

NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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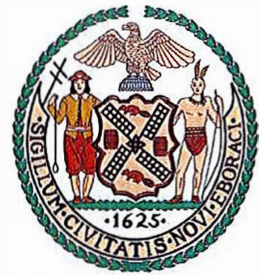
NEW YORK CITY VETERANS' ACHIEVEMENTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

*“Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.” – **President Harry S. Truman, April 17, 1945***

Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988, press 1)

The Crisis Line, mandated by the Joshua Omvig Veteran Suicide Prevention Act of 2007, provides immediate support to veterans, service members and their families.

New York City Veterans Advisory Board



Wendy McClinton, Chairperson Charles Hernandez, Vice Chairperson Mercedes Elias, Secretary

April 2023

Honorable Mayor Eric Adams
Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom
NYC Council Speaker Adrienne E. Adams
Councilmember Robert Holden, Chair, Veterans Committee NYC Council

Greetings,

Submitted for your review is the New York City Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) end of the year report. This report highlights the concerns of veterans shared during the NYC Veterans Advisory Board Public Hearing Sessions. The public sessions are held every other month and provide our city's veterans a voice to share and give input into issues that plague the veteran community or offer suggestions that can better the services to the veteran community. These sessions are also a great place to find out what works and what does not. A flyer is included outlining dates, times and locations of each session. The VAB public sessions have moved from being remote to hybrid. We are currently hosting the public sessions in venues that veterans frequent the most. Some of those venues are colleges, VA medical facilities, VSO's posts and the like. This will allow for better veteran outreach and engagement. The report shares the recommendations of the VAB to the elected officials governing our city's veterans and to the Department of Veterans Services (DVS).

Secondly, included in our report and submitted as an addendum for your review is the Department of Veterans Services annual report. As in prior years, we have asked the Department of Veteran Services to provide us a report on their activities and have include their response to this request as an addendum to our report.

Finally, we are concerned with the lack of appointments and re-appointments to the board from the Council. This has been a continuing issue since former Speaker Corey Johnson. We look forward to working with the Council on this issue.

The Veterans Advisory Board stands ready to work with you to improve the quality and level of services for all New Yorkers especially Veterans. Please direct all questions or concerns my email at WMcClintonVABNYC@gmail.com or I can be reached at 917-642-1785.

Sincerely,

Wendy McClinton
Chair, NYC Veterans Advisory Board

NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

As of December 31, 2022, seven of eleven board members have current appointments. All Council appointments have expired terms and two appointments, including one for a spouse, caregiver, and/or Gold Star family member remain unfilled.

Board Member	Borough	Email (@gmail.com)	Term Expires	Appointment
Wendy McClinton Chairman	Brooklyn	WMcClintonVABNYC	June 4, 2021	Council
Charles Hernandez Vice Chairman	Bronx	CHernandezVABNYC	March 31, 2021	Council
Mercedes Elias Secretary	Queens	MEliasVABNYC	February 17, 2024	Mayor
Todd Haskins	Manhattan	THaskinsVABNYC	February 17, 2024	Mayor
Joe Bello	Bronx	JBelloVABNYC	Term Completed	Council
Paul Dietrich	Staten Island	PDietrichVABNYC	August 23, 2023	Mayor
John Rowan	Queens	JRowanVABNYC	November 19, 2021	Council
Peter Kauffmann	Queens	PKauffmannVABNYC	August 23, 2023	Mayor
Jennifer Kamrowski	Manhattan	JKamrowskiVABNYC	February 17, 2024	Mayor
Andrew Walcott	Brooklyn	AWalcottVABNYC	August 23, 2023	Mayor
Linda Ollis	Staten Island	LOllisVABNYC	May 9, 2025	Mayor

New Board Members

In previous end-of-year reports, we recommended the City Council create legislation to expand the board from 11 to 13 members. This recommendation was made to include either a spouse of a veteran or deceased veteran, a Gold Star parent or child; or a registered caregiver of a veteran as defined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); constituencies that are important to the board and the community. This was accomplished through Council Intro. 2354-B.

Intro. 2354-B became law on January 10, 2022 (LL19-2021).

On September 14, 2022, Mayor Adams, under local law 19, appointed Linda Ollis to the board as a Mayoral Gold Star Mother representative.

LOCAL VETERAN POLICIES AND RESOURCES

In 2022, the veteran community continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The VAB continued to work with DVS to make sure veterans and their families were being supported as they continued to face issues regarding homelessness, food insecurity, and unemployment.

Why Should the City Support its Veterans?

We believe that New York City, as well as the non-profit and private sectors, have both a moral and economic imperative to support our veterans. New York City benefits from the following investments:

Freedom and Security: All residents of New York City benefit from the freedom and security provided by our armed forces. The Federal Hall National Memorial reminds us of the observation of our first President, George Washington who noted that *“the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation.”* To ensure our continued prosperity, it is critical we support those who have served.

