



Connecticut Veterans Affairs Fiscal Year 2023-2024

At a Glance:

Commissioner: Ronald P. Welch

Deputy Commissioner: Joseph Danao II

Established: 1986

Statutory Authority: C.G.S. Chapter 506 Sec. 27-102l - 27-140ii

Central Office: 287 West Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Number of Full-Time Employees: 217

Recurring Operating Expenses 2023-2024: \$25,144,380.00

Agency Generated Revenue/Claims 2023-2024: \$28,370,738.00

Organizational Structure: Executive Branch State Agency. Office of the Commissioner oversees all aspects of the agency. The agency has four core function areas:

- 1) Skilled Nursing Home Care & Rehabilitation
- 2) Residential Programs & Services
- 3) Office of Advocacy & Assistance and
- 4) Cemetery and Memorial Services.

These four core functions are supported by additional agency divisions as follows: Projects & Operations, Facilities, Food Services, Human Resources, Fiscal and Procurement, Safety and Security, and Community Advocacy. Each division has a manager who reports directly to the Commissioner.

Additionally, Connecticut Veterans Affairs reports to a Board of Trustees (CGS Chapter 506, Sec. 27-102n), which is made up of eighteen voting members with diverse backgrounds in healthcare, business management, social services, and law with the common interest of helping Veterans. Board of Trustees members also include the Veterans' Council Presidents for both the residential facility and healthcare center. Meetings of the Board of Trustees are open to the public and are held quarterly in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus in Rocky Hill.



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History:

Connecticut Veterans Affairs is the nation's first and longest operating State Veterans Home. Benjamin Fitch, a Connecticut businessman and philanthropist, promised Civil War soldiers a place to call home when they returned from battle. Thus, the Fitch's Home for Soldiers and their Orphans was opened in 1863 in Darien, CT. The Home was dedicated on July 4, 1864, and is currently incorporated into the Connecticut General Assembly.

In 1940, the Home was moved to its current location in Rocky Hill, and with each succeeding period of war, new generations of Veterans presented unique needs requiring the development of a comprehensive range of services. To better provide for our Veterans, the Connecticut General Assembly established the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] in 1986. Today, the DVA serves Connecticut's estimated 150,000 Veterans with four core services: (1) Skilled Nursing Care and Rehabilitation, (2) Residential and Rehabilitative Programs and Services, (3) Office of Advocacy and Assistance with Veteran Service Officers [VSOs] located in each Congressional District, and (4) Cemetery and Memorial Services with cemeteries in Darien, Rocky Hill, and the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown.

Mission:

"Serving Those Who Served"

Enhance the lives of Connecticut's Veterans by providing:

1. Skilled nursing home care to eligible Veterans.
2. Residential services offering a continuum of rehabilitative programs and services to eligible Veterans.
3. Advocacy and assistance to Veterans, their eligible spouses, and dependents in obtaining benefits they may be entitled to under federal, state, and local laws.
4. Coordinating and assisting Veterans and their families with burial at the State Veterans Cemetery located in Middletown, CT.

Vision:

Provide Connecticut Veterans and their dependents proactive, comprehensive, and value-based services by cultivating an environment of compassion, collaboration, professionalism, engagement, and inclusion in partnership with Veteran service organizations, community partners, volunteers, Veteran supporters, and with local, state, and federal agencies.



Statutory Responsibility:

Office of the Commissioner

The Commissioner is appointed by the Governor and is responsible for the administration of the agency. The Commissioner is tasked with assisting Veterans and their eligible family members in accessing the benefits accruing to them under federal, state and local laws. This is accomplished through training, employment and reemployment programs, healthcare and rehabilitation programs, housing services, and burial benefits. The Commissioner is also responsible for outreach and consultation to state and community agencies, statutory and legislative authorities, and Veteran service organizations.

The Commissioner oversees the enforcement of regulations and procedures enacted in accordance with the provisions of General Statutes Chapters 54 and 506, including all appeals and final decisions which adversely affect benefits for Veterans participating in state programs. Additionally, the Commissioner oversees the development of long-range agency plans and current program evaluation and assessment, and the collaborative development of state-wide initiatives which aim to better serve the more than 150,000 Connecticut Veterans and their families.

Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center

The Healthcare Center is federally certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and is licensed by the CT Department of Public Health as a 125-bed skilled nursing facility. The Healthcare Center provides comprehensive person-centered care to Veterans requiring twenty-four-hour nursing home level of care. It is also certified by the Federal Veterans Administration as a State Veterans Home.

A Veteran requesting admission at the John L. Levitow Healthcare Center must be a resident of the State of Connecticut and have served honorably. Applications for admission are required in advance and contain both a financial and medical component. Applicants are screened in accordance with state and federal guidelines as well as Connecticut Veterans Affairs policies.

The Healthcare Center adheres to all federal regulations (Title 42: Public Health) and Connecticut state statutes (Chapter 368; Health Care Institutions).

Residential Facility

The Residential Facility offers temporary, supportive living with programming designed to assist Connecticut Veterans successfully transition to independent community living. The Residential Facility utilizes a continuum of rehabilitation services, including social work, case management, recovery support, health clinic services, recreation, compensated work therapy, vocational training, education counseling, and job search assistance. The Residential Facility can currently



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accommodate 168 Veterans. The Residential Facility also maintains Patriot's Landing, five homes across the street from the main Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus. Patriot's Landing offers temporary family housing for Veterans, their spouses, and children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance [OA&A] assists Veterans and their families in accessing federal, state, and local benefits and entitlements. OA&A staff are comprised of bi-lingual and female staff. Veterans Service Officers [VSOs] are Veterans accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to assist Veterans and their families with claims filing for disability, compensation, and or pension. Office of Advocacy and Assistance offices are in each of the five Congressional Districts including Fairfield, Waterbury, Milford, Newington, and Norwich.

Additionally, advocacy work is performed statewide through OA&A attendance at job, senior and health fairs and conferences. Veteran Service Officers conduct interviews in skilled nursing homes, Stand Down events, and in response to received inquiries and referrals.

Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Services

The Cemetery and Memorial Services Office is located at the Rocky Hill Campus. The Connecticut Veterans Affairs Cemetery System consists of three state cemeteries: the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery, located in Middletown; Colonel Raymond F. Gates Cemetery, located in Rocky Hill; and Spring Grove Cemetery, located in Darien, which closed for interments in 1980 due to capacity. The State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown is open for burials six days a week and contains over 16,000 remains of Connecticut Veterans and their spouses and eligible dependents. The Colonel Raymond F. Gates Cemetery is reserved for the burials of Veterans residing at the Connecticut Veterans Affairs Residential Facility and Healthcare Center.

Connecticut Veterans Affairs is responsible for the care, maintenance, and development of all three cemeteries, including installation of headstones. Cemetery and Memorial Services is responsible for consultation and assistance to families, including coordination of burial benefits, burial plot coordination, ordering headstone and foot markers, interment ceremonies, processing of federal reimbursement payments, and coordination of memorial ceremonies.

Public Service:

Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center

The Healthcare Center provides comprehensive skilled care to Veterans requiring twenty-four-hour nursing care. A plan of care is developed and continually updated throughout a Veteran's stay to ensure individualized services are in place to assist a Veteran in reaching his or her maximum potential. The focus is on person-centered care whereby a Veteran's preferences are honored and



reflected in the plan of care.

Under the direction of the Administrator, the Healthcare Center offers progressive programming encompassing medical, social, spiritual, recreational, rehabilitative, hospice, palliative, and end-of-life services in a Veteran-centric atmosphere.

The Healthcare Center treats a wide array of diagnoses, including, but not limited to, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease [COPD], Congestive Heart Failure [CHF], end stage Renal Disease, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Accident [CVA], Parkinson's Disease and dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease. The Healthcare Center's medical team consists of Board-Certified Physicians and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses who co-manage treatment plans with the Federal Veterans Affairs [VA] where specialty care is offered for Veterans who present with complex conditions.

