



Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Quarterly Meeting  
Wednesday, April 2, 2025 10:00 am  
Iowa Veterans Home, Whitehill Auditorium, 1301 Summit Street, Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

Commission of Veteran Affairs members:

Present: Todd Jacobus, Elizabeth Ledvina, Darlene McMartin, Joella Perry, Scott Miller, Robert Suesakul, Becky Dirks Haugsted, George Mosby, Reggie Richardson, Dennis Jones, David Grimm

Absent: Gregory Paulline and Linda Jones

Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs staff members present. Nathan Wilson, Kellie Meyer, Karl Lettow, Ben Dales, Gavin Sandvig, Melissa Miller, Mike Olson.

Iowa Veterans Home staff members present. Kelley Oetker and Sarah Bruner

NOTE. THESE MINUTES ARE UNAPPROVED UNTIL ACCEPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT THE NEXT MEETING.

APPROVED: Darlene McMartin DATE: July 9, 2025  
Darlene McMartin, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

1. Call to Order Chairperson McMartin called the meeting to order at 10.03 am.
2. Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence
3. Roll call
4. Welcome and Introduction of Guests
5. Tracie Pinkston, VA Regional (Director Pinkston not in attendance).
6. Report from Lisa Curnes on behalf of Director Judith Johnson-Mekota of VA Medical Center, Iowa City
  - a. Iowa City VA Health Care System was awarded that they have earned the Pathway to Excellence designation
    - i. 1 of only 13 other VA Medical Centers that have been awarded this honor
    - ii Recognized as an organization that fosters a positive practice environment for nursing staff VA Iowa City earned this designation by prioritizing shared governance, leadership, staff engagement, patient safety, quality improvement, professional development and well being.
  - b. Upcoming events
    - i. April 10-11, 2025 (9:00-11:00 am) VBA Claims Clinic, Iowa National Guard, 4540 Melrose Ave, Iowa City
    - ii April 28, 2025 (1:00-2:00 pm) Decorah Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
    - iii May 1, 2025 (11:00 am-12:00 pm) Stakeholder Meeting
    - iv. June 27-28, 2025 (9.00 am-3:00 pm) Quad Cities Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC)



- c. Facilities Update
  - i. Ambulance garage addition is proceeding with construction, expected to be open for use by July 2025
  - ii. New IR/Cath labs are scheduled to be complete later this summer, opening by August 2025
  - iii. Building 50 addition of two floors for new Specialty Clinics and Women's Clinic is ongoing with a completion in early fall 2026
  - iv. Decorah CBOC will open for the public on May 5, 2025
  - v. Burlington CBOC expansion will break ground in late April, expected completion Spring 2026
  - vi. Dialysis remodel is in design and construction to hopefully proceed in 2026
- d. ICVAHCS Needs list
  - i. Tracphones and phone cards
  - ii. Gas gift cards
  - iii. Fast food cards
  - iv. Items for spring baby shower
  - v. Dedicated Fund 4408-Meal ticket monetary donations
  - vi. Dedicated Fund 4484-Women's Clinic monetary donations
  - vii. Dedicated Fund 4457-Homeless Outreach monetary donations
- e. ICVAHCS Mental Health
  - i. Triage pilot project of an initial visit for psychotherapy referrals resulted in 68% decrease in misused consult appointments for psychotherapy. Program shows promise for improving utilization of the appropriate tier of mental health services including increased use of PCMHI, OSATP and Vet Center increasing efficiency.
    - 1. Involved scheduling Veterans for an initial visit with a social worker. After meeting 68% of Veterans ended up selecting a different service than individual psychotherapy.
    - 2. Process enables a more in depth discussion about the Veteran's goals for treatment and helped clarify the most appropriate resource or a determination that they were not interested in any mental health services.
    - 3. Veteran centric process using principles of shared decision making
  - ii. ICVAHCS Suicide Prevention Initiatives
    - 1. Veterans Crisis Line
      - a. Overall number of calls has been lower than last year at this time, but the number of calls triaged as "urgent" or "emergent" is higher.
      - b. Working with around 50 community coalitions and collaborations
      - c. Team is conducting strategic and targeted outreach to employers and colleges,



- d. Involved with the planning team for the Quad Cities Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC), scheduled for June 27-28<sup>th</sup> at the Blackhawk College in East Moline, IL
  - e. The Iowa Governor's Challenge to prevent suicide amongst Service Members, Veterans, and their Families is moving forward with building a framework for Deployment Ready Communities
- iii. ICVAHCS Homeless and underserved Veterans Support
    - 1. Homeless Overview
      - a. The Iowa City VA Homeless Programs are on target to meeting the FY 25 goals. February data for permanent housing placements (PHP), we were at 46 7%, housing 113 of our 242 goal They are meeting the Unsheltered Veteran Engagement goal at 43 5% or 91 Veterans as of February. The goal for FY25 is engaging 209 unsheltered Veterans. We have 230 of 250 HUD-VASH Vouchers issued, 212 are housed. The remaining 18/230 are looking for housing We have one PHA that has put vouchers on pause due to their budget (Davenport PHA). We have a need for increased affordable housing within our catchment area that accepts Hud-VASH vouchers, as well as second chance landlords for our Veterans that have evictions and criminal histories.
  - iv. CRRC Needs
    - 1 Canned and boxed foods
7. Report from Director Lisa Curnes of VA Medical Center, Central Iowa
- a. Veterans Served
    - i. 32,100 unique Veterans in 2024 with 574,774 unduplicated encounters, and 26,232 unique Veterans FY25 through February with 230,921 unduplicated encounters
  - b. Renovations/Projects
    - i. 73 CLC beds operational with 90-95% occupied beds
    - ii. Cottage: There was some moisture and environmental issues in the current building and they moved the Veterans into CLC, Building 12, first floor The building 25 Cottage project restores air quality and finishes for the entire building. Remediation services will start April 2025 and full construction is estimated to be completed mid FY26 When completed, 12 patient rooms for the dementia ward will be available again
  - iii 5<sup>th</sup> Floor newly renovated ICU unit is completed and 9 private rooms with bathrooms are in use. Currently 100% occupied.



