



## **Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2018**

### **MISSION: TO SERVE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

We are dedicated to ensuring that Iowa's veterans and their dependents receive the full measure of county, state, and federal benefits to which they are rightfully entitled.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

This report contains information about the services provided to veterans and their families by our Department in state Fiscal Year 2017.

The mission of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs is to serve our veterans and their families. Our office is responsible for disseminating information to veterans regarding benefits and services available to them, maintaining military service records of Iowa veterans, and assisting veterans with benefit applications. We also administer several programs that provide direct assistance to veterans and their families.

We recognize our veterans' sacrifices and commitments as well as the honor that they have brought upon themselves, their families, communities, and the State of Iowa. Our Department works with the 99 county veterans' affairs offices and other agencies to assist and ensure that our veterans receive the federal, state, and local benefits they have earned.

The Department operates and maintains the Iowa Veterans Cemetery. The Cemetery is Iowa's only state-owned and operated cemetery. Honorably discharged veterans of any service in the armed forces, qualified spouses, and eligible dependents may be interred at the cemetery. They need not be Iowa residents. We are very proud of the services that we provide at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery.

Ours is a very small agency. However, our highly qualified and motivated staff strive to provide the very best service to our veteran community. Veterans have served their nation and state, and we are proud and honored to stand ready to serve them.

Sincerely,

Steven F. Lukan

Executive Director, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

**DEPARTMENT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Department accomplishes the mission by providing all of the following services with a staff of 13:

1. Operate and maintain the Iowa Veterans Cemetery; to include all the eligibility determination, committal services, interment operations, perpetual care of the 100-acre grounds, and activities associated with veteran-related events. (6 staff members)
2. Administer the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund and associated applications.
3. Administer the Injured Veteran Grant Program and associated applications.
4. Administer the County Allocation Program.
5. Determine eligibility for the Military Homeownership Program.
6. Maintain military graves registration.
7. Archive all discharge records received.
8. Process applications for all veteran-related license plates.
9. Administer all veteran-related bonus programs; permanently maintain records of bonus applications and awards paid.
10. Administer the nursing home resident eligibility website and associated county interaction.
11. Conduct training for county veteran service officers and county commissioners, ensure accreditation compliance, and offer guidance to county commissions.
12. Provide staff support to the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs; brief the Commission quarterly.
13. Assist veterans with the filing of federal claims; make referrals when necessary.
14. Provide required reports and requested information to the Iowa General Assembly and the Congressional delegation.
15. Assist veterans and authorized agencies with inquiries regarding military service records.
16. Maintain and disseminate information to veterans and the public regarding benefits and programs available to veterans.
17. Participate in events sponsored by the federal or county VA partners, as well as other state agencies sponsoring events to benefit veterans.
18. Coordinate the planning of annual veteran-related events.
19. Effective fiscal management of available agency funding to provide the greatest impact.
20. Strict adherence to environmental stewardship programs.

**DEPARTMENT PARTNERSHIPS:**

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs is unique in the vast array of our key customers which requires strong partnerships across many levels of government and the private sector. Our prime customer is the veteran and family, and we serve them by communicating, networking, informing, training, and partnering with other agencies to provide the full range of benefits available and answer questions about services. Our Department works closely on a daily basis with:

Military service members and veterans – active and retired – and their families

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
The National Cemetery Administration  
Iowa's Congressional Delegation  
Members of the Iowa General Assembly and staff  
Governor's Office  
Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs  
Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veteran Service Officers  
Iowa Department of Public Defense  
Iowa Workforce Development  
National Guard Records Center  
Gold Star Military Museum  
99 County Veterans Affairs Offices  
Funeral Directors  
Veterans Service Organizations  
Business Entities  
Non-profit organizations  
Media

**DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS:**

Our staff members continually assess their areas of responsibility. Using the opportunity to serve, we identify priority issues and update our strategic objectives. We strive to improve our operations and use resources to the best advantage possible toward our mission of supporting our veterans and their families.

**DEPARTMENT APPROPRIATIONS:**

FY 16 \$1,200,546  
FY 17 \$1,150,503  
FY 18 \$1,142,557

**DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs accomplishes its mission with a staff of dedicated professionals; six at the Camp Dodge office, six at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, one at the VA Regional Office in downtown Des Moines, and one supervisor as the Executive Director.
- The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and the 99 county veteran service officers are involved in our communities, are committed to assisting and supporting our veterans, and are helping make Iowa a better place to live, work, be educated, and raise a family.
- The Department is committed to the Home Base Iowa program to attract veterans and military members leaving active duty to relocate to Iowa to live and work. The Executive Director has served on the steering committee.
- The Iowa Veterans Cemetery provides a well-operated and maintained final resting place for nearly 4000 veterans and family members.

- The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs website (<https://va.iowa.gov>) has become a recognized site for veterans' information, and is linked to a number of other organizations.
- The Executive Director, Executive Officer and Outreach Coordinator reach out to a number of audiences and groups, making the public more aware of our services and helping obtain state and federal benefits.
- The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs organizes and conducts two annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day observances, the Wreaths Across America ceremony at Iowa Veterans Cemetery, and the Iowa state Fair Veterans Day parade to honor our veterans.

## **Performance Plan Results:**

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs strategic objectives and results are:

1. Provide information, education and assistance regarding benefits to veterans. The 99 Iowa Counties are provided \$10,000 of state appropriated funds for assisting them with certain costs in operating their office and completing their mission of direct contact and assistance to the veterans and families who reside in their county. Over 95% of the county allocation funding was utilized during the year for the intended purpose. The Department goal is 100% utilization.  
The unused funding is returned to the Department Education account to provide training and related continuing education units (CEU's) for the county VSOs. This funding allows us to upgrade our training facilitators and course content.
2. Iowa Code requires County VSOs to become qualified and accredited by the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers. To maintain this accreditation they must receive 16 CEU's each year. State IDVA VSOs are accredited as well. The Department's Goal is 95% accreditation. During 2018 we achieved 97% accreditation. The main challenge to achieving this goal is turnover in the 99 county offices and the time needed to train up new VSOs.
3. The Iowa Veterans Cemetery is a very visible part of our Department Operations. The timeliness of setting headstones and the accuracy of the inscriptions is of utmost importance to families of veterans. The Iowa Veterans Cemetery goal of 100% of headstones set and accurately inscribed within 60 days of burial. The 2018 result is 100%.
4. The Department administers several assistance programs to help veterans and their families. The Injured Veteran Grant program provides assistance to service members who are injured in a combat zone and require medical evacuation. Our goal is to support 100% of eligible service member's applications, this goal was achieved in 2018.

The Iowa Military Homeowners Grant Program provides a State appropriated \$5,000 grant to qualified service members. Our goal is to provide as many grants as possible in the year, dependent upon the available funding. In 2018 490 grants were awarded.

The Iowa Veterans Trust Fund provides several types of direct support to needy veterans. Examples include housing repairs, emergency medical care, dental expenses, eye glasses, hearing aids, prescriptions, automobile repair, etc. The program is administered by the Department. Assistance must be approved by the Veterans Affairs Commission. Our goal is 100% of received applications, once properly scrutinized for program adherence, are approved. In 2018 336 applications were approved for a total of \$496, 153.37