Federal Spending and Tourism: New York City benefits from federal spending and tourism. Activities such as the annual Fleet Week, July 4th Celebration, New York City Veterans’ Day Parade, the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum, and the Canyon of Heroes all are connected to our nation’s military veterans and produce significant commerce. As the economic capital of the world, many Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) and veteran-focused non-profits host events here, which also adds to the commerce and culture of the city.

Veterans Make Great Citizens: Veterans and their families are this country’s greatest renewable resource and attracting them to New York City supports our continued success. Veterans tend to have higher earnings and lower unemployment than non-veterans once their transition is complete. Veterans also tend to be more civically active and have lower incarceration rates than non-veterans.

These moral and economic imperatives provide a good rationale for investment in good, local veteran policies and programs, particularly since many of these provide a direct and positive economic return for New York City.

VETERAN CHALLENGES IN NYC

All programs should be viewed through the lens of how they **support veterans' readjustment from military service and their continued service as citizens.**

We recognize that veterans face unique challenges related directly or indirectly to their service. However, veterans are not victims. They actively choose to serve. Providing support and services, particularly as they transition from service, allows them to become productive citizens. Prioritizing this principle has the added benefit of reinforcing the fact that all New Yorkers benefit from these programs, regardless of veteran status.

Wherever possible, the city should seek programs that reinforce and support veterans and their families. For example, the city should partner with non-profits and VSOs on specific programs for veterans. Furthermore, the city should make investments in programs and resources, such as education, workforce development, employment, and entrepreneurship; along with programs that support personal development, such as cultural and arts programs.

SUMMARY OF VAB ACTIONS OF IN 2022 AND PLANS FOR 2023

Below is a summary of the key activities for 2022:

Advised the Commissioner and elected officials on VA recommendations to the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission: The VAB was actively involved in engaging with DVS and the city’s elected officials to present concerns and issues on the recommendations made to the AIR commission. With the assistance of local VA medical center directors, the concerns of veterans were voiced and presented against the recommendations, which would have had a tremendous impact on the care of our veteran population.

Conducted 5 Meetings: This year we moved our public sessions to a hybrid format, allowing participants to meet with the board and DVS in public and virtually to ensure they were able to voice their concerns. We continued to see a higher level of attendance virtually than in in-person meetings held prior to the pandemic.

2023 Meeting Schedule: We have tentatively scheduled the 2023 VAB meetings on the following dates. All meetings will be held in a hybrid format, with options to attend in person or virtually.

Date	Borough
Wed Feb 8	Manhattan
Wed April 19	Queens
Wed June 7	Staten Island
Wed August 9	Bronx
Wed October 18	Brooklyn

Convened Government and other Leaders to Connect Veterans with Services: At each of the VAB meetings, the staff of DVS, as well as representatives from the VA and other government and non-government organizations were present. This year we had consistent representation from local VA leadership, which allowed us to address the recommendations of the AIR commission as well as provide information to the city’s veterans regarding ongoing updates to care provided post-COVID.

Engaged with DVS, City Council, and the Veteran Community on Strategic Priorities and Policies Relating to Veterans in New York City: The VAB actively engaged with all three of its key stakeholders to help prioritize resources and raise issues. This included meetings with elected officials as well as members of the veteran community.

Ongoing Objectives: A key objective again for 2023 will be to press DVS to continue to develop metrics for their programming and verification of key performance indicators. This will allow the board to not only verify information provided by DVS in our annual

report but help the board provide more effective advice on how to best support veterans in New York City. We will continue to work collaboratively with DVS staff to ensure that our strategic initiatives are aligned and that all parties receive the necessary information and support.

DVS PROGRESS TOWARDS PRIOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The VAB wanted to recognize the progress DVS has made over the past year towards previous recommendations. Metrics have been reported by DVS and can be accessed in their [Local Law 44 DVS Services and Performance Annual Report for FY 2022](#).

Develop a Comprehensive Veterans Outreach Plan: Over the past year, we have been pleased with the efforts DVS has undertaken to expand its communication and outreach capabilities. They have provided information to Veterans and their families, caretakers, and active service members through community events, public briefings, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), and their weekly newsletter. Communication and outreach will remain critical to ensuring DVS programs are made aware to veterans and their families in New York City.

Recommit to New York City's Fight against Veteran Homelessness: New York City has been an innovative leader in its fight against veteran homelessness. Since DVS stood up its Housing and Support Services unit in 2015, the agency has housed 1,152 homeless Veterans. From July 2021 to June 2022, DVS managed 995 client cases regarding housing and shelter. During this same time, there were 52 veterans housed by Housing & Support Services. It remains important that we consolidate our gains, continue to make progress toward functional zero and work with other city agencies on this.

Dedicated Personnel within DVS Assigned as Claims Representatives: Navigating the Federal VA bureaucracy to access benefits for which a veteran qualifies is difficult. This has become more challenging as many of the traditional providers of these services have lost funding and support staff trained to complete these activities. This year DVS started to provide direct assistance to veterans by helping them complete and file their VA disability claims to realize any federal VA benefits they may be entitled to. DVS was able to certify staff (under the State DVS umbrella) to serve as authorized representatives to submit claims on behalf of service members and their families.