The Rehabilitation Program offers physical, speech, and occupational therapy where Veterans can increase strengthening and physical function under the supervision of professionals. The Rehabilitation Program contributes to increased quality in overall mental health and well-being. Included in the department is a team of Therapeutic Recreational Therapists, who provide an array of leisure activities greatly enhancing daily life for Veterans. The gym and recreational areas are well equipped and feature large windows showcasing the picturesque Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus. The end-of-life program provides special medical, psychological and spiritual care to terminally ill Veterans and their loved ones. Pain management, special nursing visits, alternative therapies, and volunteer companions are provided to comfort the Veteran at end of his or her life, and specialized counseling services are offered to loved ones.

Residential Facility Programs and Services

For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, thirty-eight (38) Veteran Residents were admitted, and fourteen (14) Veteran Residents successfully transitioned back to the community. The average daily census for 2023-2024 was 109 for the Residential Facility and 5 families for Patriot's Landing.

Vocational Department:

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year Veteran Residents have been active in seeking to upgrade their skills and educational qualifications to increase their employability. Veteran Residents were able to attend in-person educational programs at local community colleges, universities, and private training organizations. One (1) Veteran Resident was enrolled at the University of Hartford pursuing a bachelor's degree, one (1) Veteran continues at Manchester Community College pursuing an associate degree in Drug & Alcohol Counseling, one Veteran was enrolled at Lincoln Tech in the Electrical program, and one Veteran Resident completed CDL Training at Affordable CDL Training and obtained his Class A CDL.

The Vocational Department continues to provide support and guidance to Veterans to achieve his or her vocational goals. The Vocational Department continues to make referrals for Veterans to



receive additional employment readiness and job search assistance from our partners at the CT Department of Labor. Support and guidance were also provided to gainfully employed Veterans to assist in employment retention. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, three (3) Veterans transitioned to independent community living with employment. Likewise, six (6) Veteran Residents were employed either full or part time in the community. There were also three (3) Veteran Residents who had volunteer positions at local community organizations.

Veterans at the Residential Facility continue to have the opportunity to participate in the Veteran Vocational & Therapeutic Program. The Veteran Vocational & Therapeutic Program [VVTP] had twenty-eight (28) participants for the 2023- 2024 fiscal year. The VVTP is designed to address the needs of the diverse Veteran population at Connecticut Veterans Affairs. The vocational component offers individualized and supportive employment services to Veterans to improve work skills and assist Veterans in transitioning to independent community living. The therapeutic component is intended for Veterans not seeking gainful employment, thus providing an opportunity to engage in purposeful activity for social and therapeutic purposes as they plan to transition to independent living. During the 2023 - 2024 fiscal year, two (2) Veterans who have participated in the VVTP have transitioned to community living. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, six (6) participants left the VVTP program due to a variety of reasons including increase in other benefits, agency disciplinary action, medical issues and successful discharge from Residential Facility. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, six (6) VVTP positions were requested and approved for re-fill.

Substance Use Treatment/Recovery Support:

Through a Memorandum of Understanding between Connecticut Veterans Affairs [DVA] and CT Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services [DMHAS], substance use treatment and recovery support continue to be provided to Veterans residing at the Residential Facility. The Veteran's Recovery Center provides outpatient programming and services to DVA Veterans as well as to CT Veterans and National Guard members in the community. The program is staffed by a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor [LADC]. Forty-six (46) Veteran Residents received support from the LADC during Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

Gambling Recovery Support:

During fiscal year 2023-2024 Connecticut Veterans Affairs entered into an agreement with DMHAS Problem Gambling Services [PGS] division to offer Veteran Residents integrated services emphasizing problem gambling awareness and access to problem gambling support services. Problem gambling questions and screenings have been incorporated into new admission intakes and follow-up reviews. Select Residential Staff receive ongoing training on problem gambling and during the 2023-2024 fiscal year attended various trainings and workshops to increase their knowledge of problem gambling and the community resources available. During November 2023 the DMHAS Problem Gambling Team did a site visit to see the increase in gambling awareness information located around campus and to review how problem gambling screenings were being



incorporated into our documentation.

