

STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT 2022 AGENCY REPORT



New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
407 Galisteo St., Room 134
Santa Fe New Mexico 87501

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Tribal Liaison

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (the Department) participated in relevant aspects pertaining to the State Tribal Collaboration Act (NMSA 11-18-3 NMSA 2009) during the New Mexico State Government's fiscal year 2022. The Department participated in both formal and informal interaction with several Pueblos, Tribes and Indigenous Nations throughout the state and region.

The Department participated in:

- Secretary Smith appointed Beverly Charley to full-time Tribal Liaison for the Department of Veterans' Services in January 2022
- Conducting NM Native American Veterans Collaborative meetings, Monthly - Virtual and Quarterly meetings in person
- Collaborating and Partnering with Native American VSOs to assist all NM Veterans
- Continued Collaboration with the Native American Training Institute (NATI) and the Southwest Native American Veterans Association (SWNAVA) keeping open dialogue for the upcoming training conference in the fall of 2022
- Annual training to Building Cultural Equity with Native Nations
- Conducting and planning Benefits and Education Outreach
- Continued to participate in data sharing and information exchanges with Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos
- National Association of County Veteran Service Officer (NACVSO) Benefits Training conducted via Zoom, March 2022. (2) Navajo VSOs, (1) Pueblo of Zuni, (1) Pueblo of Santa Clara received training and are in the process of attaining Veterans Administration (VA) accreditation.
- Continued virtual and onsite participation with the Cibola County, McKinley County, and the San Juan County Veterans Collaboratives with access to over 40 organizations providing benefits and services to tribal lands and near tribal lands.
- Conducting onsite and virtual services to provide State and Federal Claims Clinics.
- Assist Jicarilla Apache Veteran and Navajo Nation Veteran in missing VA Headstones
- VA Burial Benefits and State Veteran Memorial information provided in monthly collaborative meetings.

- Provide continuous on-going mentorship of Native American VSO's including the Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes.
- Continued collaboration with the NM Indian Affairs Department (NMIAD) and respond to those veterans with immediate needs for guidance and assistance.
- Attend VA Tribal Veterans Advocate Conference

II. AGENCY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND

A. Mission Statement

Mission: To provide the highest quality care, service, and advocacy for veterans and their family members

Vision: To recognize and serve all generations of veterans and their family members and approach every day as Veterans' Day

B. Agency Overview

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services is the state government agency statutorily created in 2003 to provide veterans with a cabinet-level agency to address their needs. Department services are partitioned into nine (9) programs, aggregated by common statutory purpose and outcome:

Field Operations Division

There are 16 field offices of the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services located throughout the state. Each is staffed by an accredited Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) to assist veterans and their eligible dependents with filing for their federal and state benefits. All VSOs also have regularly scheduled outreach visits to smaller and rural surrounding communities.

Administrative Services Division

Provides Administrative and Financial Services to the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services. Serves as Chief financial officer (CFO) for the agency. Responsible for establishing, monitoring, and executing the Agency's budget.

Veterans State Benefits Division

The Benefits Division ensures eligible veterans, and their dependents receive state benefits to which they are entitled. These include property tax Exemption, property tax waiver, license plates, park passes, monuments and museum passes, hunting and fishing privileges.

State Approving Agency Bureau

The primary responsibility of the State Approving Agencies (SSAs) is to ensure the quality and integrity of programs of education and training for the use of GI Bill benefits. The scope of responsibility: high schools, adult education centers, employers providing on-the-job training and apprenticeship training, license and certification testing, vocational training and apprenticeship training, license and certification testing, vocational training, as well as all certificate and degree levels of post-secondary education. The SAA promotes and safeguards quality education and training for veterans, ensures greater educational and training opportunities to meet the changing needs of veterans and assists the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill. There are currently 136 GI Bill approved facilities in New Mexico, 103 are active.

Veterans Business Outreach Center Program

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services created the Veteran's Business Outreach Center (VBOC) to "assist veterans in achieving their entrepreneurial goals".

Healthcare Coordination Program

The Healthcare Coordination Program coordinates VA, state, and local healthcare alliances within the NMDVS. In this role, the division performs an advocacy role to ensure New Mexico's veterans are aware of their health benefits and how they can more easily navigate the New Mexico VA Healthcare system—as well as the El Paso VA Medical Center for veterans in the Las Cruces area, and the Big Spring (TX) VA Medical Center for veterans in the eastern/southeast part of New Mexico. The division is also responsible for fostering partnerships with local healthcare entities

that serve veterans and their families in our state. This division also manages a highly rural transportation grant.

Veterans State Cemetery Grant Program

The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program supports the construction of state veterans' cemeteries. The New Mexico Veterans' Cemeteries are hallowed grounds that provide a final resting place, which honors and memorializes veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices made while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. Currently, there are three State Veterans Cemeteries: Fort Stanton; Gallup and Angel Fire. The Carlsbad Veterans Cemetery is projected to be completed in 2024.