Develop a Plan to Celebrate Veterans Throughout History: A critical part of the mission of the DVS is celebrating veterans and what they have brought to our nation and to New York City. DVS established the Veteran Voices Project to capture and share the stories of New York City veterans to bridge generational gaps, preserve our city's rich military history and foster a citywide appreciation for service. DVS continues to work with local organizations to celebrate veterans across all eras. Future reports will report on how many stories have been captured by DVS.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Our recommendations are made to increase the efficiency of the Department of Veterans Services as well as address issues brought to our attention by constituents, based on feedback received during our town hall meetings.

Establish a Preference for New York City to Contract with Veteran-Owned Businesses: The Federal and State Governments, along with most major U.S. corporations maintain preference programs to contract with veteran-owned businesses, and yet New York City does not. While the city has taken a few steps to address this, this continues to send a wrong message to our veterans. In 2022, DVS launched a Veteran Business Leadership Association (VBLA) to provide one-on-one assistance to veteran business owners in pursuit of city and state certifications, contracting opportunities, networking, and business development. While this has helped veteran business owners, we believe the current administration, or the Council (through legislation) should work to establish a veterans small business designation preference administered through the existing Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (“MWBE”) program. Veterans come from all backgrounds and as such many veteran-owned businesses qualify for the MWBE program. For New York City to be a national leader in local veteran policies it must find a way to support veteran entrepreneurship and veteran-owned businesses through a contracting preference.

Add Resources for Contracting Capability at DVS: This has been a top priority of the VAB for each of the past five years and it continues to be an issue today. Currently, there is a Deputy Commissioner serving as General Counsel & Agency Chief Contracting Officer. One of the most fundamental aspects of a city agency is having direct control over contracting resources. We believe the lack of this ability has hampered DVS’s effectiveness. Currently, all contracts to local Veteran Service Organizations or not-for-profits that provide direct service to veterans are currently executed through multiple city agencies, often leading to confusion. In addition to prioritization, there are unique contracting attributes that VSOs often carry, such as not being a 501(c)(3), which confuse and slow down the completion of contracts and disbursement of funds when centralized through DCAS and other agencies. We believe this should be rectified as soon as possible.

Increase Interagency Cooperation Regarding Vendors’ Preferences for Veterans Street vending is New York City’s oldest entrepreneurial venture for veterans going back to 1894 when New York State legislators enacted the state laws promising wounded Civil War veterans could make a living as street peddlers, unfettered by legal restrictions. This was a promise made to veterans by a grateful State and historically remains deeply rooted in the NYC veteran community. As workers return to offices, veterans who own and operate street carts have had a difficult time operating and maintaining their vendor’s license. We recommend creating an avenue for veteran street vendors to voice their concerns and issues, as they are a unique subsection of the vendor’s population. This would affirm the city’s commitment to its veterans, while at

the same time continuing to support these veteran entrepreneurs. This recommendation was made in 2022 and continues to be an ongoing issue for veteran vendors.

Provide Funding and Resources for Student Veterans: As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many colleges in NYC reported a decrease in the overall population on their campuses. This included student-veterans. A contributing factor to this decline included the increased cost of living in New York City. We believe New York City needs to provide greater funding and resources to attract and actively recruit veterans to attend schools here, which will also create employment opportunities locally, post-graduation. As we've consistently stated, the GI Bill and the stipend tied to it bring a significant amount of money into the city. The last CUNY Task Force on student veterans was a decade ago. We believe it is time for CUNY to review what's been successful and what hasn't over the past decade. We also recommend DVS work with student veteran representatives to assess what it can do to better support our student veterans.

Speaker of the City Council: We recommend the Speaker of the City Council appoint the Council's remaining members to the VAB, including those who have not been renewed within the past few years. Additionally, the board is concerned that members of the VAB were removed without prior notification to the chair of the Council's Veterans Committee. We recommend that any future appointment or removal of members have a formal notification to the chair of the Veterans Committee so that they may be aware of changes within the VAB. This would also include notification to the chair of the VAB.

Assess, Evaluate and Document the Impact of Our Programs:

Our vision statement includes reference to **effective** local veteran policies, and we are committed to recommending policies and programs focused on veterans and their families. To accomplish this, we believe DVS must be provided with appropriate resources.

As such, we call upon the administration and the City Council to provide proper funding specifically dedicated to evaluating and documenting programs, including:

- ✓ Document benefits and efficiency: To have the most effective programs, there must be documentation. Documentation will allow the board to prove that DVS has been good stewards of resources, and this will attract additional State and Federal resources. Further, documentation, including audits from the New York City Comptroller's office, will highlight the value that these programs provide to all New Yorkers.
- ✓ Document lessons learned: The veteran population in New York City is a relatively small one compared to other constituencies. Documenting the lessons learned from programs DVS is currently running would allow us to understand what works for the community and what isn't. We see what has worked in both our veteran homeless and treatment court programs.