Patriots' Landing Temporary Housing Program (Veteran Families):

Patriots' Landing has been in operation since 2014 and offers temporary housing, up to two years, to Veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk for homelessness. Connecticut Veterans Affairs provides physical housing for up to 5 (five) Veteran families. All houses come fully furnished, and maintenance and utility costs are covered by the agency. Veteran families and Residential Staff work collaboratively with case managers provided through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [DMHAS]. Case management services ensure that each Veteran family obtains the necessary benefits and services needed to successfully transition to permanent housing. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, there were two (2) transitions to independent living and one (1) admission to the program with an average occupancy rate of 97%.

Advocacy and Assistance

Advocacy and Assistance is responsible for assisting Veterans and their families in accessing federal, state, and local benefits and entitlements. Veterans Service Officers [VSOs], accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, assist Veterans and their families with documentation and filing of claims for disability, compensation and/or pension.

During Fiscal Year 2024, Connecticut Veterans Affairs increased the number of full-time accredited VSOs by three (3), bringing the total to 18. The increase was due to internal shifting of allocations yielding one position, and legislative action yielding two positions (one also being a supervisor).

In Fiscal Year 2024, the OA&A team responded to over 15,000 requests for assistance from Veterans in 2024. The CT Department of Veterans Affairs, as an accredited Veterans Service Organization, formally represents over 8,000 Veterans across the state. The OA&A team submitted, on behalf of Connecticut Veterans, over 2,100 claims to the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This representation yields over \$125,000,000.00 annually in disability, pension, and other benefit payments directly to Connecticut Veterans.

During Fiscal Year 2024, OA&A continued to review the eligibility status of Veterans and/or dependents of Veterans across the state's skilled nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The office continues to conduct in-person visits to nursing homes and assisted living facilities as time permits and maintains a close working relationship with facility administrators. These benefits have provided a direct savings to the state where the clients are Medicaid recipients, and in other cases, served to delay the time when clients may be forced to rely on state-funded services.

Additionally, OA&A manages the Connecticut Wartime Service Medals and Registry program and awarded 739 medals in Fiscal Year 2024, bringing the total number of Wartime Service Medals



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awarded to eligible Veterans since 2006 to over 41,000 recipients.

Likewise, OA&A manages the Veterans Identity on the CT Driver's License Program. The office is responsible for verifying the service of the CT Veteran and transmitting that information to the CT Department of Motor Vehicles with 1,732 applications processed during this period. Since the inception of the program in January 2013, more than 17,000 applications have been processed by OA&A.

Moreover, OA&A provides training for all 169 town, city, and municipal Veteran Representatives. This program provides a single source point of contact in the Veteran's hometown to act as a liaison for Veterans' benefits and services. To date, more than 148 towns have appointed a Veteran Representative and over 250 volunteers have completed a benefits training seminar since the training was first offered in October 2012. The annual municipal Veteran Representative training was held on June 14, 2025, with over 90 CT municipalities in attendance.

OA&A provides certification of Veteran owned micro-businesses. In Fiscal Year 2024, the office certified 22 businesses.

The Connecticut Veterans INFO line (1-866-9CT-VETS) continues to receive an average of 30 calls per day. This number provides Veterans an easy access to general benefit information, assistance with requesting military records, referrals to other state agencies, and helpful information on the location and availability of the Congressional District Offices.

Cemetery and Memorial Services Office

The Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown is open for burials six days a week and has 17,740 casket burial sites, cremains burial sites and columbarium niches. Currently, 16,907 Veterans and eligible dependents are buried in our cemetery. The Colonel Raymond F. Gates Cemetery has 2,341 burial sites. 1,621 Veterans and eligible dependents are buried in the cemetery. Burial in the Raymond F. Gates Cemetery is generally restricted to residents of our skilled nursing facility and residential program. The Spring Grove Cemetery closed for interments in 1980.

During Fiscal Year 2024, 755 interments were performed at The Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery and seven (7) at the Colonel Raymond F. Gates Cemetery for Veterans and/or eligible dependents.

Improvements/Achievements for Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

Agency Wide

- During the 2023 – 2024 Fiscal Year, Connecticut Veterans Affairs established an official agency podcast, CT Vets ConneCT. Podcasts are recorded quarterly and broadcast via the



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agency's Facebook page.

