

# DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES

James Hendon (Lt. Col.), Commissioner



## WHAT WE DO

The Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) connects, mobilizes and empowers New York City's Veteran community in order to foster purpose-driven lives for U.S. Military Service Members—past and present—in addition to their caregivers, survivors and families. DVS works with City, state and federal agencies, as well as regional private and not-for-profit partners, to improve the lives of all New York City Veterans and those close to them. The Department ensures that homeless Veterans have permanent housing and access to the support services needed to find and maintain their homes; expands education and career opportunities for Veterans; and provides the human and technological infrastructure for Veterans and their families to gain citywide access to benefits, resources and care through the nation's leading coordinated service network.

## FOCUS ON EQUITY

DVS strives to connect with New York City Veterans regardless of discharge status and branch of service in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the Reserves and National Guard. DVS serves as a critical hub for Veterans' advancement by informing the City's Veteran community of resources that exist, serving as a bridge to those resources when needed and occupying roles that the local government can uniquely fill when gaps in Veterans' services appear in the private, not-for-profit, federal and state realms. DVS recognizes and honors Veterans of all protected classes in the City of New York, as the diversity of our City informs and reflects the diversity of our Veteran community. Further, the Department serves family members, caregivers and survivors, recognizing their essential role in Veteran health and well-being.

## OUR SERVICES AND GOALS

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### **SERVICE 1 Provide supportive services to Veterans and their families.**

Goal 1a Mitigate and prevent homelessness for Veterans.

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### **SERVICE 2 Assist Veterans and their families with accessing eligible resources.**

Goal 2a Ensure Veterans have information about and are connected with appropriate resources.

# HOW WE PERFORMED IN FISCAL 2020

## SERVICE 1 Provide supportive services to Veterans and their families.

**Goal 1a** Mitigate and prevent homelessness for Veterans.

During Fiscal 2020, DVS secured housing for 184 homeless Veterans through the Veteran Peer Coordinator (VPC) program, a peer-to-peer service model focused on helping homeless Veterans navigate the challenging process of finding housing in New York City. The number of Veterans housed grew 16 percent compared to Fiscal 2019; this increase is attributed to the Housing and Support Services team on-boarding an additional Veteran Peer Coordinator. Additionally, the first quarter of Fiscal 2020 brought the opening of Surf Vets, a mixed-use development on Coney Island with 82 apartments reserved for Veterans.

Starting on March 16, 2020, the agency—including the VPC team—shifted to remote operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite working remotely, VPCs continued to engage Veterans, community partners and other agencies to work towards combating Veteran homelessness via alternate means to limit close, in-person interactions. Housing viewings were replaced by videos of available units and management companies opted to interview Veteran applicants over the phone or video conference. The VPC team navigated these new processes alongside the Veterans to ensure that services continued. On top of their continued contact with Veterans currently experiencing homelessness, during the first two weeks of the pandemic, VPCs called all Veterans who were previously housed by the program to complete wellness checks and provide vital resources during uncertain times.

DVS provided aftercare and prevention services to 455 Veterans in Fiscal 2020, an increase of four percent from the previous Fiscal Year. This growth can be attributed to an increase in referrals from the Mission: VetCheck initiative and Constituent Services unit, and an increase in requests for services. In particular, there was an increase in landlord mediation engagements as a result of the financial strain caused by the pandemic.

During the final months of Fiscal 2020, the Aftercare and Eviction Prevention unit implemented a new six month Housing Check procedure to increase engagement and connect Veterans and their families to housing support services, social services and other support needed to maintain stable housing during their transition from homelessness to residence.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
★ Homeless Veterans and their families who received housing through DVS Veteran Peer Coordinator program	NA	NA	169	158	184	*	*	NA	*
★ Veterans and their families receiving homelessness prevention assistance from DVS	NA	NA	466	438	455	*	*	NA	*
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available		↑↓ Directional Target	* None					

## SERVICE 2 Assist Veterans and their families with accessing eligible resources.

**Goal 2a** Ensure Veterans have information about and are connected with appropriate resources.

Fiscal 2020 presented unique challenges for the City as New Yorkers dealt with the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting on March 16, 2020, all agency services shifted to remote operations to ensure continuity of care and community safety. The pandemic eliminated all in-person events from March through July 2020, contributing to a decline of 45 percent in the number of Veterans and their families engaged by DVS.