- Tracking veteran intake requests: During many of the public sessions, veterans commented that outreach to DVS had been done without contact or follow up. The board requests that all processes concerning care for veterans who contact DVS be documented for tracking purposes. This will allow both DVS and the board to recognize the work that is being performed to ensure the veteran's needs are being appropriately addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DVS

Establish VAB Liaison to the DVS: There have been multiple changes at DVS over the past year, particularly over who the DVS liaison to the VAB has been. This has caused multiple points of friction and miscommunication between DVS and the VAB, causing delays in the passing of information. While the board recommended the City Council create legislation to codify the liaison role at DVS, we recommend that DVS identify one individual who has the responsibility to be the liaison between DVS and the VAB.

Codify the responsibilities of DVS and VAB. As the department and the advisory board have increased their responsibilities and impact, there is a much greater need to codify the responsibilities of both entities, to ensure all parties are cognizant of expectations going forward. Codifying these responsibilities will ensure that both parties can continue to work together to focus on the needs of the veterans in New York City.

Providing Personnel Support for the VAB: This has been a continued unresolved issue. We again request administrative support to the VAB to be codified into legislation to ensure continuity of support and communication with DVS. Last year DVS got approval for an internship to aid the board, however, no one was identified. Within any future legislation, we would like the support services provided by DVS to be detailed (i.e. what equipment, assets, etc.) in order to reduce the conflict of responsibilities between DVS and the VAB. Part of this support includes managing technology requirements for meetings to not only record virtual meetings but also maintain control over public sessions by muting participants, reviewing chats, etc.

Invest in Resources to Encourage and Support Veteran Engagement in the Political Process: While engagement has been highly successful at the national level, New York City has not fared as well with currently no sitting City Council member having served in the military. Consistent with our guiding principle of supporting veterans' continued service as citizens, DVS should support programs that assist veteran engagement in the political process. We can start this initiative by encouraging veterans and their family members to serve on their local community boards and recommend that all community boards appoint at least one veteran member.

Increased Communication for City Council Hearings Impacting Veterans. There is insufficient communication regarding City Council hearings on issues impacting veterans. We know DVS is aware of this communication as they have had consistent representation at the hearings. Veterans want to have a voice, and they will show up to relevant and important hearings. Now that hearings are available to attend virtually, we believe there will be increased engagement. We recommend DVS disseminates the information to veterans and their families regarding Council Veteran Committee hearings through their current communications platforms.

LEGISLATION AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Property Tax Exemption for Cold War Veterans: In 2008, New York State passed a law allowing New York localities to implement a property tax exemption for those veterans who served during the Cold War – September 2, 1945, to December 24, 1991. To date, New York City has not passed this exemption. There is currently a bill in the Council that would allow for this property tax break – Intro. 0377-2022. Several of our VAB members have also been working to try and get this legislation passed and we believe this exemption would allow veterans to continue to stay in the city rather than be forced out. We recommend the Council support and pass this legislation.

Employment and Entrepreneurship: Stable employment is a critical element of supporting veterans' continued service as citizens. Whether something as simple as paying taxes or more significant such as volunteering activities or engaging in the political process, stable employment is required. This year DVS established the Veterans Business Leadership Association which assists veteran business owners and promoted the Empire Vets platform.

In ensuring our veterans remain employed and in well-paid jobs, we recommend the following:

- **City Employment:** The government is the largest employer in the city, and it should lead by example. Additionally, there are many City and State agencies that face potentially acute labor shortages, such as the MTA, where a large proportion of its skilled labor is eligible for retirement over the next five years. Transitioning service members could be a cost-effective pipeline for talent. While the city does waive fees on civil service exams for veterans, it should also develop a citywide veteran employment program. These include classifying veterans as a protected class where appropriate so that they can be provided with a hiring preference, supporting agencies' creation of a veteran employee support network, and recruiting initiatives for attracting transitioning veterans to various city employment opportunities. The city should also seek collaborative commercial and non-profit leaders to develop programs such as those run by Helmets to Hardhats which train transitioning veterans for careers in specific (union) trades.
- **Private Employment:** Critical to supporting veterans' continued service as citizens are supporting their stable employment. While New York City does not control private employers; it can act as a facilitator for private companies who want to hire veterans. These programs can potentially be revenue-neutral through Federal government employment programs for veterans, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) program, which can provide businesses up to \$9,600 in tax credits per eligible veteran hired if those tax credits are then redeployed in the city.

- Empire Vets Platform: During the pandemic, DVS created the Empire Vets platform with an outside non-profit to assist with employment support to private employers in New York City looking to increase their hiring initiatives. The VAB

would like to understand the cost and value of this program, with results being provided to assess its success.

- Track Outcomes: Establish policies to track outcomes for long-term unemployed veterans who have obtained employment, WOTC credits for employers, and other key performance indicators.