- Completion of a 20x40 outdoor pavilion in the “quad” area of the Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus.
- Connecticut Veterans Affairs is planning for expansion of the Middletown State Veterans Cemetery. The cemetery opened in 1984 on 21 acres of property in Middletown, CT. The cemetery is now nearly full. Project planning is progressing to ensure burial options for Connecticut's Veterans are available for the next 60 years.
- The DVA is repairing and rehabilitating Building #18. This building will reopen as Connecticut's Municipal Veterans Resource Center. This focus will ensure Connecticut's 169 Municipal Veteran Representatives receive support and services to successfully assist Veterans in their towns and cities. This center will also utilize a grant from the Connecticut Department of Labor for job search and hiring assistance for Connecticut's Veterans.
- The DVA began design phase work on adding temporary housing for Veterans and their families. The focus of this program is to repair and rehabilitate 11 housing units on the agency's historic campus. This initiative will use up to \$5,000,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funding.

Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center

- During fiscal year 2023-2024, the Healthcare Center's [HCC] clinical focus has been de-prescribing of medication, specifically the gradual dose reduction of psychotropic medications. Through person-centered care planning with input from the Veteran, Veteran's family, and responsible party, attending physicians, psychiatrist, and pharmacist, the current percentage of individual Veterans receiving antipsychotic medications is 26%. Similarly, Veteran use of hypnotic medication at the HCC is 2% compared to the CT average of 5.3%. Additionally, the HCC's use of anti-depressant medication among Veterans is 60%, which is close to the CT average of 54.5%. All psychotropic medications are reviewed monthly by the Federal VA psychiatrist and the DVA pharmacist for possible dose reduction.
- The HCC continues to partner with the University of Connecticut Dental School. Dentists and dental residents visit the HCC bi-weekly to provide dental services to Veterans. Many Veterans are mobility challenged, so having dental services provided in-house is optimal. The dental program is made possible by a grant that UCONN received to provide dental services to Veterans.
- The HCC holds medical staff meetings quarterly, Family Council meetings quarterly, and Veteran Council meetings monthly. All managers and directors have open door policies and are highly accessible to the Veterans we serve.



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- The HCC serves as a clinical training site for nursing students from area nursing schools. The clinical trainings that were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been fully reinstated. Additionally, pharmacy students from UCONN school of pharmacy and Western New England University do a portion of their clinical training in the Connecticut Veterans Affairs pharmacy.

Residential Facility and Programs and Services

- Reestablished Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings on the Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus. Meetings are held weekly and are open to the public and Veteran residents.
- Established weekly Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery [CCAR] meetings.
- Developed partnership with Hospital for Special Care; Veterans attend Aqua Therapy weekly at the Hospital's pool.

Advocacy and Assistance

- Fully implemented a digital claims submission and management system leading to a significantly improved accuracy rate and a higher success rate for claims submitted on behalf of Veterans.
- Aggressive determination to actively track appeals and overall knowledge of the claims appeal process led to numerous appeal grants ranging from \$30,000.00 to over \$125,000.00 in retroactive payments to Veterans.

Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Services

- Cemetery and Memorial Services collected \$296,908.00 in federal burial allowances for the General Fund. Also, installation payments for over 867 federal Veteran headstones/foot markers were processed totaling \$130,050.00.

Safety and Security Division

- Director Stephen Scatena was assigned Incident Commander of the Emergency Management and the Transportation Staging Area [TSA] for Connecticut Veterans Affairs. During fiscal year 2023-2024 there were two successful activations of the Emergency Operations Center for an Emergency Management exercise and a TSA exercise.
- Submitted and approved for a Nuclear Fund Grant to provide the security division with additional radio accessories and a new Command Vehicle.