- iv. The third floor telemetry renovation provides 10 single occupancy rooms with private bathrooms. Construction is underway with a completion estimate in mid FY26
  - v. The Carroll CBOC has recently undergone renovations to align with the PACT model design intent. The renovations converted standard exam rooms to meet program requirements for two women's exam rooms with dedicated women's restroom. Lab finishes were upgraded, and access was streamlined for an adjoining restroom. The renovation expanded space for the audiology clinic and provided security for access into the clinic with the addition of a locked door between the waiting room and the actual clinic
  - vi. Ames. The as built lease went out three times and received no offers They are replanning the space as a new lease request.
- c Trust Scores
- i March 2025 (Updated. 3/27/2025) **94.4%**
  - ii FY25-to-Date (Updated. 3/27/2025) **93.4%**
  - iii. Last 12-months (Updated: 3/27/2025). **92.9%**
  - iv VACIHCS has outperformed the National benchmark in 11 of the last 12 months.
  - v **Areas of Opportunity specific to VSignals Trust Score:**
    - 1. Work to improve trust of female Veterans Female Veterans served at VACIHCS indicate a lower trust score than their male Veterans by 4.1%.
    - 2. Female **89.3%**
    - 3. Male **93.4%**
- d My HealtheVet Transition
- i Conducted training at the Iowa Veteran Service Officer's Fall School and which was attended by all 99 county VSO's and state commissioners.
  - ii Traveled with the Virtual Mobile Clinic (VMC) throughout September and October for 16 visits and assisted 334 veterans
  - iii. Mailed out 3270 letters and sent 721 secure messages.
  - iv. Held 6 open houses at the South Side and Main Campus assisting 167 veterans.
  - v VSO coffee events (2) 100 Veterans
  - vi CBOCs (5) - 105 veterans in person and 12 veterans assisted virtually
  - vii. January 24th – provided assistance to the low vision clinic Veterans – 14 Veterans
  - viii January 29th – assisted with Golden Age Games registration – 20 Veterans
  - ix. Overall Veterans transitioned. 65% of total veterans successfully transitioned
  - x Starting. 17,283, left to transition as of 3/7/25 is 6,000



- e. Virtual Mobile Clinic
  - i. Virtual Mobile Clinic has resumed rural visits after winter season on 3/3/2025
  - ii. The Virtual Mobile Clinic was able to see HPACT Veterans at the CRRC on Friday's through the winter months and continue to see Veteran's once per week
  - iii. The Virtual Mobile Clinic serves 15 rural counties in Iowa and provides care at the CRRC once per week
  - iv. The Virtual Mobile Clinic is staffed with 1 RN and 2 TCTs (Telehealth Clinical Technicians)
  - v. Services provided on the Virtual Mobile Clinic include CVT (Clinical Video Telehealth) virtual visits include: primary care, dermatology, respiratory, physical/occupational therapy, pain management, pharmacy, and podiatry. Nurse visits such as battlefield acupuncture, vaccines, labs, toenail trims, and blood pressure checks. Additional services include home sleep study set up, MyHealthVet sign up and assistance, Home Telehealth education and admission to program.
  - vi. Completed 127 Clinical Video Telehealth visits FY25
- f. Homeless Veterans
  - i. Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team (HPACT) established at the Community Resource & Referral Center (CRRC) using the Virtual Mobile Clinic (VMC). VMC has been coming to the CRRC every Friday since December.
  - ii. HPACT is a model of care designed around the unique needs and distinct challenges homeless Veterans face both in accessing and engaging in health care
  - iii. HPACT is associated with lower rates of emergency department use and hospitalization; is more effective in engaging Veterans in care; assists Veterans in obtaining housing faster; provides better care experiences for homeless Veterans, and increases timely access to mental health care.
  - iv. Veteran feedback has been very positive to our local HPACT.
  - v. Nearly 40 Veterans are on the HPACT panel since it started in December with new Veterans being seen every week.
  - vi. Implementation of HPACT has been a great collaboration between the Homeless Programs, Primary Care, and the Virtual Mobile Clinic
  - vii. On track to meet or exceed local targets for all three FY2024 National Homeless Programs Goals
    - 1. Goal 1 Permanent Housing Placements - Local target: 161 unique Veterans obtain permanent housing in FY24. 79 Veterans have obtained housing thru February representing 49.1% of goal Target for February is 42%.



- 2 Goal 2 Prevention of Returns to Homelessness – Of Veterans housed in FY24, no more than 5% return to homelessness. Only 1 (1 3%) of the 79 Veterans housed thru February have returned to homelessness
  - 3 Goal 3 Increase Outreach and Engagement with Unsheltered Veterans – Local target Engage with 100 unsheltered Veterans in FY24. Have engaged with 55 unsheltered Veterans thru February representing 55% of goal Target for February is 42%
- viii Due to increased demand, received 20 additional HUD-VASH vouchers in Des Moines effective March 1st First allotment of new vouchers since 2015. Total vouchers. 220 (185 in Des Moines and 35 in Mason City).
- 1 Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Collaborative program between HUD and VA that pairs HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance (commonly referred to as Section 8) with VA case management and supportive services.
  - 2 Where HUD-VASH is offered is determined by need and the ability of the VA to provide VA case management Veterans must meet HUD’s definition of literal homelessness to meet basic eligibility (staying on the streets, emergency shelter, or a place not made for human habitation)
- ix In 2016, Polk County successfully achieved the criteria for ending Veteran homelessness established by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) criteria for meeting Communities must apply to USICH to have the declaration approved. Work continues with community partners and the benchmarks are reviewed monthly
- 1 Ending Veteran homelessness does not mean there are no homeless Veterans The goal is to prevent Veteran homelessness whenever possible but when it does happen, it is rare, brief, and nonrecurring. Must have the appropriate level of resources to meet the need which is demonstrated by the 20 additional HUD-VASH vouchers we received this year.
  - 2 There is a statewide workgroup that VA Cental Iowa participates in that is working towards ending Veteran homelessness in Iowa
- g Women’s Program:
- I Demonstrated growth of the women’s clinic over the past 5 years
    1. 2020 – 2327
    2. 2021 – 2424
    3. 2022 – 2485
    4. 2023 – 2561
    5. 2024 – 2646
    6. 2025 – 2654 (To date).