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship is the lifeblood of America. According to the Small Business Administration from 2012 Census Bureau Data, veterans own 9% of small businesses, while only comprising 6.7% of the population. Nationally, veteran-owned firms generated \$1.14 trillion in receipts annually and employed 5.03 million people. State and Federal governments provide a great deal of support to small businesses in the forms of training, contract support, financing, and other benefits. As such, New York City should support its veterans who seek to become entrepreneurs through a comprehensive program. The program should include, among other attributes, the following three specific items:

- Establish a Veteran Preference in Contracting with New York City: Federal and State governments and as well as most large businesses have a preference for contracting for Veteran-owned businesses, and yet New York City does not offer such a preference. New York City has an existing infrastructure for the MWBE programs, and these efforts should be expanded to veteran-owned businesses.
- Connect Veteran Entrepreneurs to Resources: In order to support and encourage entrepreneurship, programs should be created to connect veteran entrepreneurs to resources. Specialized resources are active in New York, including: The Coalition for Veteran Owned Business (CVOB) through the Institute for Veteran and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, Veterans Future Lab at NYU, Bunker Labs, and more.
- Supporting Veteran Vendors: New York City has a tradition of supporting veterans interested in operating as street vendors going back to the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. To ensure that veterans who choose to vend excel, DVS should, in conjunction with other agencies and with input from current veteran vendors, develop a training program to ensure that veterans are educated on the regulations and can ply their craft with professionalism. DVS should also partner with private industry to create programs for veterans to finance and acquire equipment that will support their success. Further, NYC's Department of Consumer and Workers Protection (DCWP) & Health Department should give due consideration to veteran status in awarding licenses.

Veteran Treatment Courts: We are proud that Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs) have now been established in each of the five boroughs and we believe these are great programs for both veterans and taxpayers. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, the average cost to incarcerate a prisoner in the State of New York is \$60,076, the most expensive state in the country, nearly twice the national average of \$31,286. Further, as of the first three years of existence, the Buffalo Veteran Treatment Court has a 0% recidivism rate. While we would not expect that to be sustained, it has clearly been more successful than other courts. The positive feedback of VTCs is that after the veteran completes treatment, no matter what the problem they came for, they leave with a clean slate. Anyone who wants to volunteer with VTCs is welcome. The volunteers assist with the treatment of the Veterans using their skill set to ensure their needs are met.

Regarding VTCs, we recommend the following three actions:

- ✓ Eligibility for all veterans. Veteran's Treatment Courts in NYC do not serve all veterans. Treatment through a VTC is based on the Veteran's military discharge. We recommend that all veterans, regardless of discharge status, be eligible to use the VTCs.
- ✓ Consistency across all VTCs. The Veteran's Treatment courts are governed at the discretion of the Judge and the local District Attorney, who determine how the Treatment Court will operate and what the policies will be. We recommend a uniform approach to VTC operations and policies in New York City.
- ✓ Education on Veteran Resources. There must be knowledgeable Judges and staff that are familiar with the various veteran programs and services in NYC. We recommend that DVS work with the VA's Veteran Justice Program to conduct training for personnel who work with the VTCs to ensure they are culturally competent and aware of all resources available.

Create Innovative Funding Strategies: While many of the resources and funding for the services that DVS provides will be provided from the budget and other government sources, there are times that the most innovative public policy will require other sources. New York City, as the financial capital of the world, should be at the forefront of innovation in funding and establishing public/private partnerships. This year, DVS received funding from the State for the Joseph P. Dwyer program to allocate to various non-profits operating within the greater NYC area. DVS should continue to explore funding strategies to help offset the needs of our veterans that are not currently met in the city's budget.



Daniel Steinberg
Director

TO: Adrienne E. Adams, Speaker of the City Council
James Hendon, Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Services
Wendy McClinton, Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board

FROM: Daniel Steinberg

DATE: March 10, 2023

SUBJECT: Local Law 23 Veterans Services Report for 2022

Attached please find the 2022 Veterans Services Report pursuant to Local Law 23 of 2015. As you may be aware, Local Law 23 requires the Mayor's Office of Operations to collect and report specified data from a certain set of agencies that provide services to veterans, by category of benefit available to veterans and by veterans' borough of residence. If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact Lauren Quinones at LQuinones1@cityhall.nyc.gov or 917-207-3318. Thank you.

**Veterans Services
Calendar 2022**

Agency	Indicator Name	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022
DCA	Applications for general vending licenses submitted by veterans	373	330	116	235	233
DCA	General vending licenses issued to veterans	227	240	64	98	144
DCAS	Civil service examination applications received from applicants claiming veterans' credit	2,175	2,315	733	2,451	5,101
DOHMH	Fee-exempt mobile food vending licenses issued to veterans	324	381	305	455	357
DOHMH	Food vending permits issued to veterans	204	251	213	229	223
HPD	Mitchell-Lama housing applications received from veterans, or their surviving spouses, who have identified themselves as heads of household on their applications	143	138	95	59	34
HPD	Approved Mitchell-Lama applications for veterans, or their surviving spouses, who have identified themselves as heads of household	143	138	95	59	26
HPD	Veterans residing in rental units who use US Department of Housing and Urban Development/US Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers administered by HPD (snapshot)	163	204	208	208	199
NYCHA	Veterans residing in housing operated by NYCHA who use HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA	651	617	461	420	257
NYCHA	Veterans residing in rental units who use HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA	2,169	2,263	2,542	2,676	2,859