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- Obtained a new Four Door UTV for TSA support through the Nuclear Safety Grant; obtained a Capital Equipment Grant for new patrol vehicles.
- Hired (1) Part-Time Officer.
- Safety Program Officer has performed pre-event Fire & Life Safety inspections, monitored construction and maintenance project safety, conducted Fire & Life Safety surveys across the Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus, revised several safety policies, attended inspections, testing and maintenance trainings, and assisted in the CT Long Term Care-Mutual Aid Plan in a full-scale exercise drill. Safety Program Officer serves as the liaison to external certifying agencies such as Federal Veterans Affairs, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS], CT Department of Public Health, and CT State Fire Marshal.
- Safety Program Officer has performed pre-event Fire & Life Safety inspections, monitored construction and maintenance project safety, conducted Fire & Life Safety surveys across the DVA campus, and revised several safety policies, attended inspections, testing and maintenance trainings, and assisted in the CT Long Term Care-Mutual Aid Plan full-scale exercise drill.
- Safety and Security conducted In-Service Training for agency employees, to include Fire Safety, Electrical Safety, Hazmat Safety, and Ethics. Likewise, Buildings and Grounds Patrol Officers participated in multiple trainings to include an online dementia training, Crisis Intervention Training [CIT], CPR training, and Narcan training.
- Supported multiple tactical trainings on the Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus, including trainings by the Federal Bureau of Investigations [FBI], Homeland Security, US Marshalls, CT State Police, and local law enforcement agencies.

Projects and Operations Management Division

Projects and Operations oversee facilities maintenance, building services, transportation, environmental management, strategic planning, information technology, and energy efficiency functions for the agency. The division maintains collective responsibility for the three Connecticut Veterans Affairs cemeteries and a 92-acre campus with approximately 800,000 square feet of facilities. Projects and Operations Management synchronize and coordinate these functions to support the agency's mission and core functions. During the 2023-2024 FY, the division achieved the following:

- Utilizing approximately \$7.5 million in funding from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's "Lead by Example" program, Connecticut Veterans Affairs has several projects in progress to improve energy efficiency, lower consumption, and lower emissions of Greenhouse Gases. Projects include steam trap valve replacement (completed),



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interior lighting upgrades in all buildings (ongoing), replacement of central boilers (ongoing), exterior lighting upgrades (ongoing), and solar panel installation (ongoing).

- Security and Safety projects include upgrade of all camera systems (ongoing), new front entrance and gates (ongoing), installation of mass notification system (ongoing), new call bell system at the John L. Levitow Healthcare Center (ongoing), new roof on the John L. Levitow Healthcare Center (ongoing), repairs to the 300,000 gallon water storage tank and system (ongoing), new and repaired roofs as applicable (ongoing), water tower repairs (ongoing).
- Information and technology improvements aimed at improving CT DVA's delivery of critical services to Veterans. In progress are upgrades to the electronic healthcare record system, agency website, fillable online forms, and upgrades to multiple technology platforms.
- Completed capital project plans include:
 - Facility capitalization 5-year master plan
 - Cemetery Services master plan
 - Information technology investment strategy plan

Human Resources

The Human Resources [HR] Department is comprised of an HR Business Partner and HR Generalist assigned to Connecticut Veterans Affairs from the Department of Administrative Services [DAS]. Human Resources assists the agency and its employees by providing specialized functions, including recruitment, staffing, and staff transactions such as management of all position actions in CORE-CT. Human Resources, in conjunction with Labor Relations, manages all disciplines, grievances and investigations and provides guidance to managers and supervisors regarding employee relations. To create consistency in Human Resource functions, Department of Administrative Services HR has centralized requests for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- During the 2023 – 2024 FY there was a significant amount inter-agency collaboration taking place related to Workforce Development, and outreach efforts to CT Veterans once they discharge from the service. Connecticut Veterans Affairs participated in meetings with representatives from DAS, Department of Transportation [DOT], and the CT Military Department related to the transferability of military skills for civilian job, particularly with DOT. Connecticut Veterans Affairs held its annual Municipal Veteran Representative Training on June 14, 2024, and staff from DAS Talent Solutions were in attendance to provide the Municipal Veteran Representatives information and resources on applying for state positions.
- Additionally, as part of a Department of Administrative Services effort, DAS HR was invited to attend a Workforce Planning meeting soliciting information on the issues around salary and benefits for Managerial staff. This initiative is looking to reimagine CT's Managerial Class



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and compensation system.