- ii. The number of 3D mammography we have done in FY24 and to date in FY25
  - 2024 – 3 D screening – 634; 3 D diagnostic – 106
  - 2025 – 3 D screening - 178; 3 D Diagnostic 17
- The number of cervical screenings we have done in FY24 and to date this year FY 25
  - 2024 - 163
  - 2025 - 93
- 8. Presentation by Eric Hall, Chief Operating Officer, Warriors Heart
  - a Treatment center for substance abuse and trauma with a focus on Veterans, active duty military, US law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics, and first responders
  - b. Two locations: Bandera, Texas and Milford, Virginia
  - c. Mission is to heal our nation's warriors through private, licensed, and accredited resort-style healing centers. Specializing in substance abuse treatment and co-occurring psychological disorders, with special attention to PTS, unresolved grief/loss, and moral injury.
  - d. Full continuum of care, from detox, inpatient (residential), day treatment, outpatient, sober living and 1 on 1 counseling
  - e Accepts Tricare and Tricare West
  - f. Once Veteran signs the initial contract, they will not be turned away for a failure to pay
  - g. K9 program which provides reduced cost of service animals
  - h Financials
    - i The client's first step is to meet with a VA Primary Care Provider or a Mental Health Provider to request a referral to Warriors Heart The doctor will place a referral in the community care portal in order to be eligible for treatment at Warriors Heart, your referral diagnosis must identify a substance use disorder as your primary diagnosis We do treat co-occurring psychological disorders, but the primary diagnosis must be substance abuse or addiction. If your doctor has trouble locating our facility in the portal, he or she can search using either of these two numbers NPI#: 1780048827 TAX ID#: Is 37-1742449 If you go this route, you must have approval from Veterans Affairs before receiving care at Warriors Heart to avoid being billed for our services Warriors Heart will bill the VA for your treatment
    - ii. Also have grants and sponsorships with other organizations
- 9. Presentation by Liz Peitzman and Aaron Lerberg (and Hall), Jester Park Equestrian Center Manager, Horses Helping Heroes
  - a Established in September of 2016, Horses Helping Heroes (H3) is an Equine-Assisted Activity Learning and Therapy (EAAL/T) program offered free of charge

- to military Veterans and Active Service Members, First Responders, and National Guard Members.
- i. Equine assisted learning and therapy include emotional regulation, self-confidence, improved communication and relationship skills
  - b Participation requirements
    - i. Military Veterans-DD Form 214
    - ii. Active Service, First Responders and National Guard Members-active or retired work ID
  - c Program Information
    - i. Co-Ed Program Wednesday evenings for six weeks
    - ii Carriage-Driving Program on Tuesdays for eight weeks
  - d Partner with Polk County VA and is at no cost to Veterans
10. Presentation by LTC George Mosby, Iowa National Guard (Deputy Chief of Staff)
- a. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, Brigade Combat Team
    - i. Every 5 years since 2010 the BCT is earmarked for deployment in their training cycle
      1. 2025 Deployments
        - a. 1800 Soldiers set to deploy
        - b. Continous Mobilization starting in May to JRTC for 3 week CTC training Will mobilize straight from training site
        - c. Operation Inherent Resolve-CENTCOM (Middle East) Iraq, Kuwait, Syria. providing security, support and stability
        - d. 1 year deployment
        - e. August - small unit to OSACOM in support of Spartan Shield
      - 2 Ways to support
        - a Prayers
        - b. Family support in the community for families left behind
        - c Employment support of Soldiers and family members
- 11 Operational update, Patty Hamann, President, IACVS
- a. Training Offered to new VSOs
    - i January. DD 214 /NGB 22/Retirement document understanding
    - ii. May: Office Management/Daily Schedules/Outreach/Commissioner Meetings/Robert's Rules and Open/Closed Meetings
  - b All Association CVSO Virtual Training Opportunities
    - i January. Accessing CAPRI and how to utilize/Service Connected Applications
    - ii February-VA Claim Appeal Processes with BVA Best Practices
    - iii. March-Secondary Conditions and Homeless Benefits/Programs
    - iv April-April 15-17 CVSO in person spring training (126 CVSOs already registered)
    - v April 23-How to Handle a Proposed Service-Connected Rating Reduction (Virtual)



- vi. May-Elements Necessary for Service Connection (Virtual)
- vii. June- Aid and Attendance/SMC and SMP (Virtual)
- c. Attendees who receive an attendance certificate may apply it towards their 16 CEU requirement
- d. Impact of fully trained, well educated, CVSOs and the partnerships with all the service organizations
  - i. As of Feb 2025, regional office is reporting that this fiscal year (October) has been \$454,242,656
  - ii. \$347,423 73 just in the month of February
  - iii. \$1779.93 is the average of the compensation coming into eligible Veterans
- 12. Operational update, Sarah Bruner, Administrator of Nursing, IVH
  - a. Nursing shortage in Iowa and across the nation
  - b. What is IVH doing to attract new employees and retain staff
  - c. Overview of employee engagement survey
    - i. Two concerns were being “treated fairly” and flexibility
      - 1. Fairness and flexibility all came back to their schedules
  - d. Top Job Postings in the State
    - i. March: #1 was Registered Nurses, #2 Nursing Assistants, #5 Licensed Practical Nurses
  - e. Staffing Office Background
    - i. Centralized staffing department with no involvement from leaders/charge nurses; mandate lists; minimal opportunities for vacation, no flexibility; all of campus staffed as “one facility”
  - f. Goals:
    - i. Improved flexibility and work/life balance
    - ii. Removing the negative stigma associated with the nursing department in order to recruit new nursing employees
  - g. Action Steps
    - i. Small group meetings
    - ii. Licensed nurse meetings
    - iii. Staff “town hall” meetings and open forums for discussion
    - iv. Poll to all nursing staff how they would like to manage call ins
    - v. Policy revision
  - h. Key Changes
    - i. Change from centralized scheduling to building schedulers
    - ii. Staff calling their absences in to charge nurse
    - iii. Shift staffing is managed by charge nurse/Nurse Supervisors
    - iv. Each building covers itself
    - v. Eliminated the mandate list
- 13. Operational update by Gavin Sandvig, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Benefits and Cemetery Bureaus

