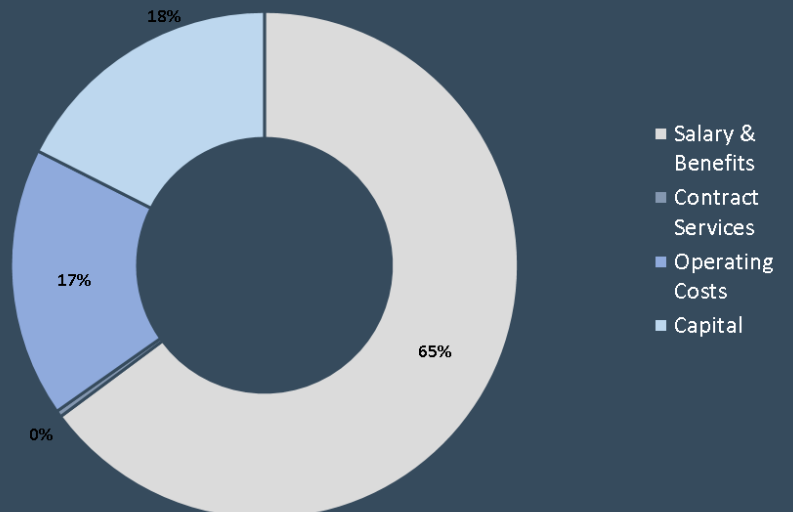
Patient/Family	\$	803,031
State	\$	952,304
Total:	\$	1,755,335



RI VETERANS CEMETERY - FY 2020 EXPENDITURES

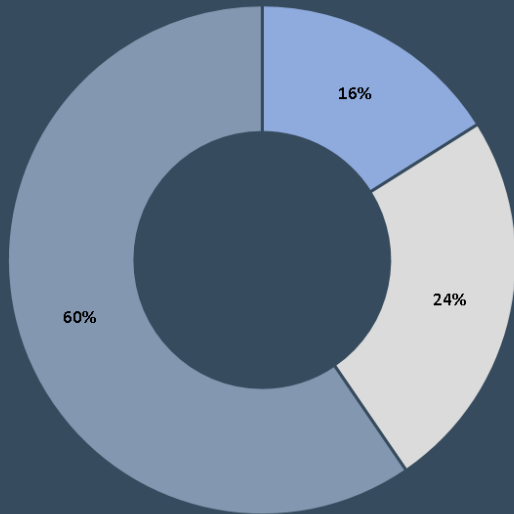
RI Veterans Cemetery Expenditures

Salary & Benefits	\$	1,138,193
Contract Services	\$	7,132
Operating Costs	\$	301,685
Capital	\$	308,324
Total:	\$	1,755,335



Budget Reports

RI VETERANS HOME - FY 2020 REVENUE

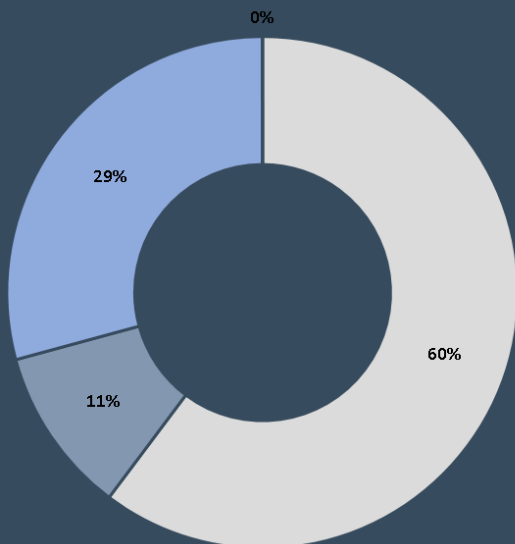


- Patient/Family
- Federal
- State

RI Veterans Home Revenue

Patient/Family	\$	6,653,435
Federal	\$	10,097,927
State	\$	24,668,238
Total:	\$	41,419,600

RI VETERANS HOME - FY 2020 EXPENDITURES



- Salary & Benefits
- Contract Services
- Operating Costs
- Capital/Grants

RI Veterans Home Expenditures

Salary & Benefits	\$	24,955,163
Contract Services	\$	4,362,022
Operating Costs	\$	12,095,321
Capital/Grants	\$	7,094
Total:	\$	41,419,600

Contact Us

Rhode Island Veterans Resource Center

560 Jefferson Boulevard, Suite 206

Warwick, RI 02886

(401) 921-2119

Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

301 South County Trail

Exeter, RI 02882

(401) 268-3088

Rhode Island Veterans Home

480 Metacom Avenue

Bristol, RI 02809

(401) 253-8000

Stay Connected



www.vets.ri.gov



[www.facebook.com/
RIOfficeofVeteransServices](https://www.facebook.com/RIOfficeofVeteransServices)



www.twitter.com/RIServes

SERVING VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, & THEIR FAMILIES



**Access the network today! Visit www.RIServes.org to
submit service requests online 24/7**