

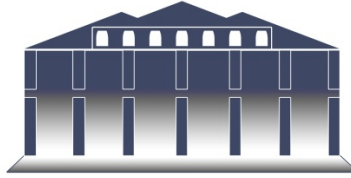
**North Carolina Needs a Coordinated Strategy to
Guide the Changing Landscape of Veterans
Programs**



**Final Report to the Joint Legislative
Program Evaluation Oversight Committee**

Report Number 2014-10

September 17, 2014



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John W. Turcotte
Director

September 17, 2014

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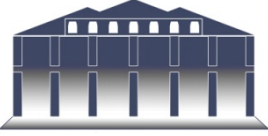
The 2013–15 Program Evaluation Division work plan directed the division to inventory and describe state programs and services available to veterans and their families as part of a larger review of adult alcohol and drug abuse programs, prescription drug abuse, and programs for veterans. This evaluation was included in the larger project because veterans returning from combat operations have high rates of substance abuse. These veterans also often exhibit a co-occurring triad of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and pain, which complicates the problems associated with substance abuse.

I am pleased to report that the state agencies, universities, and community colleges that provided the information for this report cooperated with us fully and were at all times courteous to our evaluators during the evaluation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Turcotte".

John W. Turcotte
Director



PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

September 2014

Report No. 2014-10

North Carolina Needs a Coordinated Strategy to Guide the Changing Landscape of Veterans Programs

Summary

The Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee's 2013–15 Work Plan directed the Program Evaluation Division to inventory and describe state programs and services available to veterans and their families. This report is the only known published summary of state programs and efforts for veterans and their families in North Carolina.

In State Fiscal Year 2013–14, North Carolina state agencies and public higher education institutions operated 23 programs for veterans, 11 of which spent \$53.9 million solely on veterans and their families. The 23 programs in the inventory reside in 10 state entities: the departments of Administration, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Public Instruction, Public Safety, and State Treasurer; the NC Community College System; the NC Housing Finance Agency; the University of North Carolina; and the Wildlife Resources Commission.

Although outcome data provide the strongest evidence of program success, few programs in the inventory track this information. Most programs track the number of veterans served. However, only nine programs track outcomes for veterans and their families.

In addition to the programs identified for the inventory, North Carolina offers 22 educational initiatives, benefits, discounts, and reduced recreational fees to veterans and their families. Some of these efforts are administered by the same agencies that house programs in the inventory, but the tracking of participation and outcomes is not consistent.

Although the Governor recently created a Working Group on veterans via executive order, North Carolina lacks a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to support veterans in the State. Lack of legislative oversight of the Working Group means its efforts may not be aligned to budget priorities established by the General Assembly.

Based on these findings the General Assembly should

- establish the Task Force on Veterans, Service Members and their Families in statute; direct this group to develop and implement a statewide strategic plan to track and improve services for veterans and their families; and direct state entities to track and report information to the Task Force; and
- create a legislative oversight committee to monitor and oversee the implementation of this plan.

Purpose and Scope

The Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee's 2013-15 Work Plan directed the Program Evaluation Division to inventory and describe state programs and services available to veterans and their families. This study is the second report of a three-part series on drug abuse, drug treatment, and programs for veterans.¹ This evaluation was included in the larger project because veterans returning from combat operations have high rates of substance abuse. These veterans also often exhibit a co-occurring triad of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and pain, which complicates the problems associated with substance abuse.

State law defines a veteran as any person who may be entitled to any benefits or rights under the laws of the United States by reason of service in the Armed Forces of the United States.² This definition includes individuals who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who were discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable. Also, National Guard members and Reservists who meet eligibility requirements for length of service, service commitment, and duty status are eligible for certain federal veteran benefits.

This evaluation addressed three central research questions:

- What state-funded programs exist to support veterans and their families in North Carolina?
- How do these programs support veterans and their families?
- Do these programs collect and report the data necessary to determine their performance?

The inventory identifies state-administered programs that support veterans and their families. To be included in the inventory, a program had to have a separate funding stream (from all sources including federal) dedicated to supporting military veterans, their spouses, or dependent children. To identify programs for the inventory, the Program Evaluation Division surveyed state agencies to obtain a list of programs that met these criteria. Identified programs received a second survey to collect information on program characteristics (e.g., purpose, activities, funding, eligibility criteria) and the types of performance measures collected. Exhibit 1 summarizes parameters for the inventory.

The inventory did not include programs where veteran or NC National Guard status was not required for participation or eligibility. For example, within the Department of Health and Human Services, the Veteran Peer Support program was included, but the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—which provides benefits to veterans and their families who qualify for services but does not target them—was not included. As shown in the exhibit, other programs excluded from the inventory had these characteristics:

- offered discounts or reduced fees;
- had a central focus on research;
- implemented a hiring or contracting preference for veterans;

¹ The first report in the series was entitled "North Carolina Needs to Strengthen Its System for Monitoring and Preventing the Abuse of Prescribed Controlled Substances." The third report in the series will evaluate inpatient substance abuse treatment.

² N.C. Gen. Stat. §165-3(4)b.

- did not provide a direct benefit to veterans; or
- provided tax relief.

While the inventory collected information on performance measures, evaluating program success based on those measures was outside the scope of this project.

Exhibit 1: Parameters Defining the Programs Included in the Inventory of Veterans Programs

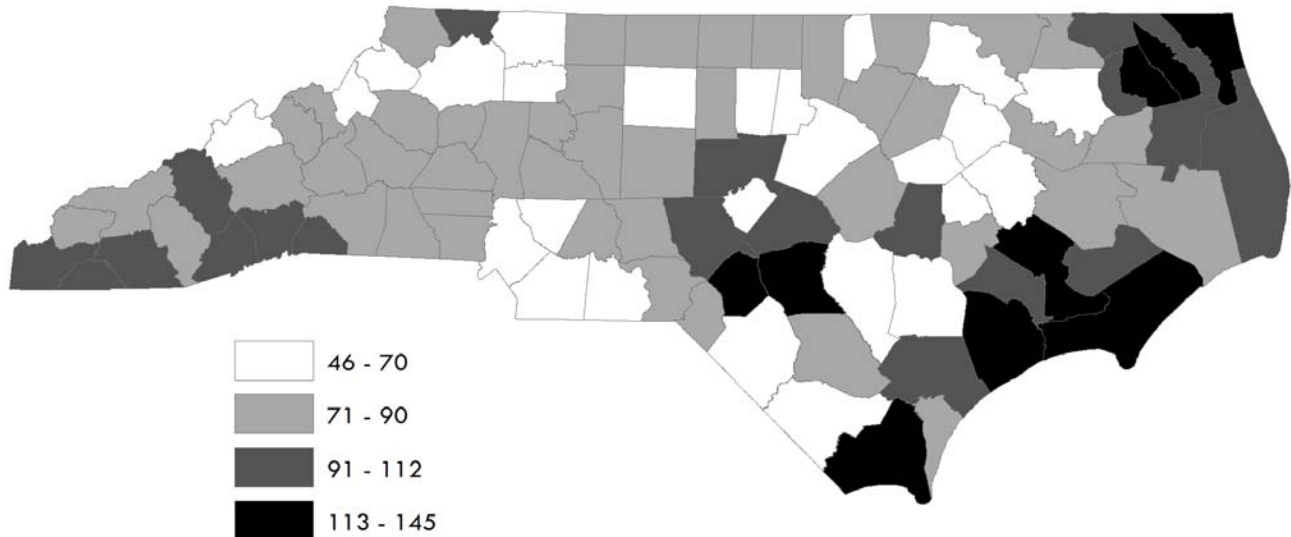
Criteria	Included	Excluded
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A separate funding stream (from state or federal sources, agency fees and receipts, or private grants) dedicated to supporting military veterans, their spouses, or dependent children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs, services, initiatives, and efforts supported 100% from local funds • Tax relief offered by local governments to benefit military veterans
Targeted individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military veterans • Spouses and dependents of military veterans • NC National Guard members • Spouses and dependents of NC National Guard members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active-duty military service members in the Armed Forces • Spouses and dependents of active-duty military service members or ineligible military veterans • Military veterans ineligible for federal benefits (i.e., dishonorable discharge)
Program focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military veteran or NC National Guard status is a requirement or determining factor for participation or eligibility • Provides a direct benefit to military veterans, their spouses, or their dependent children; may include a research component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military veteran or NC National Guard status does not determine participation or eligibility • Central focus on research; does not provide a direct benefit to support military veterans, their spouses, or their dependents • Provides a discount or reduced fee for services offered by state agencies and institutions (e.g., state attractions) • Preferences for veterans (e.g., employment and contracting) • Benefit does not go to veteran directly

Source: Program Evaluation Division.

Background

North Carolina has the ninth largest veteran population in the country and is home to approximately 770,000 veterans and their families.³ North Carolina's veterans reside in every county across the State. When measured as a percentage of total population, Cumberland, Craven, and Onslow counties are home to the most veterans. Exhibit 2 displays the number of veterans per 1,000 residents by county.

Exhibit 2: Number of North Carolina Veterans per 1,000 Residents



Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The federal government offers numerous benefits to veterans and their families. The United States has the most comprehensive system of assistance for veterans of any nation in the world. Congress established a new system of veterans benefits during World War I to include programs for disability compensation, insurance for service persons and veterans, and vocational rehabilitation for the disabled. In 1930, Congress authorized the President to "consolidate and coordinate Government activities affecting war veterans." The three component agencies became bureaus within the Veterans Administration. This agency assumed operation of the National Cemetery System in 1973, including the marking of graves of all persons in national and state cemeteries, and administration of the State Cemetery Grants Program. Congress established the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a cabinet-level position on March 15, 1989.

³ This estimate is based on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veteran Population Projection Model 2011, an actuarial projection model for the veteran population from Federal Fiscal Year 2011 to Federal Fiscal Year 2040.

The VA provides a wide range of benefits to veterans and their families including

- health care,
- education and employment assistance,
- vocational rehabilitation,
- disability payments,
- pension benefits for survivors and dependents,
- burial services,
- life insurance, and
- home loan guarantees.

Appendix A describes these federal benefits for veterans in detail. Appendix B describes the eligibility requirements for these benefits for National Guard members and Reservists.

North Carolina veterans received \$5 billion in federal benefits in Federal Fiscal Year 2012–13.⁴ These benefits represented 4% of the \$142.8 billion dollars in total VA expenditures on veterans and their families residing in the U.S.⁵ Federal spending per veteran in North Carolina is slightly higher than the national average and ranks 20th in the country. Exhibit 3 displays federal spending per veteran for different types of benefits for Federal Fiscal Year 2012–13 for the states with the ten largest veteran populations. Among the 50 states, North Carolina ranks

- 9th for federal expenditures per veteran for compensation and pension;
- 15th for education and job training programs; and
- 39th for medical care.

This pattern may reflect the demographic characteristics of veterans seeking VA benefits as well as the resources available to assist veterans in accessing these benefits.

⁴ The federal fiscal year is October 1 to September 30.

⁵ This figure includes VA expenditures in the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

Exhibit 3: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Expenditures per Veteran for States with the Ten Largest Veteran Populations, Federal Fiscal Year 2012–13

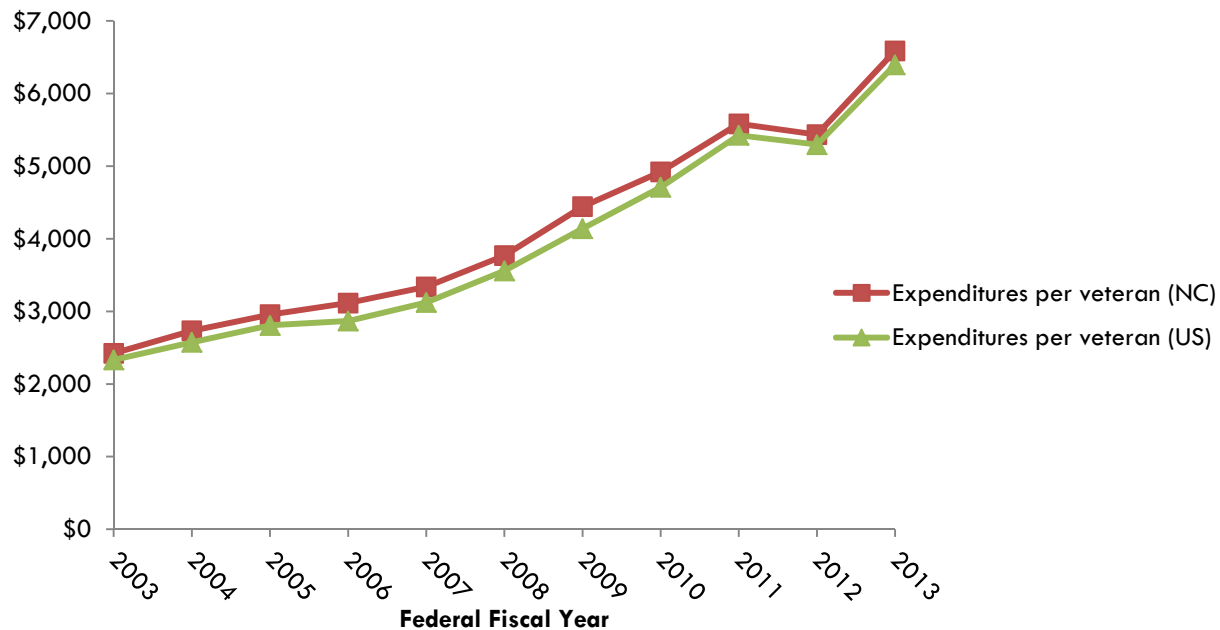
State	Total Veteran Population	Total Spending	Rank	Compensation and Pension	Rank	Education and Job Training	Rank	Medical Care	Rank	Other Spending
1. California	1,795,455	\$ 7,078	10	\$ 3,006	18	\$ 891	3	\$2,902	17	\$ 279
2. Texas	1,667,740	7,761	3	3,653	7	670	7	2,391	35	1,047
3. Florida	1,520,563	6,860	13	3,110	16	587	9	2,889	18	275
4. Pennsylvania	953,644	5,015	48	2,128	47	377	38	2,206	41	304
5. New York	885,796	6,347	27	2,330	40	557	13	3,198	6	262
6. Ohio	877,894	7,568	5	2,093	48	338	42	2,521	28	2,616
7. Virginia	840,398	5,537	40	2,726	29	1,040	2	1,599	50	172
8. Georgia	774,464	6,031	32	3,205	14	585	10	2,032	46	208
9. North Carolina	769,384	6,587	20	3,525	9	519	15	2,326	39	216
10. Illinois	744,710	5,176	44	1,947	49	418	27	2,629	22	182
U.S. Total	21,742,004	\$ 6,396		\$ 2,886		\$ 546		\$2,537		\$ 427

Notes: The federal fiscal year starts on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following calendar year. U.S. total expenditures and state ranks are for the 50 states and exclude the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The increase in per-veteran spending in North Carolina has been consistent with overall trends in the federal budget for veteran benefits. Exhibit 4 depicts changes in federal spending per veteran at the national and state levels. Total spending for veterans' benefits in North Carolina has increased at a rate comparable to the national average. From Federal Fiscal Year 2011–12 to 2012–13, federal per-veteran spending increased by approximately 21%, or nearly \$900 million in North Carolina. The majority of this increase can be attributed to an increase in per capita spending at the federal level (19%).