- a. IVC- fiscal year July-June and as of March 21, 25 there have been 488 interments, average of 54/month
  - b Highlights
    - i. IVC hosted eleven 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders from ADM, featuring “Untold stories of the Korean War” spotlighting two Korean War veterans interred at the cemetery
    - ii Finally getting updated internet and a new phone system
  - c IVB
    - i Upcoming events
      - 1. Johnson County hosting a USS Iowa Commissioning watch party
      - 2 Iowa City IAARNG 2 day DM VA Regional Claims Clinic
      - 3 IACVS spring training April 15-17
      - 4. Mental Health First Aid training
      - 5. Gavin speaking at Wayne Co event
      - 6 Multiple outreach events
      - 7 Pre Yellow Ribbon events in Waterloo, Iowa City, Boone, Sioux City, Council Bluffs and Johnston
      - 8. Final Salute will be on Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025
    - ii Upcoming Training
      - 1. In October, IDVA will be providing training A 5 year training plan will be presented to the Commission first, then pushed out to the field
      - 2. On top of IACVS training, NVLSP will also be providing virtual training
14. Operational update by Mike Olson, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Legislative Liaison
- a Representative Amos, Representative Levin, Brenda Safranski (Ernst ) and Clayton Brown(Grassley) office in attendance
  - b Meeting with Senator Enst and Rep Miller-Meeks
    - i HR 1970-reintroduced this year which introduces the concern of the lack of adequate reimbursement to State Veterans Homes re pharmaceuticals
    - ii Iowa chooses to cover the remaining cost
    - iii Estimated cost comes in at \$1-2 million per year
  - c Record number of bills filed this session Close to 40 still alive that involve Veteran issues
    - i. IDVA HF 250- gives Commandant greater discretion in authorizing accrediting agency, this was signed by Governor last Friday, will take effect July 1
    - ii. IDVA SF617 /HF534-raise the Tust Fund balance-passed Senate appropriations, still needs full vote in Senate. Passed house appropriations sub committee
    - iii. HF 117-establishes NG service professional qualification program



- iv. HF901- allow for military police experience on active duty to cross over to shorten civilian training.
  - v SF 93-allow NG or reserve members who do not meet the definition of veteran to serve on County Comissions of Veterans Affairs
  - vi SF 275-Department of Education to establish Purple Star School Initiative
  - vii HF 175-expands definition of a veteran for fees
  - viii. HF779-expand eligibility for veteran license plates regardless of active duty term
  - ix 4 bills have property tax exemptions or credits
15. Operational update by Todd Jacobus, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Commandant, Iowa Veterans Home
- a. 1. Thanks to everyone who made Veterans Day on the Hill such a success on January 22, 2025. This is a day that takes place each year and kicks off the legislative initiatives of the Department, the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Service Organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supporting Veterans 12 of 13 Commissioners were present at this year's event. Thanks to these Department staff for attending: Nathan Wilson, Kelley Oetker, Mike Olson, Karl Lettow, David Haines, Gavin Sandvig, Kellie Meyer, Ben Dales, John Ralls, Melissa Miller, Jeanna Hampel, Julie Sieck, Jeff Hanselman, and Peggy Rogers **Great day!** Mark January 21, 2026 on your calendars now for next year's event.



**Celebration of 5-Star CMS Rating!** The Iowa Veterans Home CMS (Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services) Quality Rating increased from 4-Star to 5-Star in January 2025 A 5-star

CMS rating for a nursing home means that, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the facility is considered to have "much above average" quality compared to other nursing homes, signifying a high level of care based on factors like health inspections, staffing levels, and quality measures across different areas of resident care. The Iowa Veterans Home has maintained an overall 5-Star Rating dating back to July 2016, although our quality measure increased from 4-Star in January 2023 to 5-Star in January 2025 – meaning that our staff enhanced care of urinary tract infections and pressure ulcers, better catheter management, reduced percent of residents on antipsychotic medications, reduced hospitalizations, reduced outpatient emergency room visits. This is a great news story for the quality assurance and process improvement team and entire staff of the Iowa Veterans Home! **Performance matters and attention to detail means everything in terms of support of our residents.** Our Veterans community needs to be aware that the care of residents at the Iowa Veterans Home is second to none.

**3. Celebration of Deficiency Free Survey!** Six surveyors from the Iowa Department of Inspections Appeals & Licensing (I-DIAL) were present on the Iowa Veterans Home campus from Monday, March 24 at 10:00 am thru Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 2:30 pm for our annual Recertification Survey. I wish each of you could have been present in the room to hear the out-briefing.

**There were no deficiencies during this survey. Great job to the entire team!**

a. Surveyor Meghan Lokenvitz **specifically called out Resident Treatment Worker Cathy Acevedo during her comments.** She told us that residents on Malloy 2 were very complimentary about their care from all staff, emphasizing that **almost every resident with whom she spoke called out Cathy Acevedo as someone who is "amazing" in her delivery of care. "Residents love Cathy Acevedo."** - Meghan Lokenvitz.

b. Surveyor Kristopher King went above and beyond in his comments regarding his week in the Ulery Building. Kris told us that he went rapid-fire with his questions of staff, and he was impressed with the answers he received every time. Kris observed staff being very observant and attentive each and every time he was observing residents and staff. Kris **specifically called out Resident Treatment Worker Jeff Parks for observing interactions between two residents which surely would have resulted in an altercation if it were not for Jeff's attentiveness and interactions with both of the residents to get them re-focused on other areas.**

c. Each of the surveyors shared their appreciation for the kindness shown to them throughout the week. They told us that they were heartened to know that Iowa Veterans receive this level of quality care from our staff here at the Iowa Veterans Home. Several of them have Veterans in their family, and indicated that they would be keeping IVH in mind in the future in the event that their family member needed nursing level of care. Thanks for representing our Iowa Veterans Home in such a professional way.



**4. USDVA Survey of IVH.** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs surveys the Iowa Veterans Home annually. Our survey window opens in May 2025, so we anticipate their arrival anytime between May and July 2025. They will survey many of the same things that DIAL surveyed in March 2025 in addition to some VA specific requirements.

**5 Need Licensed Nursing Staff** As of April 1, 2025, there are **396** residents (Veterans and Spouses) living at the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown. Our capacity is **447**. We are not able to expand our census to 447, as we do not have enough licensed staff who serve in direct-care roles. If anyone were to ask, "do you have any challenges at the Iowa Veterans Home where the community can help, then our answer would be, "yes, we need to encourage good workers to become licensed health care workers. There are some outstanding opportunities in these career fields and lots of upward progression. Here is an overview of where we are in terms of authorized versus assigned.