- During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Human Resources compiled a comprehensive “Manager On-Boarding” checklist to ensure new Connecticut Veterans Affairs managers are provided with the tools necessary for success.

Affirmative Action

- Connecticut Veterans Affairs Affirmative Action Plan is coming to a two year close at the end of October 2024. Affirmative Action/EEO through DAS will begin preparing Connecticut Veterans Affairs two-year plan for November 1, 2024, through October 2026. EEO will evaluate hiring and identify hiring goals for this same period.
- All staff participated in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training in March 2023 and a State Ethics training for staff is scheduled for July 2024.

Fiscal Updates

Fiscal Services division at Connecticut Veterans Affairs supports each agency division by prioritizing expenditures to conservatively manage appropriated resources while meeting the challenges of supply chain shortages and rising costs. The department concluded Fiscal Year 2024 balanced within its appropriated funding resources. Fiscal Services will continue to apply strategic methodologies using a conservative approach to manage resources while fulfilling the core mission of “Serving Those Who Served” strategically and responsibly.

Special Events

Stand Down 2023:

Stand Down is Connecticut Veterans Affairs signature event bringing together federal and state agencies, community providers, and Veteran service organizations to provide medical screenings, employment and education assistance, legal and motor vehicle help, Veterans’ benefits information, essential clothing and personal care items, and housing referrals to Veteran attendees. Stand Down 2023 was the fourth year in a row that the event was held across five regional locations: Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Rocky Hill, and Norwich. The event in 2023 was widely attended with more than 1000 Veterans from across CT attending. Information on Stand Down can be found on the DVA website: [Veterans Stand Down 2023 \(ct.gov\)](https://www.ct.gov/dva/standdown)

Unclaimed Remains Military Burial 2023:

On November 3, 2024, six souls were brought to their eternal resting space at the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, CT through a dignified military burial service in partnership with the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association and CT Military Department. The unclaimed remains



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of six Veterans provided an opportunity for them to be remembered, recognized, and honored as they were laid to rest among their fellow brothers and sisters.

Veterans Day 2023 and Pavilion Dedication:

On Veterans Day (11/11/2023) Connecticut Veterans Affairs held a ribbon cutting and dedication of a new 20 x 40 outdoor pavilion. This pavilion was made possible through a generous donation by an individual donor who supports the mission and vision of Connecticut Veterans Affairs. The construction phase was managed and executed by Connecticut Veterans Affairs staff. The pavilion boasts an adjoining firepit area, water access, and electricity with working lights, fans, and electrical outlets. The donor as well as the donor's family were invited to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony, and they were provided with a custom photobook memorializing the event on Veterans Day 2023. In May 2024, landscaping around the pavilion was completed.

Wreaths Across America:

Connecticut Veterans Affairs hosted Wreaths Across America at the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown and the Colonel Gates Veterans Cemetery in Rocky Hill on Saturday, December 16, 2023. More than 300 volunteers placed nearly 14,000 wreaths at the headstones of our Veterans. In partnership with over 900 individual and corporate sponsors, each Veteran laid to rest in our Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery was personally recognized and honored with a wreath placed at his or her headstone.

Veterans Hall of Fame:

On January 25, 2024, Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs in partnership with the CT Military Department and the Office of Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz inducted 11 Veterans into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. For the first time since the CT Hall of Fame's inception in 2005, the ceremony was hosted on the Connecticut Veterans Affairs campus in the Gold Star Families Memorial Auditorium. The ceremony was open to the public and welcomed over 200 guests. Induction into the Hall of Fame recognizes the impact and inspirational work Veterans have contributed to their communities after his or her military service.

Vietnam and Korean Veteran Ceremonies:

In conjunction with the Lieutenant Governor's Office, Connecticut Veterans Affairs has been traveling throughout the state honoring Vietnam and Korean Veterans. Vietnam and Korean Veterans are presented with a pin from the DVA and a certificate from Lt. Governor Bysiewicz. During Fiscal Year 2023–2024, Commissioner Welch participated in twenty-two (22) events with the Lieutenant Governor's Office.