Exhibit 4: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Spending per Veteran Nationally and in North Carolina, Federal Fiscal Years 2003–2013



Source: Program Evaluation Division based on expenditure data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The type of services veterans need differs among military era cohorts and differs from the general population. In 2013, the VA estimated there were approximately 22 million veterans living in the United States.⁶ Exhibit 5 separates the number of living U.S. veterans by the era in which they actively served in the military. Roughly a third of veterans served in the Vietnam era, 30% served during the Gulf War era, and 25% served during peacetime.

According to a 2010 national survey, most veterans are 55 years old or older. One-third of veterans reported having served in a combat or war zone and a similar percentage reported being exposed to dead, dying, or wounded individuals during their service.⁷ Compared to civilians, veterans are more likely to experience homelessness and to have poorer health and health behaviors.^{8,9} Unemployment rates for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans outpace both their civilian counterparts and veterans of previous conflicts.¹⁰

North Carolina's veterans are slightly younger and are more likely to have served in the Gulf War era than all veterans nationwide. This relatively larger population in the 30-to-50 age range may represent a greater need for educational and employment services, mental health treatment, or assistance purchasing homes whereas older veterans may have a relatively greater need for more health care and assisted living facilities.

⁶ This estimate includes veterans living in the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and in foreign countries.

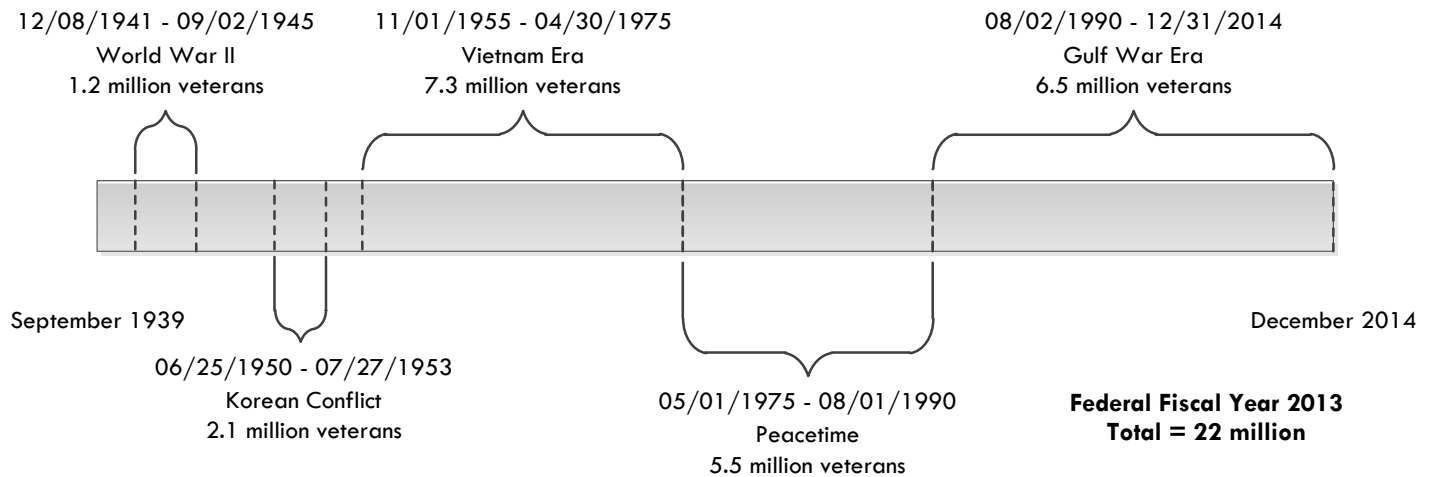
⁷ Westat (2010, October). *National Survey of Veterans, Active Duty Service Members, Demobilized National Guard and Reserve Members, Family Members, and Surviving Spouses: Final report deliverable 27 submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*. Rockville, MD.

⁸ National Center on Homelessness among Veterans (2010). *Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs.

⁹ Hoerster, K.D., Lehavot, K., Simpson, T., McFall, M., Reiber, G., & Nelson, K.M. (2012). Health and health behavior differences: U.S. Military, veteran, and civilian men. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 43(5), 483-489.

¹⁰ Institute for Veterans and Military Families (2014, June). *The employment situation of veterans*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University.

Exhibit 5: Number of Living Veterans by Military Era



Notes: These figures cannot be summed because categories are not mutually exclusive. The number of veterans serving in peacetime includes veterans serving prior to World War II, between World War II and the Korean conflict, and in the post-Gulf War era.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on veteran projection data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Like other states, North Carolina is gearing up to meet the needs of a growing veteran community. North Carolina has provided state support and assistance to veterans and their families for almost 90 years. These programs complement and enhance existing federal programs. The General Assembly established the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) as part of the Commission of Labor in 1925 to “aid veterans of the World War.” In 1945, the NCDVA became a separate agency to assist veterans and their families in securing benefits earned through military service. The Department of Administration (DOA) assumed all responsibilities of this agency in 1967. Since then, the State has created numerous programs across different agencies to support the employment, health, and educational needs of veterans and their families.

In recent years, North Carolina and other states have introduced legislation to enhance the quality of life of veterans, separated service members, and their families. Sample bills include removing licensure impediments for veterans and their spouses and providing in-state tuition for veterans.¹¹

Tens of thousands of additional troops are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan as the U.S. presence in both countries is drawn down. These troop reductions are likely to lead to an increase in the number of veterans in North Carolina. More veterans living in the State may lead to a corresponding increase in the demand for state-administered veteran services. Additionally, changes in the demographic composition of the military, including the presence of more women and minority members, may mean that veterans need different types of services than those provided in the past.

The following inventory identifies state-administered programs that support military veterans, their spouses, and their dependents. This compilation identifies the state programs that serve veterans and their

¹¹ Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs. (2013, April). *State policy options*. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.

families and describes the services and benefits that these programs provide. In addition, this inventory gives lawmakers and the public a better understanding of state resources devoted to veterans.

Findings

Finding 1. In State Fiscal Year 2013–14, North Carolina state agencies and public higher education institutions operated 23 programs for veterans, 11 of which spent \$53.9 million solely on veterans and their families.

The Program Evaluation Division sent an initial survey to state agencies, universities, and community colleges requesting a list of programs that met inventory criteria. The results of this survey yielded 39 programs. Identified programs completed a second survey requesting detailed information about funding, expenditures, participants, and performance measures. To qualify for the inventory, programs had to be fully operational and able to provide information on program funding and expenditures for Fiscal Year 2013–14.¹² Based on responses to the second survey, 16 programs did not meet inventory criteria (see Exhibit 1) and were excluded from the inventory.

The inventory identified 23 programs for veterans and their families that operated in Fiscal Year 2013–14. As shown in Exhibit 6, these programs reside in 10 state entities: the departments of Administration (DOA), Commerce (DOC), Health and Human Services (DHHS), Public Instruction (DPI), Public Safety (DPS), and State Treasurer (DST); the NC Community College System (NCCCS); the NC Housing Finance Agency; the University of North Carolina (UNC) system; and the Wildlife Resources Commission. NCCCS operated the most programs (5). The Departments of Administration (DOA) and Health and Human Services (DHHS) each operated four programs for veterans and their families.

The inventory included two types of programs:

- **Veteran-only programs (11).** For these programs, veterans and their families comprised 100% of participants. In Fiscal Year 2013–14, veteran-only programs spent \$53.9 million and served almost 71,000 veterans and their families.
- **Veteran-targeted programs (12).** For these programs, veteran status was required for eligibility but not all participants were veterans. In Fiscal Year 2013–14, veteran-targeted programs served over 20,000 veterans and their families. Fiscal Year 2013–14 expenditures reported here— \$103.4 million—represent the amount spent by the entire program, not the amount spent solely on the veterans served.

¹² Rowan-Cabarrus Community College launched its Veterans Education and Training Services program in Fiscal Year 2013–14 but was unable to provide funding and expenditure data for the inventory. Finding 4 mentions this program.

Exhibit 6: Veteran-Only Programs Spent \$53.9 Million and Veteran-Targeted Programs Spent \$103.4 Million, FY 2013–14

Agency/Institution	Program Name	2013–14 Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served
Veteran-only Programs (11)			
Administration	Veteran State Nursing Homes	\$33,262,000	726
Administration	Veteran Scholarship Program	\$9,742,652	693
Commerce	Jobs for Veterans State Grant	\$5,435,909	51,794
Administration	Veteran Service Officer Support	\$3,683,195	14,533
Administration	State Veterans Cemetery Program	\$854,863	1,053
Health and Human Services	Substance Abuse Services Initiative for NC National Guard	\$492,110	54
NC Community College System	Veterans Upward Bound	\$215,668	129
Public Instruction	Troops to Teachers	\$136,048	1,043
Public Safety	Veterans Specialty Court Pilot Project	\$70,197	43
NC Community College System	Enhancement Services for Veterans	\$20,000	473
Wildlife Resources Commission	Wounded Warrior Hunting and Fishing Programs	\$8,400	395
Veteran-only Programs Subtotal		\$53,921,042	70,936
Veteran-targeted Programs (12)			
Housing Finance Agency	NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund	\$87,956,217	81
State Treasurer	NC National Guard Pension Fund	\$7,480,761	14,679
NC Community College System	NC Back-to-Work	\$6,206,528	375
NC Community College System	Center for Military Families and Veterans	\$347,424	2,000
Health and Human Services	NC Operation Recovery-Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery Program	\$267,920	28
Health and Human Services	DMHDDSAS Traumatic Brain Injury Program	\$225,223	NA
Health and Human Services	Veteran Peer Support Program	\$203,047	321
Public Safety	NC National Guard Family Programs	\$194,476	656
University of North Carolina	Veterans Business Outreach Center	\$183,400	459
Commerce	Apprenticeship and Training	\$123,035	773
NC Community College System	Military Affairs Center	\$106,683	724
University of North Carolina	NC Central University School of Law Veterans Law Clinic	\$91,951	433
Veteran-targeted Programs Subtotal		\$103,386,665	20,529
Program Inventory Total		\$157,307,707	91,465

Notes: The total number of veterans served by programs in the inventory is not an unduplicated count. The number of veterans served by the Housing Finance Agency represents the cumulative number of veterans served since the program began tracking veteran participation in October 2013. State Treasurer expenditures are for Fiscal Year 2012–13. Four of the five programs for the NC Community College System are operated by individual community colleges. Both programs for the University of North Carolina are operated by individual campuses. Public Safety includes the NC National Guard and the Governor's Crime Commission. Wildlife Resources Commission expenditures are based on the program's Fiscal Year 2013–14 authorized budget as of April 30, 2014. DMHDDSAS stands for the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on the inventory of programs for veterans.

Taken together, the programs included in the inventory served more than 91,000 veterans and their families in Fiscal Year 2013–14.¹³ The Jobs for Veterans State Grant program provided services to 51,794 veterans, the most of any program in the inventory. Of the 23 programs, 65% offered services statewide. Programs for veterans were evenly distributed across five domains.

- **Educational support (5).** This domain consists of the DOA Veteran Scholarship program and four programs operated by NCCCS—the Center for Military Families and Veterans at Central Piedmont; Enhancement Services for Veterans at Pitt; the Military Affairs Center at Craven; and Veterans Upward Bound at Central Carolina.
- **Financial assistance (5).** Two programs in DOA provided financial assistance: the State Veterans Cemetery Program and Veteran Service Officer Support. Other programs are the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund, the NC National Guard Pension Fund, and the Veterans Law Clinic at the North Carolina Central University School of Law.
- **Physical and behavioral health (5).** DHHS houses four programs in this domain: DMHDDSAS Traumatic Brain Injury; NC Operation Recovery, the Substance Abuse Services Initiative for NC National Guard, and Veteran Peer Support.¹⁴ In addition, DOA operates the Veteran State Nursing Homes.
- **Social and emotional well-being (3).** Two of the programs in this domain are housed in DPS (NC National Guard Family Programs and the Veterans Specialty Court Pilot Project) while the other, Wounded Warrior Hunting and Fishing Programs, is operated by the Wildlife Resources Commission.
- **Workforce and economic development (5).** Two of the programs in this domain are operated by DOC—Apprenticeship and Training and the Jobs for Veterans State Grant. The other three programs are NC Back-to-Work (NC Community College System), Troops to Teachers (DPI), and Veterans Business Outreach Center (UNC).

Exhibit 7 provides detailed information for the 23 programs in the inventory.

¹³ The total number of veterans served does not represent an unduplicated count.

¹⁴ DMHDDSAS stands for Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services.