- a **Nursing Services Directors (NSDs)** Authorized 4 Assigned 4, **0% of authorized positions vacant**
- b **Nursing Supervisors (NSs)** Authorized 25, Assigned 24, **4% of authorized positions vacant**
- c **Registered Nurses (RNs)** Authorized 36 Assigned 28 **23% of authorized positions vacant**
- d **Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)** Authorized 52, Assigned 33, **37% of authorized positions vacant**
- e **Resident Treatment Workers (RTWs/CNAs)** Authorized 276, Assigned 214, **23% of authorized positions vacant**

f Help! Please refer health care professionals on our website at <https://dva.iowa.gov/iowa-veterans-home/work-iowa-veterans-home> and then click on "Our Current Openings". Thank you!

**6. National Association of State Veterans Home (NASVH) Conference Comments.** Kelley Oetker, Nathan Wilson, and I attended the NASVH Conference on February 9-13, 2025. This is the third conference I've attended, and it was very insightful to listen to the presentations on changes that we will need to implement in order to remain in compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). One presenter in particular was phenomenal – Dr. William Hallett, President & CEO of Guardian Consulting Services, Inc., provided an overview of the CMS changes as they pertain to psychotropic pharmacy products use, and the manner in which surveyors will be assessing these changes. It seems like our biggest challenge will be to ensure that we be more specific and thorough when charting the reasons and support for using psychotropics on residents. Changes took effect on March 24, and we are within our survey window now. We are expecting another survey any time and will be



ready for that, as always Gratefully, Dr Hallett responded immediately to an inquiry from IVH LNHA Kelley Oetker and provided summaries of his presentations by email, including Survey Updates on Psychotropics Effective March 24 2025, Adding / Confirming Schizophrenia Diagnosis, Chemical Restraints Behavior Monitoring & Target Behaviors, Non-Drug Intervention Log, Gradual Dose Reduction Requirements Psychotropic Consent and Right to Be Informed, Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) Schizophrenia Guidance We have these available if anyone would like to see them

### 7 National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Conference

**Comments.** Nathan Wilson (IDVA Operations Executive Administrator), Gavin Sandvig (IDVA Benefits & Cemetery Bureau Chief), Mike Olson (IDVA Legislative Liaison), and I attended the NASDVA Conference on March 1-5, 2025, in Arlington, Virginia. This visit included a tour of the Pentagon and opportunities to discuss DoD / VA Collaboration Initiatives, Skill Bridge, Credentialing, and DoD – State Data Exchange We also spent time visiting with Representative Marianette Miller-Meeks, Senator Joni Ernst, and also connected with Representative Zach Nunn.

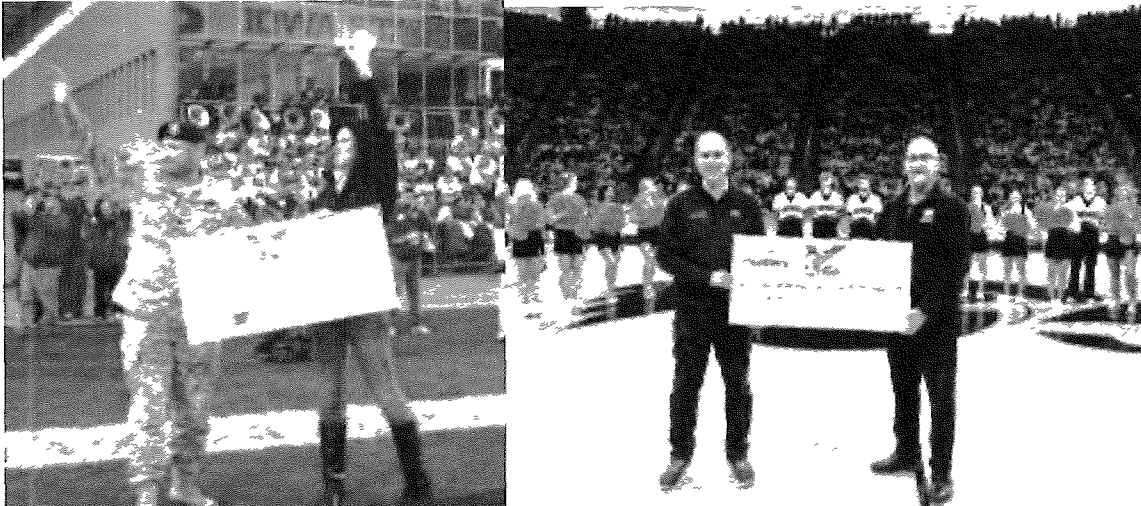
**8 Secretary Collins Comments to State Directors** VA Secretary Doug Collins spoke for 1 ½ hours on Wednesday, March 5, and outlined some of his thoughts, strategies and plans. Secretary Collins indicated that there will be a reduction in force of VA employees. He is focused on streamlining process and holding VA leaders accountable to the Veterans we serve. He feels like we can do better, and committed to working toward that end. He asked that we serve as partners and help him figure out how to better support and streamline the organization. Bottom line up front - - If the federal VA decides to initiate the 80,000-position Reduction-In-Force (RIF) you've been hearing about in the news, it will NOT impact IDVA, our employees, and our operations of the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown, the Iowa Veterans Cemetery in Van Meter, and the Iowa Benefits Office on Camp Dodge. That plan is exclusive to the federal VA Change *is* hard We understand the concerns of our vets and empathize with anyone whose job is affected If that happens, we're here to help We have many open positions at IVH, or we can connect them with veteran job placement services through Home Base Iowa or IowaWORKS for Vets One rumor we started hearing in January was fears of cuts to Veterans Benefits These rumors are verifiably **false**, and unnecessarily stressful In fact - as it was briefed to 200 state VA directors at the conference - the motive behind the RIF in consideration, is to find efficiencies to redirect more funds toward direct benefits, services and health care Cuts in benefits, services and health care are **not** on the table. I'm sure you've also heard about efforts to reduce redundant contracts That's also exclusive to the federal VA I'm proud Iowa is one of the best managed states in the country year in, and year out. And IDVA is served almost entirely by state employees. The only part of our operation contracted out is our custodial services, which itself has been a fairly long relationship There are no plans for any other part of our organization to be contracted out. I hope these comments help calm some of the uncertainty out there in the mainstream that naturally comes with change. If you hear anyone saying anything about these issues that



conflicts with the above, I encourage you to question their source and try to correct them if you think it's helpful. As Americans we all have the right to have our own opinions about these decisions. That's part of what we fought for. I just want to head off any rumors or confusion about their impact on us - a separate state agency - before they start. This way you can make your opinion with solid information