Veterans Services CY2022
By Applicant's Borough of Residence

DCA

General vending license applications from veterans

Borough of Residence	Approved	Rejected	Total
Bronx	30	24	54
Brooklyn	37	29	66
Manhattan	22	10	32
Queens	39	17	56
Staten Island	6	3	9
Outside of NYC	10	6	16
Total	144	89	233

DCAS

Civil service exam applicants claiming veterans' credit

Borough of Residence	Applicants
Bronx	1,015
Brooklyn	657
Manhattan	302
Queens	1,158
Staten Island	397
Outside of NYC	1,572
Total	5,101

DOHMH

Licenses and permits issued to veterans

Borough of Residence	Mobile food vending licenses	Food vending permits
Bronx	72	41
Brooklyn	90	44
Manhattan	60	39
Queens	87	64
Staten Island	14	6
Outside of NYC	34	29
Total	357	223

HPD**Mitchell-Lama applications from veterans/surviving spouses heads of household**

Borough of Residence	Approved	Rejected	Total
Bronx	17	3	20
Brooklyn	2	1	3
Manhattan	6	4	10
Queens	1	0	1
Staten Island	0	0	0
Total	26	8	34

HPD**Use of HUD-VASH vouchers administered by HPD**

Borough of Residence	Used in rental units
Bronx	132
Brooklyn	30
Manhattan	27
Queens	5
Staten Island	4
Outside of NYC	1
Total	199

NYCHA**Use of HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA**

Borough of Residence	Used in NYCHA housing	Used in rental units
Bronx	83	1,327
Brooklyn	74	768
Manhattan	89	345
Queens	3	313
Staten Island	8	73
Outside of NYC	0	33
Total	257	2,859



James W. Hendon
COMMISSIONER

Glenda V. Garcia
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

December 31, 2022

To the Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board,

The year 2022 was one of new beginnings for the City of New York as Eric Adams became our 110th Mayor. The new administration ushered in economic growth and recovery for the five boroughs, thus enabling our city to fully emerge from the pandemic. The NYC Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) continued its mission of mobilizing and empowering New York City Veterans by launching new programs, advocating for Veteran-friendly policies, and broadening our in-person outreach efforts.

In February, our agency won the Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for our Mission: VetCheck outreach initiative. This honor kicked off a year of progress for DVS. In the spring, we launched the Veteran Business Leadership Association to help Veteran Business Owners obtain city and state certifications and connect with business development opportunities. Over the summer, we partnered with members of the City Council, local non-profit organizations, and neighborhood volunteers to build furniture for recently housed Veterans.

We also reopened our Veteran Resource Centers and co-located them at new sites including NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) offices in Brooklyn and the Bronx. In the fall, we partnered with the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Service (DCAS) to create a one-time civil service exam fee waiver for Veteran spouses. In addition, we worked with DCAS to expand civil service hiring credits to Veterans of all combat eras, including those who served during peacetime. On Veterans Day, we announced the launch of "CoveredNYCVet", a partnership with the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit created to connect Veterans with affordable healthcare options, including VA care.

The Veterans Advisory Board was a strong ally to DVS in 2022, especially as we stood together with our Mayor back in the spring to send a clear message that NYC's VA hospitals must not be closed. The Board remains an instrumental part of our work thanks to its insightful feedback, advocacy, collaboration, and commitment to community-building. DVS remains grateful for your partnership and steadfast guidance.

To aid you with your 2022 annual report, I am writing to share highlights from our agency's accomplishments over the last year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JWH", written over a light blue horizontal line.

James W. Hendon
Commissioner
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army Reserve

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Overview of DVS Accomplishments

2022: Year in Review

Throughout 2022, the NYC Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) expanded its service offerings to make New York City a more Veteran friendly place to live, learn, and work.

January

On January 1st, Eric Adams became the 110th Mayor of the City of New York and reaffirmed his commitment to serving NYC Veterans as someone who also served in uniform as a member of the New York City Police Department.

From January 6th - 8th, DVS attended the Student Veterans of America National Conference in Orlando, Florida. Agency leadership spoke on a panel that made the case for transitioning Veterans to choose NYC as their next destination to live, learn, and work. The presentation highlighted the City University of New York (CUNY), DVS, and NYC's various social services and community programs. The conference was attended by roughly 3,000 student Veterans from across the country.

February

On February 22nd, Secretary of the VA Denis McDonough presented DVS with the Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award for our Mission: VetCheck outreach initiative at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) mid-winter conference. From 2020 through the spring of 2022, volunteers helped Mission: VetCheck place over 40,000 supportive wellness check calls to New York City Veterans in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The initiative helped to reduce social isolation and connected home-bound Veterans with information about vital resources, including food, and Covid-19 testing locations.

March

On March 16th, DVS and Navy leadership stood alongside the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Frank Carone, for a press conference on the steps of City Hall to announce the return of Fleet Week to New York City after two years of the event being held virtually.

On March 26th, DVS partnered with the United War Veterans Council to host Vietnam Veterans Day ceremonies. The day's activities included an honor ruck, motorcycle ride, name reading of those killed in action, and a community outreach fair with resources about benefits and services. More than 200 Veterans and members of the community participated in Vietnam Veteran Day 2022.