Exhibit 7: State Agencies and Higher Education Institutions Operated 23 Programs for Veterans and their Families, FY 2013–14

Program Name (Domain)	Agency/Institution	Mission	Fiscal Year 2013–2014			Statewide
			Total Funding (Funding by Source %)	Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served	
Federally-funded Programs						
NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund (Financial assistance)	Housing Finance Agency	To assist responsible homeowners experiencing a temporary financial hardship and veterans transitioning to civilian life in avoiding foreclosure and to assist veterans who are struggling to make their mortgage payments while they are enrolled in VA employment or vocational training programs or attending school on the GI Bill	\$87,596,218 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$87,956,217*	81	Yes
Jobs for Veterans State Grant (Workforce and economic development)	Commerce	To promote employment among eligible veterans and others by providing placement services for job training and employment	\$5,612,000 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$5,435,909	51,794	Yes
Troops to Teachers (Workforce and economic development)	Public Instruction	To assist eligible military personnel in transitioning to new careers as public school teachers in high-need schools	\$340,112 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$136,048	1,043	Yes
Veterans Upward Bound (Educational support)	NC Community College System	To motivate and assist veterans at Central Carolina Community College in the development of academic and other requisite skills necessary for acceptance and success in a program of postsecondary education	\$215,668 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$215,668	129	No

Program Name (Domain)	Agency/Institution	Mission	Fiscal Year 2013–2014			Statewide
			Total Funding (Funding by Source %)	Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served	
Veteran Peer Support Program (Physical and behavioral health)	Health and Human Services	To provide training certification and monitoring of peers trained to provide recovery and other supports for individuals seeking intervention for mental health and substance use problems	\$203,047 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$203,047*	321	Yes
Veterans Business Outreach Center (Workforce and economic development)	University of North Carolina	To advance the growth and commercial competitiveness of veteran-owned small business enterprises by providing counseling, training, business plan assistance, and resources to help with finance options	\$183,400 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$183,400*	459	Yes
Apprenticeship and Training (Workforce and economic development)	Commerce	To develop and administer the Registered Apprenticeship programs, ensuring program quality by inspecting, approving, and supervising programs offered by qualified training establishments and performing compliance surveys	\$123,035 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$123,035*	773	Yes
Veterans Specialty Court Pilot Project (Social and emotional well-being)	Public Safety	To promote public safety and reduce recidivism in a cost-effective way by providing veteran offenders in Harnett County with intensive court supervision and a comprehensive VA-driven treatment program resulting in a productive and law-abiding life	\$70,196 Federal: 100% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$70,197	43	No
All Federally-funded Programs (8)			\$94,343,676	\$94,323,521	54,643	
State-funded Programs						
Veteran Scholarship Program (Educational support)	Administration	To provide four-year scholarships for qualifying children of certain class categories of deceased, disabled, combat, or POW/MIA veterans	\$9,742,652 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$9,742,652	693	Yes

Program Name (Domain)	Agency/Institution	Mission	Fiscal Year 2013–2014			Statewide
			Total Funding (Funding by Source %)	Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served	
National Guard Pension Fund (Financial assistance)	State Treasurer	To provide a supplemental retirement benefit to retired members of the NC National Guard	\$7,007,443 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$7,480,761*	14,679	Yes
NC Back-to-Work (Workforce and economic development)	NC Community College System	To increase the employment potential of unemployed workers by providing short-term, pre-employment training to develop skill competencies that lead to industry-recognized or state-regulated credentials	\$4,808,000 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$6,206,528*	375	No
Veteran Service Officer Support (Financial assistance)	Administration	To connect veterans and their family members with benefits and services by operating a network of 13 district offices and a processing office in Winston-Salem	\$4,519,473 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$3,683,195	14,533	Yes
DMHDDSAS Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program (Physical and behavioral health)	Health and Human Services	To coordinate services and support for military members who have sustained a TBI and their family members and caregivers; to develop educational information, support services, and activities for persons directly or indirectly affected by TBI	\$225,223 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$225,223*		Yes

Program Name (Domain)	Agency/Institution	Mission	Fiscal Year 2013–2014			Statewide
			Total Funding (Funding by Source %)	Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served	
NC National Guard Family Programs (Social and emotional well- being)	Public Safety	To provide assistance to active members of the military, veterans, and family members with obtaining benefits and procuring needed in-house and community resources	\$194,476 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$194,476*	656	Yes
Military Affairs Center (Educational support)	NC Community College System	To provide military students and their families at Craven Community College with one-on-one assistance for all their needs from course registration and financial aid assistance to veteran- specific services	\$106,683 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$106,683*	724	No
NCCU School of Law Veterans Law Clinic (Financial assistance)	University of North Carolina	To provide legal students with practical experience while advising veterans and their families about the complexities and technical aspects of filing their claims with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices nationwide, the Board of Veterans Appeals, and the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims	\$91,951 Federal: 0% State: 100% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$91,951*	433	Yes
All State-funded Programs (8)			\$26,695,901	\$27,731,469	32,093	
Programs with Multiple Funding Sources (7)						
Veteran State Nursing Homes (Physical and behavioral health)	Administration	To provide high-quality care to eligible veterans	\$33,262,000 Federal: 40% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 60%	\$33,262,000	726	Yes

Program Name (Domain)	Agency/Institution	Mission	Fiscal Year 2013–2014			Statewide
			Total Funding (Funding by Source %)	Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served	
Center for Military Families and Veterans (Educational support)	NC Community College System	To provide life-long education and career development for veterans and their family members at Central Piedmont Community College	\$988,245 Federal: 0% State: 16% Local: 0% Private: 36% Other: 48%	\$347,424*	2,000	No
State Veterans Cemetery Program (Financial assistance)	Administration	To provide free burial plots to North Carolina veterans and eligible family members	\$919,208 Federal: 0% State: 52% Local: 0% Private: 0% Other: 48% (user fees)	\$854,863	1,053	Yes
NC Operation Recovery-Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery Program (Physical and behavioral health)	Health and Human Services	To identify veterans with traumatic stress disorder and/or traumatic brain injuries who are involved with the criminal justice system and connect them with services in order to reduce prison sentences and improve their well-being	\$519,709 Federal: 75% State: 0% Local: 25% Private: 0%	\$267,920*	28	No
Substance Abuse Services Initiative for NC National Guard (Physical and behavioral health)	Health and Human Services	To provide service members who test positive for drug use with clinical substance abuse assessments and vouchers that authorize payment for assessment and limited counseling	\$492,110 Federal: 91% State: 9% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$492,110	54	Yes

Program Name (Domain)	Agency/Institution	Mission	Fiscal Year 2013–2014			Statewide
			Total Funding (Funding by Source %)	Expenditures	Number of Veterans Served	
Enhancement Services for Veterans (Educational support)	NC Community College System	To provide support services which contribute to the student success of Pitt Community College veterans and their dependents	\$20,000 Federal: 0% State: 0% Local: 0% Private: 100%	\$20,000	473	No
Wounded Warrior Hunting & Fishing (Social and emotional well- being)	Wildlife Resources Commission	To offer recreation and safety training for wounded veterans	\$8,400 Federal: 75% State: 25% Local: 0% Private: 0%	\$8,400	395	No
All Programs with Multiple Funding Sources (7)			\$36,209,672	\$35,252,717	4,729	
Grand Total (23 Programs)			\$157,249,249	\$157,307,707	91,465	

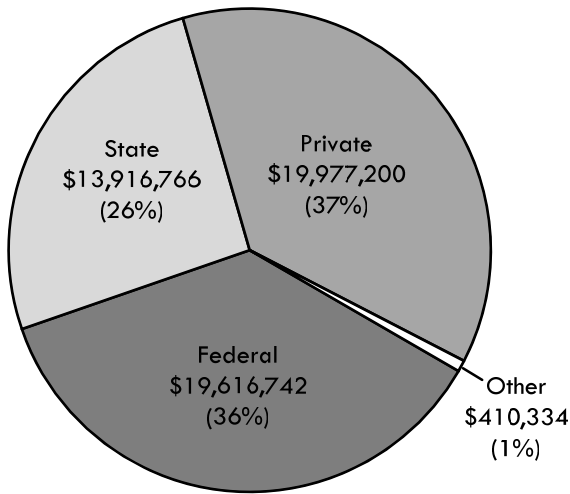
Notes: Asterisks denote programs where veterans were targeted but expenditures were not spent solely on veterans. The NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund started tracking veteran participants in October 2013. The Jobs for Veterans State Grant has expenditures that are less than total program funding due to a staff position that was vacant for part of the year; these funds will be carried forward into the 2014–15 fiscal year. Troops to Teachers' total funding exceeds expenditures because money is being carried forward into Fiscal Year 2014–15 to cover possible federal budget shortfalls. NC Back-to-Work used \$1.4 million in carryover funding from Fiscal Year 2012–13 to equate expenditures with Fiscal Year 2013–14 funding. Veteran State Nursing Homes operate through receipts directly billed to Medicare, Medicaid, the U.S. Veterans Health Administration, and private insurance companies and receive no appropriated funding. The Center for Military Families provided expenditures data based on the program's authorized budget as of April 30, 2014. NC Operation Recovery experienced staff turnover in Fiscal Year 2013-14 that led to lower than anticipated program expenditures. Wounded Warrior Hunting and Fishing provided expenditure data based on the program's authorized budget as of April 30, 2014. VA stands for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. DMHDDSAS stands for the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services. NCCU stands for North Carolina Central University. The Veterans Business Outreach Center is operated by Fayetteville State University. NC National Guard Pension Fund defines military veterans as active members, terminated vested members not in receipt of a benefit, and retired members currently in receipt of a benefit, and the program reported data for Fiscal Year 2012–13.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from state agencies and public higher education institutions.

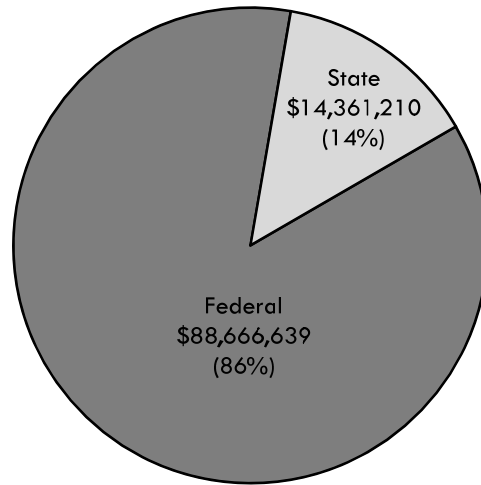
Exhibit 8 shows the breakdown of expenditures by funding source for both veteran-only and veteran-targeted programs. Veteran-only programs received a greater proportion of funds from the State and from private and other sources than veteran-targeted programs. Federal funds represented the vast majority (86%) of expenditures for veteran-targeted programs.

Exhibit 8: Percentage of Fiscal Year 2013–14 Expenditures by Funding Source

Expenditures for Veteran-Only Programs by Funding Entity (\$53.9 Million)



Expenditures for Veteran-Qualified Programs by Funding Entity (\$103.4 Million)



- **Federal Government** - Program funding is provided by the federal government in the form of grants, pass-through funding to state agencies, and payments to medical and nursing facilities.
- **State Government** - North Carolina funds scholarships, supplemental retirement benefits, some health services, and programs that assist veterans with obtaining federal benefits and resources.
- **Private** - Funding comes from individuals to help support educational programs and from veterans in nursing homes who pay for a portion of their care.
- **Other** – Some funds are raised by charging program fees.
- **Local Government** - One local government provides funding to support a behavioral health program.

Note: No local funding is dedicated to veteran-only programs. The Expenditures for Veteran-Qualified Programs by Funding Entity chart does not contain private, other, or local government funding because each represents less than 1% of total funding.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on program data.

North Carolina does not know the total amount of expenditures for veterans and their families. The expenditure data reported reflect the best available figures for the 23 programs in the inventory. The veteran-targeted programs provided expenditures for their entire programs. Because these programs do not track expenditures specific to veterans, the total amount spent on veterans remains unknown.

The programs for veterans included on the inventory report to five different legislative oversight committees—Education, Government Operations, Health and Human Services, Justice and Public Safety, and Natural and Economic Resources. Most programs have a domain that aligns with the legislative committee overseeing their agency. However, the physical and behavioral health program operated by DOA (Veteran State Nursing Homes) does not report to the Joint Legislative Health and Human Services Oversight Committee, the legislative oversight committee most closely associated with its domain. Instead, DOA reports to the Joint Legislative Commission on Government Operations. Similarly, the DOA Veterans Scholarship Program in the educational support domain is not overseen by the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

In summary, North Carolina state agencies and public higher education institutions operated 23 programs serving more than 91,000 veterans and their families in Fiscal Year 2013–14. Eleven programs exclusively served veterans and their families at a cost of \$53.9 million. The inventory included 12 programs that targeted veterans but served other participants. These programs reported \$103.4 million in total program expenditures. Because these programs do not track expenditures specific to veterans, the total amount spent on veterans remains unknown.

Finding 2. Few programs identified for the inventory track outcomes for veterans and their families.

Similar to a previous report inventorying programs for children, youth, and families, the Program Evaluation Division sought to examine the types of information collected by programs for veterans and their families and to determine whether or not these programs collected outcome data indicative of program success.¹⁵

Outcome data provide the strongest evidence of program performance.

Several types of data describe how programs are implemented and how they work. Performance measures consist of information about program operations that document the target population, inputs, activities, and outcomes.

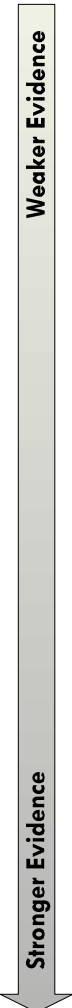
- *Descriptive information* describes participants' age, income, gender, ethnicity, or other salient attributes.
- *Inputs* are resources available to deliver activities, such as funding, staff, or facilities.
- *Processes* describe how the program works, such as who does what and how activities are delivered.
- *Outputs* consist of numerical counts to describe activities actually provided, such as number of sessions or services, participant attendance, or items distributed.
- *Outcomes* capture whether or not the program achieves its intended goals.

¹⁵ Program Evaluation Division (2011, February). *Programs for Children, Youth, and Families Need a Guiding Framework for Accountability and Funding*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina General Assembly.

The Program Evaluation Division classified program information into these five tiers of evidence that reflect the strength of the performance data collected (see Exhibit 9). Together, these types of information can answer questions about who participates, what goes into programs, how they work, what they provide, and to what end. In some cases, outputs (what programs provide) may be sufficient to capture whether a program is successful. However, only outcomes can answer questions of program success such as “What works?” For example, a program that awards scholarships to veterans or their dependents may report outputs in terms of the number of applications received and the number of scholarships awarded; however, outputs cannot demonstrate to what end the scholarship contributed to the academic success of the student.

Exhibit 9

Outcome Data Provide the Strongest Evidence of Program Performance

Strength of Evidence	Type of Performance Information	Type of Data Collected
	Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant demographic information (e.g., age, income, race/ethnicity)
	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of staff who support program activities • Expenditures for program activities • Financial audits
	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time in program • Number of calls or emails to the program (e.g., requests for information) • Number of potential participants identified to receive services (e.g., received information about program) • Participant satisfaction • Cost per participant
	Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of services provided (e.g., number of sessions held, trainings conducted) • Number of referrals provided • Number of participants enrolled in the program • Number of participants who received service • Number of participants who received a minimum amount of services • Number of participants who dropped out of the program • Number of participants who completed the program • Participant attendance at program sessions or events • Percentage of eligible population served
	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome assessments (e.g., knowledge, skills, behavior) • Progress toward contract benchmarks • Return on investment

Source: Program Evaluation Division.