**9 Video Response to Rumors Regarding Cuts to Veterans Benefits** Secretary of Veterans Affairs Doug Collins recorded a video on February 13, 2025 in response to rumors that have circulated regarding impending cuts to Veterans benefits and programs. I am aware that staff at the Federal, State, and County levels of the Department of Veterans Affairs, leaders of Veteran Service Organizations, residents of State Veterans Homes, and Veterans and family members of Veterans throughout the Country are concerned about what they read and watch I am attaching here a Youtube link of a 1 minute 27 second video of his response to these rumors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4H7oL5LFIE> At the 28 second to 37 second mark of this video, Secretary Collins states, ***"there's a rumor going around in the media right now about Veterans benefits being cut. I'm the Secretary of the VA and I'm going to tell you right now - that's not happening."*** I, Todd Jacobus, am not aware of any changes to our operational environment and I'm not anticipating any significant changes.

**10 Growth of Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Principle.** The Iowa Veterans Trust Fund was established in 2007 to provide support for Iowa Veterans in need of medical, dental, hearing and prescription drug assistance, emergency housing repair and vehicle repair / replacement; travel expenses, job training; unemployment assistance; ambulance and emergency room services. In 2024, Missy Miller processed, and the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs reviewed almost 250 applicants for more than \$775,000, and disbursed more than \$193,600 to service organizations supporting military funeral honors. Resources for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund come from an appropriation and the Iowa Lottery On September 27, 2010, I accepted a check for \$5,959,215 00 during a Cyclone football game at Jack Trice Stadium. On February 22, 2025, I accepted a check for \$42,400,000 during a Hawkeye basketball game at Carver Hawkeye Arena This is an outstanding partnership and our goal is to see this principle grow so that we can support more Veterans in the future



**September 25, 2010 – \$5,959,215.00 February 23, 2025 - \$44,400,000**

**11 Monthly IDVA Newsletter.** Many of you should have received an Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs newsletter. This newsletter will be published monthly beginning on March 15, 2025. The audience for this newsletter is Iowa Veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, and Veteran stakeholders and community partners. If you have something to include in the newsletter then you can send that to Karl Lettow, IDVA Communications Director, at [karl.lettow@iowa.gov](mailto:karl.lettow@iowa.gov). There are approximately 2,000 names on our current distribution list. You can opt-in to receiving the monthly newsletter by going to the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Website (<https://dva.iowa.gov/>) and scrolling down to the blue box and hitting the "subscribe" button.

**12. Mental Health Conference at IVH May 1-2, 2025.** Dr. Doug Steenblock, Mental Health Services Bureau Chief at the Iowa Veterans Home, is coordinating with other mental health specialists in Iowa and the Midwest to facilitate the "**25<sup>th</sup> Annual Mental Health In Long-Term Care Conference**" at **Whitehill Auditorium**. Clinicians, Caregivers, & Administrators are invited to join us for this 1 - 1½ day conference to learn the latest on mental health issues in long-term care!

a. Thursday, May 1, Pre-Conference Workshop, 1.00-4.00 p.m. Offered in-person only

(1) Team-Based Behavioral Interventions for Dementia, Kyle Page, PhD, ABPP (2) Geriatric Psychologist, Edwards Hines Jr. VA Hospital, Chicago, IL

b. Friday, May 2 8:00 a.m -5.00 p.m. Offered in-person or Virtual. Conference Agenda

(1) Hoarding in Seniors, Douglas Steenblock, MD, Iowa Veterans Home



- (2) Calming the Storm. Addressing Personality Disorders in Long-Term Care, Nate Wolken, MA, LMHC Iowa Veterans Home
- (3) Interventional Psychiatry for Geriatric Patients, Lori Suvalsky, MD, Medical Director, Mental Health, VA Central Iowa Healthcare System
- (4) Dignity, Desire, and Decorum: Supporting Healthy Sexual Expression in Older Adults, Derek Hess, JD, PhD, Clinical Director and Licensed Psychologist, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
- (5) Kristin Roof, MA, PhD Candidate in Clinical Psychology, Fielding University Psychologist 3, Independence Mental Health Institute
- (6) Finding Meaning and Purpose Later in Life, Christopher Sparks, LISW, Iowa Veterans Home

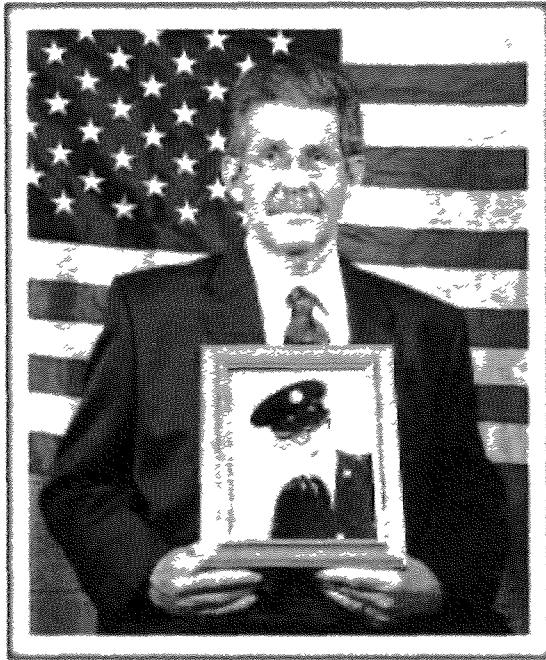
c To Register for this event and for more information, go to <https://cme.dmu.edu/ivh-2025>. Des Moines University is the accredited provider. This educational activity has been approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™, AOA 2-A credit, and nursing contact hours. The point of contact is Carol Tripp, IVH Education Coordinator, at [carol.tripp@ivh.state.ia.us](mailto:carol.tripp@ivh.state.ia.us)