To compensate for the elimination of in-person events, DVS quickly launched several initiatives to engage Veterans digitally and over the phone. In mid-April, DVS launched Mission: VetCheck, a citywide outreach partnership with ThriveNYC, that engaged over 2,870 Veterans and Veteran households through supportive phone calls to provide information about vital public services, free meals, COVID-19 test site locations and mental health resources. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the Engagement and Community Services (ECS) team was reorganized into demographic portfolios to improve connectivity with our community. Portfolios were organized into the following categories to provide more targeted and individualized services: women Veterans, working professionals and jobseekers, LGBTQ+, caregivers and seniors, Veteran business owners and student Veterans. This reorganization proved fruitful and timely. It provided the team with a clear engagement framework when the COVID-19 crisis eventually reached its peak in New York City.

DVS also ramped up its digital outreach by increasing the frequency of the DVS newsletter to a weekly cadence, equipping the community with access to timely, vital resources and information during this critical period. The ECS team assisted 270 Veterans and their families who faced food insecurity, processing a total of 408 direct food requests through the GetFood NYC program, each captured in the assistance metrics below. The team also responded to 360 service requests that emerged from the Mission: VetCheck outreach initiative. These instances of direct assistance are also captured below. From April 13 to May 7, the DVS Outreach and Constituent Services teams successfully connected Veteran homeless shelters, supportive housing residences, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) and VSO-run food pantries with 5,123 pantry boxes of food. As of July 1, DVS has distributed 3,584 meal packages donated by HelloFresh. DVS also played a critical role in distributing almost 25,700 reusable face masks to all New York City based U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals and Vet Centers, Veteran nursing homes, homeless shelters and supportive housing residences and VSOs. Though the figures from these two specific efforts are not counted in the itemized individual assistance indicator below, this effort illustrates how DVS creatively worked across sectors to form partnerships that connected Veterans with essential resources in the midst of extraordinary circumstances.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Veterans and their families engaged by DVS	NA	NA	12,099	12,896	7,084	*	*	NA	*
★ Veterans and their families given assistance to access resources	NA	NA	3,230	3,087	2,715	*	*	NA	*
★ Critical Indicator	“NA” Not Available		↑↓ Directional Target	* None					

## AGENCY RESOURCES

Resource Indicators	Actual <sup>1</sup>					Plan <sup>2</sup>		5yr Trend
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	
Expenditures (\$000,000) <sup>3</sup>	NA	\$2.5	\$3.6	\$4.1	\$5.9	\$6.1	\$6.5	NA
Personnel	NA	32	35	38	41	49	44	NA
Overtime paid (\$000)	NA	\$11	\$23	\$29	\$30	\$30	\$0	NA

<sup>1</sup>Actual financial amounts for the current fiscal year are not yet final. Final fiscal year actuals, from the Comptroller’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, will be reported in the next PMMR. Refer to the “Indicator Definitions” at [nyc.gov/mmr](http://nyc.gov/mmr) for details. <sup>2</sup>Authorized Budget Level <sup>3</sup>Expenditures include all funds “NA” - Not Available \* None

## SPENDING AND BUDGET INFORMATION

Where possible, the relationship between an agency’s goals and its expenditures and planned resources, by budgetary unit of appropriation (UA), is shown in the ‘Applicable MMR Goals’ column. Each relationship is not necessarily exhaustive or exclusive. Any one goal may be connected to multiple UAs, and any UA may be connected to multiple goals.

Unit of Appropriation	Expenditures FY19 <sup>1</sup> (\$000,000)	Modified Budget FY20 <sup>2</sup> (\$000,000)	Applicable MMR Goals <sup>3</sup>
001 - Personal Services	\$3.5	\$4.1	All
002 - Other Than Personal Services	\$0.7	\$1.8	All
Agency Total	\$4.1	\$5.9	

<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2019. Includes all funds. <sup>2</sup>City of New York Adopted Budget for Fiscal 2020, as of June 2020. Includes all funds. <sup>3</sup>Refer to agency goals listed at front of chapter. “NA” Not Available \*None

## NOTEWORTHY CHANGES, ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

- During the first four months of Fiscal 2020, Loree Sutton, MD. Brigadier General (ret.) was DVS Commissioner; James Hendon was appointed Commissioner of DVS as of November 1, 2019.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on the agency, please visit: [www.nyc.gov/veterans](http://www.nyc.gov/veterans)