Whereas descriptive information, inputs, processes, and outputs are useful for describing program operations, outcome data are needed to inform whether or not the program has effected change. Outcome data serve several important functions. They can aid program improvement by illustrating whether or not activities are associated with intended effects. Program staff may use outcomes to review the program goal, alter activities, improve practices, or otherwise adjust the program. Outcomes can inform funding decisions: stakeholders may elect to eliminate programs with weak outcomes or increase funding for programs that demonstrate strong results.

A review of performance measures used by programs in the inventory revealed little focus on outcomes. Of the 96 performance measures submitted, 24 measure outcomes for veterans and their families (25%). Most programs track number of veteran participants.¹⁶

Few programs for veterans tracked performance data beyond descriptive measures. Of the 23 programs in the inventory,

- 4 programs track only descriptive measures (i.e., the number of veterans served);
- 7 programs track input measures, such as program budgets;
- 10 programs track process measures, such as participant satisfaction and cost per participant;
- 13 programs track output measures for the program, such as number of training sessions or events; and
- 9 programs track outcomes for veterans and their families, such as starting a business.

Exhibit 10 shows the percentage of programs in each domain that track each type of performance measure. Programs for veterans in the physical and behavioral health domain were more likely than other domains to collect input, process, output, and outcome measures.

Exhibit 10: Performance Data Tracking by Domain for Programs in the Inventory

Domain (Program Count)	Number of Veterans Served	Input Measures	Process Measures	Output Measures	Outcome Measures
Educational support (5)	●	○	○	○	○
Financial assistance (5)	●	○	○	○	○
Physical and behavioral health (5)	●	●	◐	●	◐
Social and emotional well-being (3)	●	○	○	◐	○
Workforce and economic development (5)	●	○	◐	●	◐

- – 100% of programs collected this type of information
- – 75–99% of programs collected this type of information
- ◐ – 50–74% of programs collected this type of information
- – Less than 50% of programs collected this type of information

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on performance measures submitted by programs in the inventory.

¹⁶ The DMHDDSAS Traumatic Brain Injury program serves veterans as one of its mandated target populations, but it does not track the number of veterans separately from other groups. The NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund started tracking veterans in October 2013.

In summary, outcome data provide the strongest evidence of program success. Most programs for veterans track at least one performance measure. However, only nine programs in the inventory track outcomes for veterans and their families. Without outcome data, the State cannot determine the extent to which these programs improve the lives of veterans and their families.

Finding 3. In addition to the programs identified for the inventory, North Carolina offers 22 educational initiatives, benefits, discounts, and reduced recreational fees to veterans and their families.

During the course of this study, the Program Evaluation Division identified three educational initiatives, five benefits, nine discounts for admissions, and five reduced recreational fees that support veterans or military-affiliated individuals in North Carolina. Although these efforts did not meet the criteria of a veterans program, they warrant attention because of their relationship with the programs identified in the inventory. Some of these efforts are administered by the same agencies with programs for veterans, and these efforts are a fundamental part of the agencies' overarching approaches to serving this population.

Educational initiatives—University of North Carolina. In addition to the two programs identified for the inventory—the Veterans Business Outreach Center at Fayetteville State University and the Veterans Law Clinic at the North Carolina Central University School of Law—the University of North Carolina (UNC) operates a system-level educational initiative to support military-affiliated students at UNC institutions.¹⁷ This initiative, called UNC SERVES, aims to improve access, retention, and graduation rates for active-duty service members, veterans, and their families at UNC institutions.¹⁸ UNC SERVES started in 2010 as a system-wide working group of faculty, administrators, and students who evaluate the current state of military-affiliated students and recommend improvements. UNC SERVES issues an annual accountability and resources guide to report on the progress of campus- and system-level efforts. In addition, the UNC Board of Governors has demonstrated its commitment to serving this population by outlining key strategies to reach out to military students in its 2013–2018 strategic plan, adopting a policy on military student success, and appointing a special committee on military affairs. Other efforts under the UNC SERVES umbrella that provide a direct benefit to veterans and their families include the following:

- **UNC Partnership for National Security.** This system-wide effort supports North Carolina's military and defense industry by promoting access to higher education for veterans to encourage them to remain in North Carolina and contribute to the State's economy. This effort received more than \$1.2 million in Fiscal Year 2013–14 in federal and state support.

¹⁷ Military-affiliated students include active duty service members, veterans, and their families.

¹⁸ The acronym stands for Systemwide Evaluation and Recommendation for Veteran Education and Services.

Exhibit 11: North Carolina Offers 22 Educational Initiatives, Benefits, Discounts, and Reduced Recreational Fees to Veterans and Their Families

Efforts	State Entity	Description	Domain	Tracks Number of Veterans Served
Educational initiatives (3)				
NC Military Educational Positioning System	University of North Carolina system	This web portal provides military-affiliated students with the resources to explore North Carolina's higher education options; the tools to navigate the application, admission, and enrollment process; and the knowledge to graduate and pursue their career goals	Educational support	Yes
UNC Partnership for National Security	University of North Carolina system	This system-wide effort is a branded initiative of the University of North Carolina and serves as the umbrella identity for direct services for veterans and military-affiliated students provided by the University	Educational support	Yes
Yellow Ribbon	Community College system; University of North Carolina system	Participating higher education institutions enter into a voluntary agreement with the VA to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the amounts payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill; institutions contribute a specified dollar amount of those expenses, and the VA contributes up to 50% of the difference	Educational support	Yes
Benefits (5)				
Disabled Veteran Property Tax Homestead Exclusion	State property tax law	N.C. Gen. Stat. § 105-277.1C excludes the first \$45,000 of appraised value of the residence from taxation for disabled veterans	Financial assistance	Not applicable
Behavioral Health Target Population	Health and Human Services	N.C. Sess. Law 2008-107, Section 10.15(v) directed DHHS to include veterans and their families in the target population definition for mental health services, substance use treatment, and services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury	Physical and behavioral health	Yes
Veteran Hiring Preference	Office of State Human Resources	State law grants hiring preference to veterans in employment with every state department, agency, and institution	Workforce and economic development	Not required (N.C.G.S. § 128-15.)

Efforts	State Entity	Description	Domain	Tracks Number of Veterans Served
Licensure Endorsement for Military Training	Occupational licensing boards	N.C. Sess. Law 2012-196 allows a military-trained applicant to lawfully practice in this state if the individual has been awarded a military occupational specialty in the occupation, and allows licensure endorsement for military spouses who hold a current license, certification, or registration from another state	Workforce and economic development	Not required (N.C.G.S. §105-277.1C)
Veteran-Designated Driver Licenses and Identification Cards	Transportation	N.C. Sess. Law 2011-35 allows veterans to carry the designation of veteran on their driver licenses and identification cards	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Admission discounts (9)				
Aquarium at Fort Fisher	Environment and Natural Resources	General admission discount for active-duty military and veterans for tickets purchased at military bases	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores	Environment and Natural Resources	General admission discount for active-duty military and veterans for tickets purchased on-site	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Aquarium at Roanoke Island	Environment and Natural Resources	General admission discount for active-duty military and veterans for tickets purchased at military bases	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Museum of Art	Cultural Resources	Discounts for active-duty military and veterans to programs or exhibits where an admission fee is charged	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Museum of History	Cultural Resources	Discounts for active-duty military and veterans to programs or exhibits where an admission fee is charged	Social and emotional well-being	No
State Fair	Agriculture and Consumer Services	General admission discount for active-duty service members, Reservists, retirees, National Guardsmen, and their dependents at the ticket window	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Tryon Palace	Cultural Resources	General admission discount for active-duty military and veterans	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
USS NC Battleship	Cultural Resources	General admission discount for active-duty military and veterans	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Zoological Park	Environment and Natural Resources	General admission discount for active-duty military and veterans for up to six admissions	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Reduced recreational fees (5)				
Basic Hunting/Inland Fishing	Wildlife Resources Commission	Reduced fee for residents who are 50% or more disabled as determined by VA	Social and emotional well-being	Yes

Efforts	State Entity	Description	Domain	Tracks Number of Veterans Served
Coastal Recreational Fishing	Environment and Natural Resources; Wildlife Resources Commission	Reduced fee for residents who are 50% or more disabled as determined by VA	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Inland Fishing	Wildlife Resources Commission	Reduced fee for residents who are 50% or more disabled as determined by VA	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Sportsman	Wildlife Resources Commission	Reduced fee for residents who are 50% or more disabled as determined by VA	Social and emotional well-being	Yes
Sportsman/Coastal Recreational Fishing	Environment and Natural Resources; Wildlife Resources Commission	Reduced fee for residents who are 50% or more disabled as determined by VA	Social and emotional well-being	Yes

Notes: The disabled veteran property tax homestead exclusion is administered at the county level and thus its use is not tracked by the State. DHHS stands for the Department of Health and Human Services. VA stands for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on review of General Statutes and program information from state entities.

- **NC Military Educational Positioning System.** This web portal provides military-affiliated students with the resources to explore North Carolina's higher education options; the tools to navigate the application, admission, and enrollment process; and the knowledge to graduate and pursue their career goals. In addition to state appropriations, this effort received grants totaling \$75,000 in Fiscal Year 2013–14 from the Aurora Foundation and the Cannon Foundation to assist with the development of online resources.¹⁹

Educational support—Yellow Ribbon Program. In the 2013–14 academic year, six UNC campuses and five community colleges participated in the Yellow Ribbon program, which funds tuition and fee expenses that exceed the amounts payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.^{20,21} The public institutions in the Yellow Ribbon program provided more than \$600,000 to 251 university and community college students in the 2013–14 academic year. The 2014 Appropriations Act directed the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program starting with the 2015–16 academic year.²² In addition, the General Assembly established separate Yellow Ribbon Reserve Funds for universities and community colleges to pay for undergraduate tuition assistance required by the program.²³

Financial assistance—Disabled veteran property tax homestead exclusion benefit. State law provides for property tax relief for disabled veterans and the surviving spouses of disabled veterans. Specifically, this provision excludes the first \$45,000 of appraised value of the residence from taxation. To claim this exclusion, individuals must have been discharged from the Armed Forces under honorable conditions and must satisfy one of the following requirements:

- be the recipient of federal benefits to assist with the acquisition or adaptation of housing to accommodate the disability;²⁴
- have a certification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or other federal agency that he or she has a service-connected, permanent, and total disability; or
- have a certification from the VA or other federal agency that the veteran's death was the result of a service-connected condition.

This program is administered at the county level and thus its use is not tracked by the State.

Physical and behavioral health—Behavioral health target population benefit. In 2008, the General Assembly directed the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to include veterans and their families in the

¹⁹ UNC SERVES also includes East Carolina University's Operation Reentry North Carolina, a research support organization, and North Carolina State University's Operational Military Kids NC, a project supporting military children and youth during the deployment of a family member.

²⁰ The institutions are Craven Community College, East Carolina University, McDowell Technical Community College, North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina State University, Pitt Community College, Sandhills Community College, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, UNC Greensboro, and Wake Technical Community College.

²¹ The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 authorized the Yellow Ribbon program.

²² N.C. Sess. Law 2014-100, Section 11.12(a)-(d).

²³ The UNC Yellow Ribbon Reserve Fund received a \$4.9 million appropriation, and the Community College Yellow Ribbon Reserve Fund received a \$1 million appropriation.

²⁴ 38 U.S.C. § 2101.

target population definition for mental health services, substance use treatment, and services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury.^{25,26} This population is linked to services provided by local management entities and managed care organizations (LME-MCOs) and their provider networks throughout the State. Each LME-MCO has a designated point of contact for the military. DHHS's Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services has a military liaison, and division staff coordinate care and ensure partnerships to support whole-person care. Division staff also conduct trainings for LME-MCO staff. DHHS has not received additional funding for these activities; however, LME-MCOs may allocate the cost of their administrative activities to Medicaid. Because veterans are included in the target population definition, LME-MCOs can use federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funds to pay for these services. More than 2,100 veterans, active-duty military, NC National Guardsmen, Reservists and their families received screenings for services in Fiscal Year 2012–13.

Social and emotional well-being—Admission discounts. The State Fair and eight state attractions—the three aquariums, the USS North Carolina Battleship, the State museums of Art and History, the North Carolina Zoo, and Tryon Palace—offer veteran discounts on general admission and for ticketed events. Exhibit 12 lists the number of veterans utilizing military discounts and the value of the discounts for Fiscal Year 2013–14.

²⁵ Family member is defined as spouse, and parents thereof; sons and daughters, and spouses thereof; parents, and spouses thereof; brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof; grandparents and grandchildren, and spouses thereof; domestic partner and parents thereof, including domestic partners of any individual included in this definition; and any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the veteran is the equivalent of a family relationship.

²⁶ 2008 N.C. Sess. Law 2008-107, Section 10.15(v).

Exhibit 12: Military Discounts for North Carolina Attractions and the State Fair, Fiscal Year 2013–14

State Attraction	Discount Description		Fiscal Year 2013–14	
	Full Price	Military Price	Number of Veterans	Value of Discount
Aquariums • Fort Fisher • Pine Knoll Shores • Roanoke Island	\$10.95	\$9.95	18,538	\$ 18,538
Museum of Art	Varies	Varies	1,548	12,805
Museum of History	Varies	Varies	Does not track	Does not track
State Fair	\$9.00	\$5.00	20,443	81,772
Tryon Palace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20 for Time Traveler's Pass • \$15 for Governor's Pass or Garden and Galleries Pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15 for Time Traveler's Pass • \$12 for Governor's Pass or Garden and Galleries Pass 	4,556	16,859
USS NC Battleship	\$12.00	\$10.00	13,523	27,046
Zoological Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$12 for Adults • \$10 for Seniors (62+) • \$8 for Children (2-12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10 for Adults • \$8 for Seniors (62+) • \$6 for Children (2-12) 	21,611	43,222
Total			80,219	\$ 200,242

Notes: All discounts apply to active-duty military and veterans with proof of military service. The data reflected in the exhibit do not disaggregate admissions for active-duty and veteran service members. The aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores offers the discount for tickets purchased on-site; the aquariums at Roanoke Island and Fort Fisher offer the discount for tickets purchased at military bases. The NC Battleship operates on a federal fiscal year. The museums of Art and History offer military discounts for those programs or exhibits where an admission fee is charged. The Museum of History does not track military discounts separately from its senior discounts. The zoo allows up to six admissions with a military ID.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from state attractions and the State Fair.