**13 Passing of Pat Palmersheim** The State of Iowa and all Veterans of the United States Armed Forces, lost a strong advocate on January 12, 2025, with the sudden and unexpected passing of Patrick James Palmersheim at his home in West Des Moines, Iowa. In 2002, Governor Tom Vilsack appointed Pat as the Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs – a role he held with distinction until 2011. Pat took over the Department during the most austere times for our deployed service members. 98 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen were killed in action or died of wounds between 2002-2011, Pat attended each visitation and funeral – proudly representing the Governor of the State of Iowa and presenting an Iowa Flag to the service member's next of kin. Pat took a leadership role in the establishment of the **Injured Veteran Grant Program**, which ensured that the State of Iowa financially supports a family sustaining hardship as a result of their loved one being wounded in action. Pat was among the leaders of the **Iowa Veterans Trust Fund**, which provides financial support to our most financially challenged Veterans, and forging a partnership with the Iowa Lottery which has resulted in a net of \$44 million to be invested in our Veterans. Pat was the main point of contact for coordinating the very first **State Veterans Cemetery** in Iowa – a project which culminated in the selection of Van Meter, Iowa, and the establishment of the traditions and protocols that make the Iowa Veterans Cemetery special and unique. Since 2007, Pat Palmersheim has been the coordinator for the **Wreaths Across America** program at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery – a monumental mission for one person, and one that he enthusiastically performed with precision and professionalism. Pat was grateful and appreciative of all of the relationships that he established with so many Directors across the United States, and valued their friendship and comradeship – speaking of you often and with great respect. Patrick is known in many circles around Iowa and beyond as "The Founder of

Iowa's Arlington", and it is appropriate that he was laid to rest at his home on Thursday, January 23, 2025. Rest in peace.

**14. Communication.** My intent is and has been to keep our Commissioners informed about the operation of the Department and on issues pertaining to the Veterans Community. I have an email distribution list specifically for Commissioners, I use it almost daily, and I am as transparent on issues as I can possibly be. I am grateful to represent the Department on the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs and to serve as the Commandant. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me on concerns or issues from yourself or the organizations you represent. Communication among us will help Iowa Veterans.

**Excerpt from NASDVA Program Binder, March 2025**  
**Patrick "Pat" James Palmersheim**  
**May 27, 1947 – January 12, 2025**



Patrick James Palmersheim, April 1947 - June 1950, Service

The State of Iowa, and Veterans of the United States Armed Forces, lost a strong advocate on January 12, 2025, with the sudden and unexpected passing of Patrick James Palmersheim at his home in West Des Moines, Iowa. Born on May 27, 1947, in New Hampton, Iowa, Patrick was the son of Mathias and Dolores (McGrane) Palmersheim. Growing up on farms with his four brothers and close-knit neighbors, Patrick treasured the memories of his childhood spent in the Iowa countryside.

Following graduation from Immaculate Conception High School in Elma, Iowa, in 1965, Patrick proudly enlisted and served in the United States Air Force for nine years, including two tours of duty in Vietnam from 1969 to 1971, exemplifying his unwavering dedication to our Nation and his fellow service members.

In 1971, Patrick married Loan Nguyen (Sandy), with whom he shared 20 years, raising their children in Elma. During this time,

Pat also served his community in various capacities, including Mayor, City Councilman, and volunteer firefighter. In 2000, he married Cynthia Rae "Cindy" Boor, wife serving as the County Veterans Service Officer for Howard County in Northeast Iowa. In 2002, the couple moved to Des Moines, where they spent 14 years. In 2016 Patrick found his soulmate, Susan Wynne Lunning, and they married in 2021. Patrick and Susan shared unlimited laughs, hugs, and an abundance of love till his very last day on this earth.



In 2002, Governor Tom Vilsack appointed Patrick as the Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs – a role he held with distinction until 2011. Patrick took over the Department during the most austere times for our deployed service members. 98 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen were killed in action or died of wounds between 2002-2011, and Pat attended each visitation and funeral – proudly representing the Governor of the State of Iowa and presenting an Iowa Flag to the service member’s next of kin. Pat was the main point of contact for coordinating the very first State Veterans Cemetery in Iowa – a project which culminated in the selection of Van Meter, Iowa, and the establishment of the traditions and protocols that make the Iowa Veterans Cemetery special and unique. Pat took the lead to establish the Injured Veteran Grant Program, which ensured that the State of Iowa financially supports a family sustaining hardship as a result of their loved one being wounded in action. Pat was among the leaders of the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund, which provides financial support to our most financially challenged Veterans, and forging a partnership with the Iowa Lottery which has resulted in a net of \$44 million to be invested in our Veterans.

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### Events

**April 1** 7:30-10:30 am Marshall County Coffee & Camaraderie, VFW Post 839, Marshalltown

**April 2** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Veterans Home, Malloy Leisure Resource Center, Marshalltown

**April 3** 7:00 pm Todd Jacobus presentation to National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Veterans Committee, Cedar Rapids