April

On April 9th, DVS partnered with New York State Senator Comrie to present on a panel about Veteran policy and programs at the 51st New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators annual caucus in Albany. Topics such as housing, peer support, employment, and entrepreneurship were covered during the discussion.

On April 13th, DVS partnered with Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Commissioner Kevin Kim and Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to launch the Veteran Business Leadership Association (VBLA) at Brooklyn Borough Hall. The VBLA is a specialized program that offers educational workshops, networking opportunities, and one-on-one support to help Veterans grow their businesses. Workshops focus on business development, government contracting, and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) and Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE) certification support.

May

Throughout the last week in May, New York City welcomed Fleet Week back in town for the first time in two years. On May 25th, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard leadership celebrated the start of Fleet Week with a kickoff breakfast hosted by Mayor Adams at Gracie Mansion. More than 3,000 Sailors, Marines, and “Coasties” visited New York City over the course of seven days and thousands more New Yorkers visited the USS Bataan as it stayed docked on the west side of Manhattan through Memorial Day weekend. The week’s ceremonies included a wreath laying at the USS Intrepid which was attended by Governor Kathy Hochul, Mayor Eric Adams, and Commissioner James Hendon.

In honor of Memorial Day, DVS also played a key role in distributing thousands of US-made American flags to Veteran Service Organizations across the five boroughs for placement on Veteran graves. Commissioner Hendon joined local Boy Scout troops to place flags on hundreds of Veteran graves at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx and at Ocean View Cemetery in Staten Island.

June

On June 15th, DVS co-hosted a partnership convening with Bob Woodruff Foundation’s “Got Your 6” network. More than 200 Veteran advocates, service providers, and members of the community convened to discuss mental health policy, affordable housing, and support for Veterans in the arts, among other topics.

July-August

In July and August, DVS brought together volunteers and local leaders to build furniture for formerly homeless Veterans who recently transitioned to permanent housing. Organized in collaboration with The Fuller Center for Housing of Greater New York City and the Office of Council Members Eric Dinowitz and Bob Holden, nearly 100 volunteers and Veteran leaders, including Mayor Adams and DVS Commissioner James Hendon, assembled tables and chairs in the Bronx and Queens. Veteran Service Organizations such as Team Red, White & Blue and

Team Rubicon also pitched in to help. Roughly 300 tables and chairs were assembled over the course of four different sessions.

September

On September 10th, DVS hosted a “Back to School” barbecue for student Veterans at Fordham University’s Lincoln Center Campus. The event featured guest speaker J. Alexander Martin, Founder of the iconic “Fubu” clothing line and Navy Veteran. There was also a special appearance by Mr. Met, our event sponsor. Student Veterans from schools across NYC attended to enjoy food, camaraderie, and access to information about services and benefits.

October

In October, DVS finalized a data sharing agreement with the US Department of Defense to gain access to the contact information for Uniformed Service Members transitioning back to New York City. Access to this information is crucial to ensuring Veterans are connected to a community of support early in their transition. The shift from military to civilian life can be a vulnerable time, making timely outreach from DVS key. DVS will leverage this data to engage Veterans and build awareness about benefits, including VA healthcare, DVS services, and other local programs.

Later in the month, DVS announced the return of all five Veteran Resource Center locations at new sites across the city. In partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Human Resources Administration (HRA), Staten Island Borough President Vito J. Fossella, and Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, these centers now provide in-person services to New York City Veterans at convenient locations. For the better part of the last two years, DVS services were provided virtually and at other locations throughout the five boroughs because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

November

Veterans Month was momentously productive for DVS. On November 11th, Veterans Day, Mayor Adams hosted a breakfast for more than 450 Veterans and members of the community. The agency also made a few major program and policy announcements on that day, including the launch of “CoveredNYCVet”, a partnership with the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit (PEU) to connect more New York City Veterans with health coverage. Through this partnership, New York City Veterans have new pathways to get enrolled in the health insurance plans that are right for them. Veterans who text “CoveredNYCVet” (“SeguroNYCVet” en Español) to 877877 can receive a call from a GetCoveredNYC specialist who will help connect them to an appropriate healthcare coverage option, including VA healthcare, if they are eligible.

DVS also partnered with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to announce the creation of a one-time civil service exam fee waiver for Veteran and Uniformed Service Member spouses. This is a joint effort to remove barriers for employment for Veterans and their families, thus making it easier to recruit the military community to join the City’s workforce. In addition, DVS worked with DCAS to expand hiring credits to Veterans of all combat eras, including those who served during peacetime.

Towards the end of the month, DVS' fresh food program celebrated a major milestone—one million fresh meals distributed to the New York City Veteran community. The occasion was marked with a ceremony attended by representatives from each partnering organization, including donors Hello Fresh, and volunteer organizers The Campaign Against Hunger and Black Veterans for Social Justice. The ceremony was also attended by New York's Lieutenant Governor, Antonio Delgado.

For Thanksgiving, DVS and our partners at Hello Fresh helped facilitate the distribution of more than 500 turkeys to New York City Veterans in need.