Social and emotional well-being—Reduced recreational fees. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Wildlife Resources Commission offer several recreational hunting and fishing licenses to veterans at a substantially reduced fee. To be eligible for the discount, veterans must be 50% or more disabled as determined by the VA.²⁷ As shown in Exhibit 13, these agencies issued more than 3,700 recreational licenses to disabled veterans in Fiscal Year 2013–14.

²⁷ The license remains valid for the lifetime of the licensee so long as the licensee remains 50% or more disabled.

Exhibit 13: Disabled Veteran Lifetime Recreational Licenses, Fiscal Year 2013–14

License Type	Regular Lifetime Fee	Disabled Veteran Fee	Licenses Sold	Discount Value
Inland Fishing	\$250	\$10	1,487	\$ 356,880
Coastal Recreational Fishing	\$450	\$10	750	330,000
Sportsman	\$500	\$100	153	61,200
Sportsman/Coastal Recreational Fishing	\$675	\$110	792	447,480
Basic Hunting/Inland Fishing	N/A	\$10	577	N/A
Total			3,759	\$ 1,195,560

Notes: All licenses are for residents who are 50% or more disabled as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Numbers include coastal recreational fishing licenses and sportsman/coastal recreational fishing licenses issued by both the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Division of Marine Fisheries and the Wildlife Resources Commission. The Basic Hunting/Inland Fishing license is only offered to disabled veterans.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Wildlife Resources Commission.

Social and emotional well-being—Veteran ID card benefit. In 2011, the General Assembly amended state law to allow veterans to carry the designation of veteran on their driver licenses and identification cards.²⁸ In order to obtain a North Carolina veteran-designated identification, veterans must provide their DD-214 form as proof that they have been honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces.²⁹ This designation allows veterans to obtain military discounts from retailers and service providers without having to show their military discharge form. Placing the designation on the driver license or identification card provides proof of identification and veteran status simultaneously. Veterans can request the designation be added to their license at their next renewal at no additional charge. As of July 2014, the Division of Motor Vehicles has issued 14,346 veteran-designated licenses and 546 identification cards.

Workforce and economic development—Licensure endorsement for military training benefit. In 2012, the General Assembly amended state law to allow occupational licensing boards to issue a license, certification, or registration to a military-trained applicant to lawfully practice in this state if the applicant has been awarded a military occupational specialty in the occupation.³⁰ The law also allows licensure endorsement for military spouses that hold a current license, certification, or registration from another jurisdiction. Session Law 2014-67 enhances the effectiveness of this act by

- directing occupational licensing boards to publish a set of criteria of requirements that are satisfied by military training and experience and to submit a status report to the Legislative Research Commission Study Committee on Civilian Credit for Military Training and State Adjutant Selection Criteria no later than September 1, 2014; and

²⁸ N.C. Sess. Law 2011-35.

²⁹ The DD-214 form is a document of the U.S. Department of Defense, issued upon a military service member's retirement, separation, or discharge from active-duty military.

³⁰ N.C. Sess. Law 2011-196.

- directing the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina and the State Board of Community Colleges to submit a plan that will ensure that college credits are uniformly granted to students with military training no later than January 1, 2015.³¹

Workforce and economic development—Veteran hiring preference benefit. It is the policy of the State of North Carolina to grant preference to veterans in employment with every state department, agency, and institution.³² In Fiscal Year 2013–14, state agencies and boards hired a total of 134 veterans, representing 3% of all new hires. Four state agencies hired 10 or more veterans: the departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Public Safety, and Transportation. In Fiscal Year 2012–13, the UNC system hired 130 veterans, representing 2% of all new hires.³³ Five universities hired 10 or more veterans during that fiscal year—East Carolina University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina State University, UNC Charlotte, and UNC Wilmington. Appendix C lists the number of veterans hired in Fiscal Year 2013–14 and the total number of veteran employees by agency and institution.

The Program Evaluation Division identified other state-administered programs that may serve veterans but do not target them specifically. The programs listed below are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent an exhaustive list of such programs.

- **DHHS Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** This federally-funded program provides food assistance to eligible households to help them purchase nutritious food. Low-income veterans, who may be unemployed, working in low-wage jobs, or disabled, may qualify for SNAP benefits. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that 50,000 veterans in North Carolina live in households that receive SNAP benefits.
- **Department of Justice Consumer Protection.** The Consumer Protection Division helps North Carolina citizens fight unfair business practices like scams and fraud. The division provides a single point of contact for military personnel, their families, and military attorneys.
- **The North Carolina Military Collection.** As part of its charge to document, preserve, and make available the State's history, the Department of Cultural Resources (DCR) documents the service and experience of veterans in North Carolina for the general public in the State Archives.³⁴

Limited data exist on the extent to which these activities result in positive outcomes for veterans and their families. Most state entities track veteran participation, but not all agencies collect this information consistently. For example, among state attractions managed by DCR, the NC Battleship, the Museum of Art, and Tryon Place track discounts to veterans but the Museum of History does not.

³¹ N.C. Sess. Law 2014-67.

³² N.C. Gen. Stat. § 128-15.

³³ Fiscal Year 2012–13 is the most recent data available from the University of North Carolina.

³⁴ N.C. Gen. Stat. § 121-5.

Outcome data for these efforts may be harder to obtain because some agencies do a better job of tracking veterans than others. For example, state law charges the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) with implementing the veteran hiring preference policy,³⁵ but in practice the responsibility for tracking the number of veterans served is split between OSHR and the UNC system because university employees are not included in BEACON, the State's human resources and payroll management system. OSHR does not routinely report nor is it required to report on agency use of the veteran hiring preference. The UNC system office compiles and submits the Vet-100 report for all campuses, an annual census of veterans employed by contractors receiving federal government grants, as required by the U.S. Department of Labor. In contrast, OSHR does not compile this information on behalf of the State; instead, the office has opted to let state agencies be responsible for reporting this information on their own.

In summary, North Carolina offers three educational initiatives, five benefits, nine discounts for admissions, and five reduced recreational fees that support veterans or military-affiliated individuals. Limited data exist on the extent to which these activities result in positive outcomes for veterans and their families because state agencies and institutions do not consistently track veteran participation or outcomes

Finding 4. Although the Governor recently established a working group on veterans, North Carolina lacks a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to support veterans in the State.

In April 2014, Governor McCrory issued Executive Order 49 creating an interagency working group to address the needs of veterans in the State. The Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members and their Families (hereinafter "the Working Group") is chaired by the Governor's Advisor on Military Affairs, with the department heads of Administration, Commerce, and Health and Human Services serving as vice-chairs.³⁶ The leadership team includes a representative from the Veterans Benefits Administration of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).³⁷ The Governor can appoint up to 35 additional members to the Working Group. As of July 2014, no formal appointments to the Working Group had been made. However, 40 potential members from state and non-state entities have been identified based on attendance at the group's first meeting. As shown in Exhibit 14, 8 out of 10 agencies with programs in the inventory participate in the Working Group.

³⁵ N.C. Gen Stat. § 128-15.

³⁶ The department secretaries can designate someone from their agency to serve in their place.

³⁷ Executive Order 49 states that the fifth member of the leadership team must be a representative from outside of state government who has exhibited a historic passion and concern for veterans' issues. As of July 2014, Cheryl Rawls from the VA Winston-Salem regional office serves in this role.

Exhibit 14

Most Entities with Programs for Veterans in the Inventory Participate in the Governor's Working Group for Veterans, Service Members and their Families

State Entity	Number of Programs in the Inventory	Participates in Governor's Working Group
Administration	4	Yes
Commerce	2	Yes
Health and Human Services	4	Yes
Housing Finance Agency	1	Yes
NC Community College System	5	Yes
Public Instruction	1	Yes
Public Safety	2	Yes
University of North Carolina system	2	Yes
State Treasurer	1	No
Wildlife Resources Commission	1	No

Notes: Four of the five programs for the NC Community College System are operated by individual community colleges. Both programs for the University of North Carolina are operated by individual campuses. Public Safety includes the NC National Guard and the Governor's Crime Commission.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on participation lists and veterans program inventory.

The Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members and their Families is the first attempt to bring together various agencies serving all the needs of veterans. Prior to this effort, Session Law 2011-185 directed several state agencies to coordinate programs, services, research, and grant dollars aimed at improving the behavioral health of veterans and their families.³⁸ These efforts supported the work of the Governor's Focus on Service Members, Veterans and Their Families (also known as NC FOCUS), a group formed in 2006 at the request of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. NC FOCUS was open to any organization working with veterans that wanted to find ways to prevent problems experienced post-deployment such as drug addiction, unemployment, mental health disorders, and domestic violence. With the creation of the Working Group, North Carolina has expanded statewide coordination efforts for veterans beyond a focus on behavioral health to instead take a more holistic approach.

The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) serves as the tactical arm of the Governor's Working Group. NCDVA has launched an agency-wide effort to be more transparent, data-driven, and accountable to the veterans, family members, and citizens of the State of North Carolina. In 2013, NCDVA issued its inaugural annual report of federal VA expenditures by county and congressional district as well as division operations. The goal of this report is to track the performance and impact of the veteran population and the federal, state, county, and volunteer organizations that support veterans. Subsequent reports will provide a yearly update and identify trends.

³⁸ These agencies included the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety (now the Department of Public Safety), the Department of Health and Human Services, the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers, and the University of North Carolina.

The division has engaged in an intra-agency reform to develop a more veteran-centric approach. For example, NCDVA plans to increase its number of regional service offices from 12 to 20 by 2016, increase the number of training officers supporting county veteran services offices from one to five, and launch a 24/7 call center to answer questions and direct veterans to services. Through the participation and support of the Working Group, the division has collaborated with several state and local entities to create the NCWorks4Vets initiative to educate local human resources professionals about the benefits of hiring veterans, including the Departments of Commerce and Public Safety, NC National Guard, the Governor's Military Advisor, the city of Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce.

North Carolina is 1 of 12 states that have established an interagency entity to coordinate services for veterans since 2011. As shown in Exhibit 15, governors in eight other states created these entities through executive order; in three other states—Georgia, Rhode Island, and Texas—the state legislature created the interagency group that serves veterans. It is important to note that 6 of the 10 states with the largest veteran populations have formed these interagency coordinating entities.³⁹

³⁹ These states are California, Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

Exhibit 15: Twelve States Have Formed Interagency Coordinating Entities for Veterans Services Since 2011

State	Coordinating Entity (Year Established)	Established By	Number of State Entities Involved	Veteran Population Federal Fiscal Year 2013
AL	Executive Veterans Network (2013)	Executive Order	17	414,963
CA	Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (2011)	Executive Order	15	1,795,455
GA	Returning Veterans Task Force (2013)	Legislation	8	774,464
ID	Veterans, Service Members and Families Coordination Council (2013)	Executive Order	6	138,108
ME	Military and Community Leadership Council (2011)	Executive Order	6	127,694
NV	Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (2012)	Executive Order	10	225,933
NY	State Council on Veterans, Military Members and their Families (2014)	Executive Order	22	885,796
NC	Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members and their Families (2014)	Executive Order	13	769,384
PA	Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (2013)	Executive Order	9	953,644
RI	Veterans' Services Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (2013)	Legislation	12	69,206
TN	Governor's Council for Armed Forces, Veterans, and their Families (2012)	Executive Order	6	521,267
TX	Coordinating Council for Veterans Services (2011)	Legislation	23	1,667,740

Notes: The Nevada legislature reestablished the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs in statute in 2013. Membership of interagency coordinating entities in Idaho, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee include representatives from non-state entities that serve veterans.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on a review of legislation and executive orders from other states.

The formation of the Working Group comes at a time when the landscape of programs and services for veterans and their families is changing. By its very nature, an inventory is a snapshot of programs that exist at a particular point in time and needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. At the time of this report, the Program Evaluation Division is aware of several recent changes to the inventory of veterans programs presented in Finding 1.

- The Wildlife Resources Commission's Wounded Warrior Hunting and Fishing program transitioned to the Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing program in May 2014. Agency officials believe this transition will benefit participants because the structure of the new program has goals, objectives, and opportunities that were missing from the original program.
- The Housing Finance Agency's Foreclosure Prevention Fund received approval from the U.S. Department of the Treasury in July 2014 to extend program eligibility to veterans using the GI Bill to attend school or retrain as they transition to civilian life.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides educational benefits to service members who have served on active duty for 90 or more days since September 10, 2001.

- Rowan-Cabarrus Community College launched its Veterans Education and Training Services program in 2014.

Federal and state initiatives are changing the landscape of programs and efforts to assist North Carolina veterans. Recent changes at the federal level in the administration of and access to benefits and services for veterans may affect existing programs in the inventory. For example, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced plans to allow veterans to seek private medical care after an internal audit found noncompliant and potentially fraudulent scheduling practices at VA health facilities that led to long wait times. The VA hospitals in Charlotte, Elizabeth City, and Wilmington and the community-based outreach clinics in Jacksonville and Raleigh were among the 111 sites identified as needing further review based on the audit findings. Programs for veterans operated by the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) may see increases in the number of participants as veterans seek non-VA health care.

During the last legislative session, the General Assembly included several special provisions affecting veterans in the 2014 Appropriations Act:

- eliminating state funding for county veteran service offices;⁴¹
- directing North Carolina's public higher education institutions to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program and appropriating \$5.9 million to support undergraduate tuition assistance through this program (as described in Finding 3);
- appropriating \$250,000 from the federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant for crisis services initiatives for veterans;
- allowing the Department of Commerce (DOC) to use \$4.6 million in de-obligated federal Community Development Block Grant funding to provide services to homeless and at-risk veterans in rural areas of the State; and
- appropriating \$3.7 million to the Department of Administration (DOA) for renovations for the state veteran nursing home in Salisbury.⁴²

Lastly, the State has supported the efforts of the Veterans Life Center, a statewide residential treatment setting for veterans in Butner operated by the Veterans Leadership Council of North Carolina-Cares (VLCNC-Cares), a nonprofit organization. On April 5, 2011, the Governor and Council of State approved a 15-year disposition lease, for \$1, for use of eight vacated buildings at the old campus of the John Umstead state psychiatric hospital by VLCNC-Cares.⁴³ DHHS signed a memorandum of agreement to develop and provide veteran-specific stabilization and addiction treatment services to homeless and at-risk veterans at the R.J. Blackley Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center, also in Butner.⁴⁴ The Department of Public Safety (DPS)

⁴¹ Prior to the 2014 Appropriations Act, the NC Division of Veterans Affairs provided matching grants to counties providing veterans services.