**April 5** 9:00 am (CST) USS Iowa Commissioning Ceremony Watch Party at Iowa Veterans Home (Malloy LRC)

**April 5** 10:00 am (EST) USS Iowa Commissioning Ceremony at Electric Boat, Groton, Connecticut

**April 10** 1:30 pm Todd Jacobus recording promotion video with Secretary of State Paul Pate for “Veterans for Voting”

**April 11** 1:00 pm Nancy Morford Retires from Iowa Veterans Home (38 Years!)

**April 12** 10:00 am Quilts of Valor Presentation to Iowa Veterans Home Residents in Malloy LRC

**April 12** 11:00 am Quilts of Valor Presentation to Iowa Veterans Home Residents in Dack Atrium



- April 14** 8:00-11:00 am Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Application Form Modification Meeting, Camp Dodge
- April 15-17** – Iowa Association of County Veteran Services Spring School, Stoney Creek Inn, Johnston
- April 15** 4:00 pm Todd Jacobus presentation to 34<sup>th</sup> Division Association, Camp Dodge
- April 16** 10:30 am Quality Assessment Process Improvement (QAPI) Steering Committee Meeting, IVH **April 21** 10:00 am IDVA Leadership Team Red Tape Legislative Review – Initial Meeting
- April 23** 11:00 am IDVA Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in Malloy LRC
- April 24** 11:30 Iowa Veterans Home Talent Show! in Malloy LRC
- April 24** 1:00 pm Iowa Veterans Home Volunteer Doris Lemker inducted into Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame in rotunda of State Capitol (40,644 hours of volunteering - - - How awesome is that!?)
- April 28** 1:00 pm U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Iowa City Health Care Center's Community Based Outpatient Clinic Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, Decorah
- April 29** 50 Year Anniversary of Marshalltown Native Darwin Judge being Killed In Action at Saigon Airport, Vietnam – Last American Killed in Vietnam, Commemoration Event Scheduled at Iowa Veterans Home
- April 29** Eastern Iowa Honor Flight #54 – 5 Iowa Veterans Home Residents Bobby Pringle, Richard Huff, Howard Holdefer, Gerry Klemzak, Bill McCollough participating
- May 5** 11:00 am Cinco de Mayo Theme Meal at IVH!
- May 6** 7:30 am Marshall County Coffee & Camaraderie at VFW Post 839, Marshalltown
- May 9** 8:30 am Coffee & Camaraderie at Iowa Veterans Home, Dack Leisure Resource Center (All Welcome!)
- May 14** 11:00 am Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day Program at Vietnam Memorial on Capitol Complex, Des Moines [Keynote Speaker Colonel Gerald "Gerry" Berry]
- May 15** 8:30 am Todd Jacobus speaking at Village Cooperative, Marshalltown
- May 16** 10:00 am Colonel Gerald "Gerry" Berry Speaking at Iowa Veterans Home, Malloy LRC (Then-Captain Gerry Berry piloted the Boeing CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter that evacuated U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin from the United States Embassy in Saigon to the USS Blue Ridge.
- May 17** 10:00 am-12:00 pm Poweshiek County Veterans Benefits Fair, Elks Lodge, 720 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Grinnell, Iowa 50112 (POC: Chris Nolte)
- May 26** 6:00 am Todd Jacobus on WHO Radio with Simon Conway at Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, Camp Dodge
- May 26** 8:00 am Memorial Day Program at Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Van Meter, Keynote Speaker. Carol Whitmore)
- May 26** 10:30 am Memorial Day Program at Iowa Veterans Home, Marshalltown, Keynote Speaker. Todd Eipperle
- June 3** 7:30 am Marshall County Coffee & Camaraderie at VFW Post 839, Marshalltown



**June 14** 250 Year Birthday of United States Army, Commemoration  
Events TBD

**June 16-20** Todd Jacobus Traveling to Kosovo with Iowa Delegation

**June 25** 10:00 am Quarterly Staff Town Hall Meeting, Whitehill Auditorium

**June 27** 3:00 pm Quarterly Resident Town Hall Meeting, Malloy Leisure Resource Center

**July 9** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa National  
Guard Joint Forces Headquarters, Johnston

**October 1** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa  
Veterans Home, Malloy Leisure Resource Center, Marshalltown

**2026**

**January 7** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa  
National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters, Johnston

**January 26** 8:00 am-12:00 pm Veterans Day on the Hill, State Capitol, Des Moines

**April 14-16** IDVA Semi-Annual Training for County Veteran Service Officers

**October 12** IDVA Semi-Annual Training for County Commissioners of  
Veterans Affairs

**October 13-15** IDVA Semi-Annual Training for County Veteran Service  
Officers

On behalf of Julie Maas, Governor's Challenge for Suicide Prevention  
Among Service Members, Veterans and Their Family Members

The Governor's Challenge is a partnership between state government, Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Service Member Veterans, and Family members (SMVF) Technical Assistance Center Iowa joined the Governor's Challenge in 2022 and as of 2023 all states and territories are now participating in this effort. The purpose of the Governor's Challenge is to bring state, military, and community-based providers together to develop and implement a strategic plan to prevent and reduce suicide.

The Governor's Challenge requires three priority areas of focus.

- i. Identify service members, Veterans, and their families and screen for suicide risk
- ii. Promote connectedness and improve care transitions
- iii. Increase lethal means safety and safety planning

Iowa HHS is co-leading the Iowa Governor's Challenge Team (GC Team) with the Iowa Department of Veteran Affairs. The members of the GC Team represent the following stakeholders:

- iv. VA hospital systems
- v. Iowa National Guard

- vi Iowa Air National Guard
- vii Department of Education
- viii Workforce Development
- ix Law enforcement
- x. Advocates
- xi. Behavioral health and crisis providers
- xii. The Regents

**Proposed Activity:**

- Collaborate with Home Base Iowa to include behavioral health resources
- Develop a toolkit for communities to complete to show they are ready to support the behavioral health needs of their SMVF community members
  
- The toolkit will include activities for each of the priority areas of focus

16. Review and approval of the changes to Iowa Code 801.1 and 801.7 Motion to approve made by David Grimm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Becky Dirks Haugsted Motion passed unanimously.

17. Approval of Minutes from the ICVA quarterly meeting on January 8, 2025.

- a. Motion to approve made by Elizabeth Ledvina, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Robert Suesakul. Motion passed unanimously

18. Approval of Minutes from the Trust Fund in person meeting on February 6, 2025

- a. Motion to approve made by Dennis Jones, 2<sup>nd</sup> by David Grimm Motion passed unanimously.

19. Approval of Minutes from the Trust Fund conference call on March 6, 2025

- a Motion to approve by David Grimm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Joella Perry Motion passed unanimously

20. Old Business:

- a. Looking at any legislative business after Jan mtg instead of waiting until fall (Darlene) ICVA meet in June to start working on leg priorities

21 New Business

- a American Legion-Boys State

- i Also has a new application for funding request that will be submitted soon
- ii Jordan Pope, Deputy Director of Boys State in Iowa
  - 1 American Legion founded Boys State in 1938
  - 2 One of only 2 programs not done on a college campus Held at Camp Dodge.
  - 3. Demonstrates how good governance should work
  - 4 June 22-27, 2025 at Camp Dodge.



- a. Adam Akers- barrier has been that the program is too long and kids are involved in too many activities Jordan says they need to have that much time for the course to work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB1B5WOgtr8&authuser=0>

22. Public Comment.

- a. American Legion legislative priorities. HF 909 made it through sub committee but stalled in appropriations. Matching grant program for any VSO to expand their service office.

23 Next ICVA meeting will be July 9, 2025 at 10.00 am at Joint Forces Headquarters (Enhanced Classroom), 6100 NW 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Johnston, Iowa 50109

24. Motion to adjourn made by George Mosby, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Scott Miller Motion passed. 12:48 pm.