December

As part of the Mayor's Office of Efficiency's effort to improve client service delivery, in December, DVS staff started processing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This new service will enable Veterans who are seeking care from DVS for other needs to now have seamless access to food subsidy programs that ease economic hardship.

DVS also launched its first targeted radio ad campaign in December. Throughout the entire month, a DVS public service announcement with agency contact information ran on 106.7 Lite FM during its all-day holiday playlist. It is estimated that our message reached some 11 million New Yorkers, including those living in the greater tri-state area.

Ongoing Agency Initiatives

Care Coordination & VetConnectNYC

VetConnectNYC continued to provide Veterans and their families with referrals to a network of vetted social services providers. In 2022, VetConnectNYC facilitated 2,734 service episodes for Veterans and their families who were seeking assistance.

Communications

The DVS Communications team sustained its content-rich weekly newsletter and developed more comprehensive website content for nyc.gov/vets in 2022. The team also leveraged new advertising tactics to engage Veterans of all ages, including print ads in local newspapers, direct mail, text messaging, and radio commercials. The year also marked the first time the agency created a robust Veteran resource guide printed booklet for distribution throughout the community.

Crisis Intercept Mapping

DVS sustained its Crisis Intercept Mapping partnership throughout 2022, hosting sessions in the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. Crisis Intercept Mapping groups are comprised of VA medical centers, behavioral health providers, social service organizations, and other New York City agencies. These providers meet regularly to improve suicide prevention and wellness offerings within the community.

Discharge Upgrade Assistance for Legal Services (DUALS)

A three-year, \$1.5 million dollar program to address the need for Discharge Upgrade services in New York City. In 2022, this program provided additional funding to legal service providers who have demonstrated a unique expertise in discharge upgrades, while managing the sensitivity of client relations for a powerful, yet vulnerable Veteran population.

Food Outreach

In 2022, the agency continued its partnership with the Governor's Office, HelloFresh, The Campaign Against Hunger, Black Veterans for Social Justice, and 20+ different military and Veteran Service Organizations. The program celebrated a major milestone with the distribution of the one millionth fresh meal to the NYC Veteran community. Since its launch in July 2020, DVS has distributed more than 1.1 million meal kits to Veterans, Service Members, and their families.

Expiration of Term of Service (ETS) Sponsorship Program

DVS continued to partner with the ETS Sponsorship Program to support Service Members through the transition from military to civilian life through mentorship and peer support. Throughout 2022, DVS actively promoted the recruitment of sponsors, including a call to action at the Mayor's Veterans Day Breakfast, to become part of the program.

Funeral Honors

DVS ensures eligible indigent unclaimed Veterans are provided dignified burials at a national cemetery. In 2022, DVS worked with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to coordinate military funeral rights for nearly 200 New York City Veterans who had passed away. In doing so, we made certain that their legacy of service was properly recognized and honored.

Housing and Support Services

The DVS Housing and Support Services team continued moving Veterans into safe housing as our city continued to recover from the pandemic. Since DVS stood up its Housing and Support Services unit in 2015, the agency has housed 1,152 homeless Veterans. Throughout the year, DVS also partnered with City Hall to issue letters of support to the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) program to advocate for real estate developers to obtain incentives to build affordable supportive housing for Veterans. In addition, DVS created a more robust housing page on our website, including a "housing ladder" that offers information about the Veterans Mitchell-lama preference, VA Home Loan, and the Veteran property tax exemption, among other resources.

VA Disability Claims

Over 6,500 Veterans living in New York City may possibly be eligible to receive Veteran Administration (VA) benefits due to their time in service. The DVS Claims Unit continued to assist Veterans in the review, preparation, and packaging of claims, including those related to Disability Compensation, Survivors Pension, Indemnity Dependency Compensation (DIC), and Education. Since July 2020, DVS has successfully actioned more than 200 claim submissions, the vast majority of which involved a claim of disability.

Veteran Business Leadership Association

In 2022, DVS launched the Veteran Business Leadership Association (VBLA). The VBLA is an empowerment initiative designed to provide one-on-one assistance to Veteran business owners in pursuit of city and state certifications, contracting opportunities, high-level networking, and business development.

VetBizMap

We continued to add more businesses to VetBizMap, an interactive map that provides the location of Veteran-owned businesses across NYC. VetBizMap includes key business contact information as well as a list of a Veteran-owned business's city and state certifications. To date, the map features 389 Veteran-owned businesses across the five boroughs.

VetConnectPro

In its first full year of operation, the VetConnectPro military skills translator tool and job board provided Veterans with access to thousands of job postings from city agencies, information about earned benefits, and free professional development training courses. In 2022, 26,000 Veterans in the New York City metro area accessed the VetConnectPro site to find information about employment opportunities.

Veteran Voices Project

The Veteran Voices Project (VVP) continued capturing the stories and experiences of local Veterans across the five boroughs in 2022. A total of 80 stories have been added to the archive since the project's launch in 2020. DVS was able to capture more stories from Veterans throughout the year, including the voices of more Post-9/11, Vietnam, and World War II Veterans.