⁴² N.C. Sess. Law 2014-100.

⁴³ The Governor and Council of State approved the lease amendment in May 2014.

⁴⁴ The initial agreement was effective April 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012 and was extended to October 2013. A second memorandum of agreement is effective March 1, 2014 – March 1, 2016.

agreed to support VLCNC-Cares in its efforts to work within other state agencies and facilitate interactions between the organization and the NC National Guard as appropriate.⁴⁵ DOC's Division of Community Assistance provided the initial funding for this effort by awarding a grant for \$4.2 million to the Town of Butner for rehabilitation of a building that will be used for veterans' services.⁴⁶ VLCNC-Cares is a sub-contractor for this grant.

Unlike other states, North Carolina lacks a statewide strategy to address the changing landscape of veterans programs. Although the Working Group seeks to break silos and build bridges through coordination and teamwork, the executive order did not charge the group with creating a statewide strategic plan. NCDVA officials stated that there are no immediate plans to develop a strategic plan to guide the Working Group's efforts; the group's activities are unfolding "organically." In addition, the Working Group does not have the authority to hold other state agencies and institutions accountable for tracking, reporting, or ensuring successful outcomes for North Carolina veterans.

Lack of authority and direction in the Working Group may undermine this promising effort to make North Carolina the "state choice for veterans."⁴⁷ For instance, the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) is required to have a policy specifying the State's hiring preference for veterans within state agencies, but OSHR is not a member of the Working Group and has not participated in the group's meetings thus far.^{48,49} Whereas the Working Group has facilitated high-level discussions and information sharing on veterans' issues among public and private entities, the lack of a strategic plan may make it difficult to monitor the results of activities and hold state entities and other stakeholders accountable.

Other states have engaged in many of the steps important for statewide strategic planning for veterans. These efforts are described below.

- **Alabama.** The executive order that established the Alabama Executive Veterans Network Commission (AlaVetNet) required this entity to develop a long-range plan for a comprehensive statewide system to improve, sustain, and deliver services to service members, veterans, and their families. AlaVetNet submitted its initial plan to the governor on June 30, 2014, which included strategies in behavioral health, employment, education, homelessness, legal assistance, and family services. The plan specified 10 goals, 10 near-term objectives, and six executive and legislative considerations.
- **Nevada.** A 2012 executive order established the Nevada Interagency Council on Veterans to identify and prioritize the needs of Nevada's veterans and to increase coordination among public and private agencies to meet those needs. Legislation passed in 2013 created the council in statute and prescribed its membership,

⁴⁵ This memorandum of agreement expired in August 2014.

⁴⁶ The Department of Commerce awarded the grant in May 2014 to the Town of Butner's North Carolina Catalyst Program to provide community development assistance in partnership with the Veterans Life Center to improve the quality of life of homeless veterans.

⁴⁷ Executive Order 49.

⁴⁸ N.C. Gen. Stat. §128-15.

⁴⁹ OSHR has had discussions with the Governor's Military Advisor and plans to participate in future meetings of the Working Group.

duties, and responsibilities, including establishing an action plan for serving veterans.⁵⁰ In May 2014, the council made six recommendations to address workforce issues facing veterans: changing the state veterans hiring preference and incentive programs; changing the veterans employment program structure; ensuring licensure reciprocity; establishing a public service internship program for veterans; and revising the membership of state advisory boards and commissions to include veterans and requiring these entities to report on veteran-related activities.

- **Rhode Island.** In 2013, legislation created the Veterans' Services Strategic Planning Advisory Committee. The advisory committee is a 13-member panel responsible for creating and maintaining a five-year plan for the dispensing of veterans services and support through government departments and agencies.⁵¹ The Rhode Island Department of Human Services and Division of Veterans Affairs is spearheading the strategic planning effort and will be responsible for measuring the effectiveness and implementation efforts prescribed in the plan. The strategic plan is due in April 2015.
- **Texas.** The Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services has a legislative mandate to coordinate the activities of state agencies; coordinate outreach efforts; and facilitate collaborative relationships among key stakeholders to identify and address issues affecting veterans, service members, and their families. In 2012, the council produced a report that identified issues and made recommendations for six areas: mental health, higher education, housing, employment, criminal justice, and women veterans. The workgroups have been expanded to include transportation and communication and outreach issues. In addition, the council plans to report on legislative actions taken as a result of the recommendations in October 2014.

North Carolina needs a comprehensive strategy to monitor the changing landscape of efforts to assist veterans and hold agencies accountable for outcomes. This report is the only known published summary of state programs and efforts for veterans and their families. The first report in this series, *North Carolina Needs to Strengthen Its System for Monitoring and Preventing the Abuse of Prescribed Controlled Substances*, identified several state entities engaged in monitoring prescription drug abuse but found no single entity responsible for developing a strategic and holistic approach to address the prescription drug abuse epidemic. This report identifies a similar issue facing programs serving veterans and their families throughout the State.

Strategic planning is a process the State can use to determine what it wants to accomplish over a given time period, and how it plans to achieve those aims. This process includes setting clear goals and measurable objectives, assessing capacity, and developing strategies and action items that are assigned to a responsible party. Strategic plans

- serve as communication documents that inform agency staff, stakeholder groups, and decision makers;

⁵⁰ Assembly Bill No. 58, 77th Legislative Session (2013), State of Nevada.

⁵¹ Legislation passed in 2014 added the adjutant general of the Rhode Island National Guard as the 13th member of the committee.

- advise management on how to link strategy with day-to-day operations; and
- are used for resource allocation, including budgetary decisions.

A strategic planning process would allow the State to develop an overarching strategy for investment in veterans' concerns and specify how each state agency, institution, or stakeholder involved would align their operational objectives with those goals.

Because it was established by executive order, the Working Group may have difficulty in compelling agencies to participate and provide necessary information for a strategic plan. By their nature, executive orders are subject to the tenure and will of the governor. Three states established interagency councils for veterans affairs in statute—Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Texas. In 2013, Nevada passed legislation to reestablish its Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs in statute after the council had been created by executive order. Establishing an interagency council on veterans affairs in statute would

- compel state agencies, universities, and community colleges to participate in the activities of the council;
- require agencies to track data on veterans, including the numbers served and outcomes;
- enable the Legislature to make changes to the composition, duties, and resources of the group over time; and
- formalize North Carolina's commitment to improving the lives of veterans and their families.

The General Assembly does not have a legislative committee that oversees programs and efforts that aim to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families. As discussed in Finding 1, five different legislative committees oversee the state entities that operate veterans' programs in the inventory. In addition, the Department of Transportation, which issues veteran-designated driver licenses and identification cards, reports to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee. Each agency, therefore, must prioritize the programs, initiatives, or other efforts benefitting veterans relative to all of its other responsibilities and duties. Similarly, each legislative oversight committee makes decisions in a vacuum regarding the staffing and expenditures for programs and initiatives for veterans operated by the agencies it oversees. The lack of legislative oversight of the Working Group's activities means that efforts initiated by the group may not be aligned with budget priorities established by the General Assembly.

Although the Legislature created two committees to address the needs of veterans during the 2013–2014 legislative session, the scope of these committees did not address all of the needs affecting veterans and their families.⁵²

- **Legislative Research Committee on Civilian Credit for Military Training and State Adjutant General Selection Criteria.** This committee met four times to study the feasibility, costs, and benefits of awarding credit towards professional licensure in the State to

⁵² The Senate did not create a corresponding standing committee.

military personnel. This committee introduced Senate Bill 761 to address occupational licensing of military service members and develop a plan to allow college credit for military training (see Finding 3). This bill was enacted into law.⁵³

- **House Standing Committee on Homeland Security, Military, and Veterans Affairs.** This committee met four times and heard a presentation from the Assistant Secretary of NCDVA on military benefits from a state and federal perspective at its February 14, 2014 meeting. The committee discussed a bill to allow a deduction for a VA survivors' pension benefit when defining income for Medicaid eligibility. This bill was referred to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services but was not enacted.

Without a distinct legislative committee for veterans, any legislative decision to benefit veterans may not address their needs in a holistic and coordinated manner.

In summary, federal and state initiatives are changing the landscape of programs and efforts to assist North Carolina veterans. The Governor's Working Group for Veterans, Service Members and their Families seeks to break silos and build bridges through coordination and teamwork among state and non-state entities focused on serving the needs of veterans. However, the executive order that established the Working Group did not charge it with creating a statewide strategic plan and did not give the group the authority to hold agencies accountable for their veteran-related activities. Other states with interagency groups that coordinate veterans services have engaged in many of the steps important in statewide strategic planning efforts. The lack of a strategic plan may make it difficult to monitor the results of activities and hold state entities and other stakeholders accountable for their contributions to addressing the needs of veterans in North Carolina. Establishing a statutory interagency council on veterans affairs in statute and a legislative oversight committee may be necessary to formalize North Carolina's commitment to veterans and their families.

⁵³ N.C. Sess. Law 2014-67.

Recommendations

This report is the only known published summary of state programs and efforts for veterans and their families. This report is included in a larger project on substance abuse and treatment because veterans returning from combat operations have high rates of substance abuse. The first report in this series, *North Carolina Needs to Strengthen Its System for Monitoring and Preventing the Abuse of Prescribed Controlled Substances*, recommended that the General Assembly direct the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a strategic plan and performance management system to monitor prescription drug abuse. This report makes a similar recommendation to create a single body responsible for developing a coordinated strategy to guide the changing landscape of veterans programs in the State.

Recommendation 1. The General Assembly should establish the Task Force for Veterans, Service Members and their Families in statute, direct the Task Force to develop and implement a statewide strategic plan to track and improve services for veterans and their families, and direct state entities to track and report information on veterans.

Although the Governor created the Working Group for Veterans, Service Members and their Families through executive order, re-establishing this group in statute will give its efforts a stronger force of law. Membership on the statutorily defined Task Force for Veterans, Service Members and their Families (hereafter “the Task Force”) should include the 10 state entities with programs identified in the inventory, eight of which currently participate in the Governor’s Working Group:

- Department of Administration,
- Department of Commerce,
- Department of Health and Human Services,
- NC Housing Finance Agency,
- NC Community College System,
- Department of Public Instruction,
- Department of Public Safety (including the NC National Guard),
- Department of State Treasurer,
- University of North Carolina system, and
- Wildlife Resources Commission.

In addition, agencies offering education initiatives, benefits, discounts, and reduced recreational fees that may serve veterans should be required to participate in the Task Force. These agencies include

- Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services,
- Department of Cultural Resources,
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources,
- Office of State Human Resources, and
- Department of Transportation.

Lastly, the Task Force should include representation from local government entities, veteran services organizations (e.g., the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars), and other private and not-for-profit organizations that assist and advocate on behalf of North Carolina’s veterans.

The leadership team of the Task Force should include the Adjutant General of the NC National Guard, the secretaries of the departments of Administration, Commerce, and Health and Human Services or their designees, and a representative from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Legislature also may want to include the Governor's Military Advisor of the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission, who is the current chair of the Governor's Working Group.

The Program Evaluation Division recommends that the Task Force continue to include a focus on active-duty military personnel, as many veteran-focused efforts affect active-duty service members, Reservists, retirees, National Guardsmen, and the dependents of these military-affiliated individuals.

The General Assembly should direct the Task Force to appoint a subcommittee to develop and implement a five-year statewide strategic plan for military-affiliated individuals. Membership of the subcommittee should include the state entities that operate programs in the inventory and support other efforts targeted to veterans and their families. This subcommittee should engage in a strategic planning process that

- identifies critical stakeholders;
- defines North Carolina's mission and vision for veterans, service members, and their families;
- scans the internal and external environment for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC analysis), including a review of veterans programs in other states;
- compares threats and opportunities to the State's ability to meet challenges and seize opportunities (GAP analysis);
- identifies the strategic issues based on SWOC and GAP analyses and formulates strategies for addressing these issues; and
- recommends ways to implement these strategies.

The statewide strategic plan should define measureable outcomes and goals for veterans, service members, and their families. In addition, the plan should specify how the Task Force, in collaboration with state agencies, universities, and community colleges, intends to

- coordinate the activities of existing programs and other efforts affecting veterans;
- maximize the amount of federal dollars to support these efforts;
- attract more veterans to the State;
- track the number of veterans served and the services, benefits, and discounts provided to them;
- track funding from all sources and expenditures on veteran-related activities;
- ensure veterans receive the services, benefits, and discounts due to them;
- establish statewide goals, objectives, and outcomes for these efforts;
- monitor progress toward achieving the established goals, objectives, and outcomes;
- establish timeframes to achieve these goals;

- recommend remedial actions to take when performance falls short; and
- propose legislation that would benefit veterans, service members, and their families.

With a strategic plan in place, North Carolina can better measure, monitor, and report on statewide efforts to serve veterans.

To ensure the success of this process, the General Assembly should require state agencies, universities, and community colleges to provide the data necessary for the Task Force to develop and implement the strategic plan. As discussed in Finding 1, North Carolina does not know the total amount of expenditures for veterans and their families because some agencies that target veterans do not track data in this way. To remedy this issue, state entities should be required to

- track the number of veterans served and the services, benefits, and discounts provided to them;
- track funding from all sources and expenditures on veteran-related activities;
- track outcomes for veterans established by the Task Force; and
- report annually to the Task Force.

The General Assembly should require the Task Force to complete its five-year statewide strategic plan for veterans, service members, and their families no later than January 15, 2016. The Task Force should present the strategic plan to the Joint Legislative Veterans and Military Service Members Oversight Committee (established in Recommendation 2) and report quarterly on the implementation of the plan to this committee beginning April 15, 2016.

Recommendation 2. The General Assembly should establish the Joint Legislative Veterans and Military Service Members Oversight Committee to monitor the implementation of the statewide strategic plan for veterans, service members, and their families.

As discussed in Finding 4, there is no single legislative committee that oversees programs and efforts to serve veterans in the State. Instead, entities operating programs, initiatives, and other efforts benefitting veterans report to six separate appropriations committees (education, general government, health and human services, justice and public safety, natural and economic resources, and transportation). This lack of centralized oversight will make it difficult for the General Assembly to monitor and oversee the State's strategic plan for veterans, service members and their families outlined in Recommendation 1. To ensure consistent legislative oversight for the implementation of this strategic plan, the Program Evaluation Division recommends the General Assembly establish the Joint Legislative Veterans and Military Service Members Oversight Committee.

The Joint Legislative Veterans and Military Service Members Oversight Committee should have representation from each appropriations committee that oversees programs, initiatives, and benefits for veterans. The Program

Evaluation Division recommends that the committee consist of 16 members as follows:

- Eight members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate including a chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education, a chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on General Government and Information Technology, a chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, a chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Natural and Economic Resources, a chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety, a chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Department of Transportation, and at least two members of the minority party.
- Eight members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives including a chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, a chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, a chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, a chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice and Public Safety, a chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Natural and Economic Resources, a chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, and at least two members of the minority party.

The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives should each appoint a co-chair for the committee.

The purpose of the Joint Legislative Veterans and Military Service Members Oversight Committee is to monitor and oversee the programs, initiatives and efforts for veterans and their families statewide, improve accountability, and improve awareness of state services for veterans. To fulfill this purpose, the committee should have the following duties:

- review reports prepared by the Task Force;
- monitor and review the implementation of the statewide strategic plan for veterans, service members, and their families; and
- study any other matter related to veterans, service members, and their families that the Committee considers necessary.

The Committee should report annually to the General Assembly beginning in 2017. These reports may contain any proposed legislation needed to implement a recommendation of the Committee. The Committee should be dissolved after it issues its final report to the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

Appendices

Appendix A: Description of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits

Appendix B: Summary of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits for National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans

Appendix C: Veterans Hired and Total Veterans Employed by State Agencies and the University of North Carolina, Fiscal Year 2012–13

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Staff members who made key contributions to this report include Kiernan McGorty and Sara Nienow. John W. Turcotte is the director of the Program Evaluation Division.

Appendix A: Description of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits

The federal government has developed an extensive network of benefits for veterans to help them transition back into civilian life and to reward them for their military service. Each benefit has its own eligibility criteria and may only be applicable to certain types of veterans, such as veterans who served in wartime or veterans who were disabled as a result of their service. Eligibility for most U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. The summary of VA benefits that follows is not comprehensive and not all veterans will qualify for each benefit. In addition, the VA provides programs for veterans with special needs such as homeless veterans, incarcerated veterans, and wounded veterans who are transitioning into civilian life.

Health care. The VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care system with more than 1,500 sites of care, including hospitals, community clinics, community living centers, readjustment counseling centers, and various other facilities. In addition to serving veterans, dependents and survivors eligible for the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMP VA) can receive reimbursement for most medical expenses such as inpatient care, outpatient services, mental health services, prescription medication, skilled nursing care, and durable medical equipment. The VA has four federal medical centers and 14 community-based outpatient clinics in North Carolina.

Education. Educational benefits are based on when a veteran served in the military and the length of active duty service. In general, veterans are entitled to receive the following:

- cost of in-state tuition and fees at public institutions;
- monthly housing allowance;
- yearly books and supplies stipend of up to \$1,000 per year; and
- a one-time payment of \$500 paid to certain individuals relocating from highly rural areas.

Veterans may use the benefits to pursue graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, on-the-job training, flight training, correspondence training, licensing and national testing programs, and tutorial assistance.

Employment assistance. Federal employment benefits consist of job banks, on-the-job training programs, and wage supplements for veterans who are completing training.

Vocational rehabilitation. People who are disabled during the course of their military service are eligible for additional vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits. An employment handicap exists if a veteran's service-connected disability impairs his/her ability to prepare for, obtain, and maintain suitable career employment. The VA pays the cost of the approved training and services included in an individual's rehabilitation plan, including a subsistence allowance. In North Carolina, federal vocational rehabilitation and employment services are available at Fort Bragg in Fayetteville and New River Marine Corps Air Station in Jacksonville.

Military pension. Low-income, wartime veterans may qualify for a pension if they meet certain service, income, and net worth limits set by law: they must be age 65 or older or permanently and totally disabled or a patient in a nursing home receiving skilled nursing care, or receiving either Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income. These payments bring the veteran's total income, including other retirement or Social Security income, to a level set by Congress.⁵⁴

Disability payment. Disability compensation provides monetary compensation to veterans who are disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service. Monthly disability compensation varies with the degree of disability and the number of eligible dependents. These benefits are exempt from federal or state income tax.

Survivor benefit. The VA provides pension benefits to qualifying surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased veterans with wartime service. To be eligible, spouses must not have remarried and children must be

⁵⁴ For a single veteran without dependents, the income level set for Fiscal Year 2013–14 is \$12,652 and increases if a spouse and additional dependents are present.

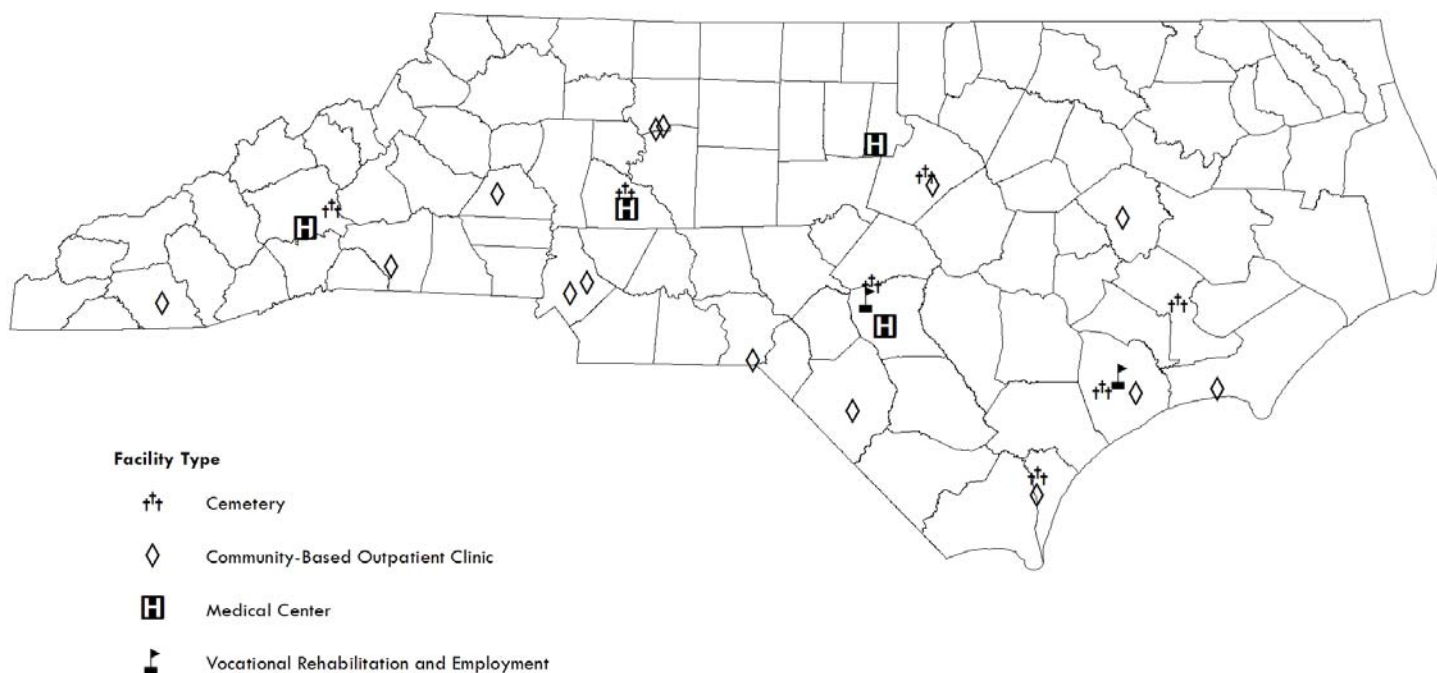
under age 18, under age 23 if attending a VA-approved school, or have become permanently incapable of self-support because of disability before age 18. The survivors' pension provides a monthly payment to bring an eligible person's income to a level established by law.⁵⁵ Spouses and dependents of veterans who died due to service-related injuries, are permanently disabled, or spent at least 90 days missing in action or held as a prisoner of war also are eligible for education benefits. Survivors and dependents receive monthly payments for up to 45 months for training.

Burial. Eligible veterans, spouses, and dependents can be buried in a VA national cemetery at no cost. This benefit includes the gravesite, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave, a headstone or marker, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine. For veterans, benefits also may include a burial flag (with case for active duty) and military funeral honors. North Carolina has four national cemeteries and three state cemeteries with a fourth under construction.

Life insurance. Service members can apply for Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) within one year and 120 days from separation. VGLI insureds who are under age 60 and have less than \$400,000 in coverage can purchase up to \$25,000 of additional coverage on each five-year anniversary of their coverage, up to a maximum of \$400,000. No medical underwriting is required for the additional coverage.

Home loan guarantees. Eligible veterans can receive a VA home loan guaranty to help obtain homes, condominiums, and manufactured homes and to refinance loans. A VA guaranty helps protect lenders from loss if the borrower fails to repay the loan. In addition to the periods of eligibility and conditions of service requirements, applicants must have a good credit rating, sufficient income, a valid Certificate of Eligibility and agree to live in the property to be approved by a lender for a VA home loan.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities in North Carolina



Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

⁵⁵ An unmarried surviving spouse may have a maximum yearly income of \$8,485 in Fiscal Year 2013–14 to qualify for benefits. This income amount increases for additional dependents.

Appendix B: Summary of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits for National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans

Members of the National Guard or Reserve may qualify for a wide range of benefits offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Generally, all National Guard and Reserve members discharged or released under conditions that are not dishonorable are eligible for some VA benefits. Their length of service, service commitment, and/or duty status may determine eligibility for specific benefits.

Active Service. Eligibility requirements for several VA benefits include a certain length of active service. Active service in the National Guard or Reserve includes

- Active duty – full-time duty in the Armed Forces, such as unit deployment during war, including travel to and from such duty, except active duty for training; or
- Full-time National Guard duty – duty performed for which the member is entitled to receive pay from the federal government, such as responding to a national emergency or performing duties as an Active Guard Reserve member.

A state or territory's governor may activate National Guard members for State Active Duty, such as in response to a natural or man-made disaster. State Active Duty is based on state law and does not qualify as "active service" for VA benefits.

Eligibility for VA Pension Benefits

Disability Requirements	Active Service Requirements On/Before September 7, 1980 (Enlisted) or October 16, 1981 (Officer)	Active Service Requirements After September 7, 1980 (Enlisted) or October 16, 1981 (Officer)
Meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age 65 or older; • permanently and totally disabled (not due to own personal misconduct); • a patient in a nursing home receiving skilled nursing care; • receives Social Security Disability Insurance; or • receives Supplemental Security Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for at least 90 days with at least one day during a wartime period; • for at least 90 consecutive days or more if the period began or ended during a wartime period; • for an aggregate of 90 days or more during more than one wartime period; or • discharged or released because of a service-connected disability during a wartime period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for at least 24 continuous months, or the full period called or ordered, with at least one day during a wartime period; • discharged or released because of a service-connected disability during a wartime period; or • previously completed 24 continuous months of active service prior to the date above, or received an early discharge under Section 1171 of Title 10.

Eligibility for Other VA Benefits

Program	Service Requirements
Post-9/11 GI Bill	Meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability after serving at least 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001; or • at least 90 aggregate days of active service consisting of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ active duty supporting named contingency operations; ○ full-time National Guard duty for the purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training; or ○ full-time National Guard duty when authorized by the President or the Secretary of Defense for the purpose of responding to a national emergency declared by the President of the United States and supported by federal funds
Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve	Meets all of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a 6-year obligation to serve in the Selected Reserve; • completed Initial Active Duty for Training; • served in a drilling unit and remains in good standing; and • has a high school diploma or equivalency

Reserve Educational Assistance Program	Meets both requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • member of a Reserve component; and • served on active duty for at least 90 consecutive days after September 10, 2001
Home Loan Guaranty	Meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • served for 90 days or more on active duty during a wartime period; • discharged or released from active duty for a service-connected disability; or • has six years of service in the Selected Reserve or National Guard, including either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an honorable discharge; • placement on the retired list; • transfer to the Standby Reserve or an element of the Ready Reserve other than the Selected Reserve after honorable service; or • continuing to serve in the Selected Reserve
Health Care	Meets both requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • served on active duty by a Federal order; and • completed the full period for which called or ordered <p>Members with active duty in theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, are eligible for free VA health care benefits for up to five years from the date of discharge or release</p>
Burial and Memorial Services	Meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • served on active duty; or • died as a result of an injury or disease that developed or was aggravated during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty for training
Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance	Automatic coverage under these conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • member of the Ready Reserve or National Guard who is scheduled to perform at least 12 periods of inactive training per year; or • volunteer for a mobilization category in the Individual Ready Reserve
Veteran's Group Life Insurance	Meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separating, retiring, or being released from assignment from the Ready Reserve, or a National Guard member who was covered by the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI); • is a member of the National Guard or Reserve covered by part-time SGLI who incurred or aggravated a disability while performing inactive duty or traveling to/from duty; or • is a member of the Individual Ready Reserve or Inactive National Guard
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment	Meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a service-connected disability rated at 20% or more; • is hospitalized or receiving outpatient medical care, services, or treatment for a service-connected disability pending discharge from active duty; • is severely ill or injured and has been referred to a military Physical Evaluation Board; • is participating in the DoD/VA Integrated Disability Evaluation System process; or • has a service-connected disability rated 10% or more and requires rehabilitation because of a serious employment handicap as determined by a vocational rehabilitation counselor

Notes: Most reservists are part of the Selected Reserve and must complete 48 unit training assemblies, or drills, plus two weeks of annual training each year and are usually the first reservists to be called to active duty. Reserve components consist of the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve. The Standby Reserve consists of members who maintain their military affiliation but are not members of the Ready Reserve. Normally, these reservists are key federal or state employees, but also can be civilians in the defense industry whose employers designate them as crucial to national security. The Ready Reserve is the category of reservists most often called to active duty. The Ready Reserve consists of three subcategories: Selected Reserve, Individual Ready Reserve and Inactive National Guard. The Individual Ready Reserve is made up mainly of those who have had training and served in an active component but do not currently belong to a unit; these members may be involuntarily recalled in a national emergency. Inactive National Guard is only for members serving in the Army; service members who leave active drilling status in the Guard before completing their enlistment will be put in this category unless they specifically request a transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve. DoD stands for the U.S. Department of Defense. VA stands for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Appendix C: Veterans Hired and Total Veterans Employed by State Agencies and the University of North Carolina

State Entity	Veteran Hires	New Hires	Veterans as a Percent of New Hires	Total Veteran Employees	Total State Employees	Veterans as a Percent of State Employees
State Agencies (Fiscal Year 2013–14)						
Administration	1	35	3%	6	588	1%
Administrative Hearings	0	2	0%	0	42	0%
Agriculture and Consumer Services	4	99	4%	23	1,926	1%
Commerce	12	57	21%	81	1,950	4%
Cultural Resources	2	39	5%	15	678	2%
Environment and Natural Resources	6	78	8%	33	2,626	1%
Health and Human Services	14	1,069	1%	91	16,069	1%
Information Technology Services	2	37	5%	9	481	2%
Insurance	1	18	6%	6	423	1%
Justice	0	68	0%	17	1,247	1%
Labor	3	23	13%	14	367	4%
Public Instruction	0	66	0%	5	883	1%
Public Safety	61	1,763	3%	950	23,391	4%
Revenue	2	72	3%	12	1,297	1%
Secretary of State	0	6	0%	2	190	1%
State Auditor	0	11	0%	0	143	0%
State Board of Community Colleges	0	10	0%	2	163	1%
State Budget and Management	1	7	14%	1	54	2%
State Controller	0	6	0%	1	183	1%
State Human Resources	0	4	0%	1	73	1%
State Treasurer	0	23	0%	2	318	1%
Transportation	25	394	6%	235	11,717	2%
Wildlife Resources Commission	0	16	0%	4	673	1%
State Boards (Fiscal Year 2013–14)						
Cosmetic Art Examiners	0	0		0	25	0%
Elections	0	4	0%	1	49	2%
Ethics	0	0		0	10	0%
Opticians	0	0		0	1	0%
University of North Carolina (Fiscal Year 2012–13)						
Appalachian State University	3	477	1%	49	3,264	2%
East Carolina University	25	681	4%	671	5,559	12%
Elizabeth City State University	0	28	0%	23	598	4%
Fayetteville State University	15	181	8%	66	867	8%
NC A&T State University	3	142	2%	174	1,646	11%
NC Central University	6	159	4%	77	1,330	6%
NC School of Science & Math	0	10	0%	12	211	6%
NC State University	25	342	7%	342	7,855	4%

State Entity	Veteran Hires	New Hires	Veterans as a Percent of New Hires	Total Veteran Employees	Total State Employees	Veterans as a Percent of State Employees
UNC Asheville	4	149	3%	34	756	4%
UNC Chapel Hill	6	1,529	0%	126	11,875	1%
UNC Charlotte	15	512	3%	171	3,189	5%
UNC General Administration	2	75	3%	20	414	5%
UNC Greensboro	1	371	0%	90	2,636	3%
UNC Pembroke	4	77	5%	57	859	7%
UNC School of the Arts	0	78	0%	13	457	3%
UNC Wilmington	12	207	6%	93	1,880	5%
Western Carolina University	5	194	3%	66	1,479	4%
Winston-Salem State University	4	510	1%	11	1,445	1%
Statewide Total	264	9,629	3%	3,606	111,887	3%

Note: Fiscal Year 2012–13 is the most recent data available from the University of North Carolina.

Source: Program Evaluation Division based on data from the Office of State Human Resources and the University of North Carolina.



North Carolina Department of Administration

Pat McCrory, Governor
Bill Daughtridge, Jr., Secretary

Ilario G. Pantano
Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

September 11, 2014

John W. Turcotte, Director
Program Evaluation Division
300 North Salisbury Street, Suite 100
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27603-5925

Dear Mr. Turcotte,

The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA), is working with federal, state and local entities to make North Carolina “the state of choice” for veterans and their families. NCDVA applauds the effort that went into the creation of this Program Evaluation Division inventory (2014-10) and we look forward to actively participating in any future veterans initiatives. For veterans advocates, any focus on this issue is a net positive for our community which, despite the rhetoric, has been woefully overlooked for decades.

While we may have some differing perspectives on how best to achieve the improved outcomes that this report seeks to facilitate, the sad fact of the State’s historical inattention and lack of focus on veterans and their issues is best summed up by the opening paragraph of your report: **“This report is the only known published summary of state programs and efforts for veterans and their families.”**

This opening line speaks to a systematic failure of previous administrations and legislatures to adequately address a broken system that Governor McCrory and his team inherited in 2013 and have been working hard to address as summarized in the following pages.

It is staggering that thirteen years after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 thrust our state’s military and veteran community into multiple wars that only now has the legislature sought visibility on the who, what and how, our state serves its heroes. The myriad programs housed in multiple agencies, often unknown to each other much less the legislators that “fund them,” is a labyrinth that has never been adequately coordinated in our state’s history. A legislator commented to me several weeks ago, that he was unaware, for example, of NCDVA’s existence, or frankly the need for it since “veterans programs are the responsibility of the federal government.”

Legislators are not the only ones puzzled by this maddening maze of services and providers. The agencies and staff that support these veterans programs have historically been unaware of each other's efforts which has led to costly duplication at best, and massive gaps that potentially contributed to the negative spirals of joblessness, homelessness and even veteran suicide. Most importantly, our clients, the veterans themselves, have gone largely unaware of the programs and benefits available to them, their families, and their survivors.

Such a failure to coordinate our State, Federal, and non-profit veterans efforts is beyond shocking. The silver lining in this dark cloud is that Governor McCrory and his team recognized this shortfall from day one and they have been rushing to address the gaps. Planning for the newly formed "Governor's Working Group on Veterans Service Members and their Families" (EO 49) began in 2013, and is just one in a series of aggressive executions of a four-pronged strategy outlined below.

Knowing how to move forward requires knowing where you are. The inventory provided by your researchers is a great step in the right direction, but its narrow focus resulted in only a partial glimpse of the veteran landscape of North Carolina. For example, the roles of county government operations and of non-profits such as the DAV, American Legion and VFW have overlooked in relation to the state's ability to generate billions of dollars a year in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) funded benefit payments.

Additionally, the urgency in improving our quality of services and attractiveness to veterans as a retention tool is massively understated. Specifically, \$2.2 Billion dollars of economic impact generated from the military pensions of our 90,000 retired service members was omitted. Sadly, this is a common oversight in North Carolina reporting efforts on veterans' economic impact which totals more than \$7 Billion in federal outlays alone. The \$2.2 Billion in federal funds that did not make it into this inventory is paid by the Department of Defense instead of the USDVA, and therefore it is frequently missed. How a \$2.2 billion dollar omission continues to persist speaks volumes to the lack of focused attention on veterans, their needs or the resources that support them.

The tale of the tape is that while North Carolina has the 3rd largest active military presence, historically, it has not translated that military activity into veterans choosing to remain in the state. In fact, for a state ranked 10th in overall population, North Carolina is only 9th in veteran population. These simple metrics and true economic impact had never been accurately reported until NCDVA published the North Carolina Veterans Annual Report 2013*, the first such effort in state history. **(<http://www.doa.nc.gov/vets/documents/2013NCDVAVeteransAnnualReport.pdf>)*

Having identified early on the gaps and challenges which your team has just chronicled in this 2014 report, last year Governor McCrory charged Secretary of Administration Bill Daughtridge and various state agencies with working together to find efficiencies, track outcomes and improve results for veterans. A brief history of this effort is given below but some of the tactical successes are noteworthy. From the Department of Transportation (DOT) to the Department of Commerce (DoC) to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Public Safety (DPS), there is a newfound coordination that is only continuing to improve.

NCDVA has spear-headed the effort that bridges private sector support, non-profit participation and a deeper level of collaboration with the USDVA. For Example, NCDVA has entered in to a long term facilities sharing arrangement with the USDVA medical centers (“VA hospitals” and clinics), so that state employees may be on hand to provide “one-stop-shop” assistance to veterans seeking treatment. This new state and federal partnership has already resulted in four office lease agreements for co-location, at no cost to the state, and many more planned in the coming years. These co-located offices mean veterans get more and better service faster. Co-location also means state dollars formerly tied up in facilities can now go to outreach and messaging so that veterans can better navigate all of the services that are offered, resulting in higher uptake and better outcomes. While these wins are tactical victories, the larger strategic framework is encompassed in a four part plan that includes:

- Intra-Agency Reform
- Inter-Agency Reform
- Communications Plan
- Legislative Agenda

OVERVIEW

NCDVA is accomplishing the mission of making North Carolina “the state of choice” for veterans by implementing a four-pronged initiative designed to make North Carolina more veteran-friendly. The initiative leverages existing capabilities across federal, state and local agencies and amplifies the effectiveness of services already offered to veterans by making them more easily accessible (**Convenient**), more efficient (**Fast**) and by increasing the awareness of their offering (**Visible**). Additionally, the initiative closes the gaps in veterans’ services by reducing the bureaucratic or cultural barriers that have limited the effectiveness of participating service providers in the past.

Planning the initiative to make North Carolina more veteran-friendly began in the Fall of 2013. Execution of the initiative began in Spring 2014 with North Carolina’s inaugural “Women Veterans Summit and Expo” that drew over 550 women veterans. Governor Pat McCrory used the occasion of the state’s first major women veterans event to sign Executive Order 49 launching the “Governor’s Working Group on Veterans Service Members and their Families.” The Governor also announced his support for instate tuition for returning veterans, which he signed into law this year for the first time, despite decades of previous failed attempts. After achieving initial milestones, including the planned deployment of new services and marketing materials in the Fall of 2014, implementation and refinement will continue through 2016 and beyond.

The initiative has four component parts that are all being executed simultaneously as part of the most comprehensive reorganization of the State’s Division of Veterans Affairs in 60 years:

- 1) **INTRA-AGENCY REFORM:** A) Double the number of service locations from 12 to 20 and go where the veterans are such as USDVA medical centers in order to create a “one-stop-shop” environment. B) Focus on better supporting the 100

counties by: expanding the training team, increasing capacity at the State Service Office (Winston-Salem) and launching a 24/7 call center to answer questions and direct veterans to services C) Create a digital “paperless” platform to speed up the provision of services, track outcomes and improve accountability.

- 2) **INTER-AGENCY REFORM:** A) Launch and support the interagency team, “The Governor’s Working Group on Veterans Service Members and their Families,” (Executive Order 49) that ties ALL state, federal and community agencies together and create a free flow of information and improved collaboration among veteran stakeholders. B) Work closely with partner agencies: 1. DHHS in collaboration on 24/7 call center, 2. DoC on “NCWorks4VETS”, 3. DPS/NCNG on relocation to JFHQ, 4. USDVA on digital benefits platform and better health outcomes, 5. DoD on Digital soldier separation data for connection to troops exiting Ft. Bragg, Camp Lejeune, etc.

- 3) **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:** A) Simplify the confusing universe of services for veterans by offering a simple and reliable information platform across all media: 24/7 call center and digital hub with website and active social media, print catalog and branded service locations (NC4Vets.com & (844) NC4-Vets). B) Use high profile recurring semi-annual events to draw media attention and connect veterans to resources and community such as the “2014 North Carolina Women Veterans Summit and Expo” (Raleigh) and “VETfest2014” (Charlotte).

- 4) **LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:** Focusing on workforce enrichment, NCDVA supports in-state tuition for returning veterans and easier credit for military experience. Future initiatives in support of NCDVA outreach efforts are in development and will be proposed. It is worth noting that an initial outreach and automation “paperless veteran” effort is being piloted in the Fall of 2014. Such an effort is the precursor to the tracking of outcomes called for in this inventory and will likely require legislative/budgetary support.

NCDVA looks forward to more fully briefing any and all interested stake holders on our efforts and such briefings can be arranged by contacting me directly at Ilario.pantano@doa.nc.gov. A robust dialog is welcome in the effort to better serve our vets.

I remain Semper Fidelis,



Ilario G. Pantano, Director
North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

Pat McCrory
Governor

Aldona Z. Wos, M.D.
Ambassador (Ret.)
Secretary DHHS
Courtney M. Cantrell, PhD
Division Director

September 8, 2014

NCGA Program Evaluation Division
300 N. Salisbury Street, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is grateful for the leadership provided by the General Assembly and the Program Evaluation Division. DHHS recognizes the comprehensive effort to catalogue the services being provided through state government and for undertaking the study of efforts to support service members, veterans and their families. The Executive Branch has been working in a variety of ways to address the increasing number of veterans returning to communities across the state.

DHHS appreciates the recognition of the NC FOCUS work group as an early effort to ensure the coordination and collaboration of health services for veterans and their families. In addition, DHHS appreciated that the report included a mention of the commitment for veterans made in the Crisis Solutions Initiative to provide crisis support for veterans. In addition, DHHS provides many services to service members, veterans and their families that were not identified in the inventory as they did not meet the criteria established of an exclusive focus on military members.

The Governor's Executive Order establishing the Work Group continues to promote integration of targeted services and supports for veterans, service members and their families. The group is bringing new departments to the conversation ensuring a more comprehensive approach to the issue.

www.ncdhhs.gov • www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/
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DHHS looks forward to continued work with the leadership of Governor McCrory and the legislature to honor those who have and are serving to protect our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Courtney Cantrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Courtney" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Cantrell".

Courtney M. Cantrell, Ph.D

Cc: Secretary Aldona Wos, M.D.
Matt McKillip



**North Carolina
Department of Commerce**

Pat McCrory, Governor

Sharon Allred Decker, Secretary

September 8, 2014

Mr. John Turcotte, Director
Program Evaluation Division
300 North Salisbury Street, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

Dear Mr. Turcotte:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Program Evaluation Division's report, titled *North Carolina Needs a Coordinated Strategy to Guide the Changing Landscape of Veterans Programs*, on the programs and services available to veterans and their families in North Carolina. This inventory provides valuable information on our state's services to veterans, and I am grateful for the insight and hard work of you and your team.

I am proud of how the N.C. Department of Commerce is helping veterans and their families and am committed to improving those services whenever possible. In 2013-14, the department served more than 52,000 veterans through NCWorks Apprenticeship and our NCWorks Career Centers. Through their distinguished service to our nation, these men and women developed the skills, experience, and work ethic that help businesses thrive. Veterans are an integral part of our workforce, and we are committed to helping them successfully transition to civilian life and connecting them with meaningful, well-paying jobs.

The department has been actively engaged with the Division of Veterans Affairs and the Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members and their Families. We will continue to work together to coordinate our programs, making it easier for veterans to access our services and find meaningful employment in North Carolina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sharon".

Sharon Allred Decker
Secretary of Commerce

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