Women Veterans Program

The Women Veterans Program develops strategies to ensure women veterans are accessing their eligible benefits and services. Provides guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the public on women veteran issues. Works with local veteran groups to advocate and educate on the unique issues facing women.

Tribal Liaison

The Tribal Liaison is committed to working with and responding to all joint Native American Veterans' related issues and concerns for the State Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes. Serves as a State Agency's point of contact with ongoing communication and will provide resources, guidance, and assistance to all Native American Veterans.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Initiatives - In addition to STCA (11-18-4.c (1):

MOU between the NMDVS and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration dated December 14, 2018, is currently being updated for signature in 2022.

Field Services is dedicated to continuing to support the Navajo Nation VSOs by not only incurring the cost of initial NACVSO Basic Benefits Course but also including those VSOs in biannual training, we are hopeful that other Nations, Tribes and Pueblos would nominate individuals from their communities to also take the training to support their veterans.

Similar MOU initiatives will include the Pueblos of Zuni, Acoma, Laguna, Santo Domingo, Cochiti, San Felipe, Santa Clara, Ohkay Owingeh and the Tribes of Mescalero and Jicarilla.

III. AGENCY EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT POLICY (11-18-4.c (1)(3))

In coordination with tribal authorities, the Department often assists tribal veterans with veterans' court issues.

Department staff members who regularly work with Pueblos, Tribes and Nations have been identified to attend the Cultural Competency training by the State Personnel Office (SPO). all staff members participate in taking training.

IV. CURRENT AND PLANNED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES (11-18-4.c (5))

- a. Provide a description of current and planned programs and services provided to or directly affecting Native communities and the funding for each program

The Department is committed to promoting fixable exchange between Department personnel, Department administration, and Pueblos, Native Nations, and Tribes. However, the Department routinely collaborates with Native Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos in mutually beneficial projects for implementation of our respective veterans' programs. The Department's programs in which Native Americans participate and/or might have interests are shown below:

Programs and Services Potentially Affecting American Indians or Alaska Natives		
Programs	Description of Services	Funding
Cabinet Secretary's Office	In partnership with NMIAD, develop guidance and best practices with the Pueblos, Nation and Tribe Offices of the Veterans Affairs that foster collaboration and advocacy.	General Fund
Healthcare Coordination	Helps veterans navigate the VA healthcare system, by assisting with coordination of their needs and ensuring they are aware of their benefits.	General Fund
State Veterans Benefits and Veterans State Cemeteries & Memorial	Administer statewide benefits for eligible veterans and their dependents. Ensure compliance with the National Cemetery Administration.	VA Funds/General Funds
Women Veterans' Coordinator	Provide guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the public on women veteran issues.	General Fund
Tribal Liaison	The Tribal Liaison is committed to working with and responding to all joint Native American Veterans' related issues and concerns for the State Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes. Serves as a State Agency's point of contact with ongoing communication.	General Fund

b. Main agency accomplishments and challenges regarding work with tribes and native organizations including significant state-tribal issues, recommendations and/or priorities addressed in FY22:

The Department continues to work with the Tribes, Native Nations and Pueblos using a variety of outreach opportunities and will continue to develop ways to improve communications and provide medical treatment to veterans. Such as:

- Tribal Liaison full time commitment in working with Pueblo's, Nation's, and Tribe's
- Held two major meetings with all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes – Uniting as NM Native American Veterans Collaboration. Building relations by having monthly virtual meetings, and quarterly in person meetings.
- National Association of County Veteran Service Officers Accreditation (NACVSO) Training and VA Administration Accreditation for in Pueblos and Tribes VSO's (4 Navajo VSO rec'd NACVSO received training in March 2022) currently participating in VA Accreditation.

b. Goals for Fiscal year FY23 relating to tribes and native organizations—

- Continue to build relations with each Pueblo, Nation, and Tribe. Encourage Veterans program within each
- Establish a Memo of Understanding with Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes for VSO Training and Services
- Seek out Native American veterans to assist with State and Federal Benefits

1. The Department is committed to working with and responding to all joint State Veterans' related concerns for the State, Tribes, Pueblos, and Native Nations.
2. The Department will continue to seek out community and veterans outreach outlets to promote New Mexico Veterans within Native communities.
3. Collaborate with Federal VA partners (i.e., VBA and VAHCS to capitalize on services to our veterans in rural communities.

V. TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION (11-18-4.C (2))

A. State Tribal Collaboration Act Training and Certification

Department field and supervisory employees from multiple Divisions received the STCA cultural awareness training and certification from SPO.

- B. Employee Notification about the STCA Department managers, project leaders, and field employees are knowledgeable of the STCA policy that the Department abides by. Department employees also have access to the Tribal Liaison for consultations regarding the Act.

VI. KEY NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION (11-18-4.C (2))

CONTACT INFORMATION

Position / Program	Key Names
Cabinet Secretary	Sonya L. Smith 406 Don Gaspar Santa Fe, NM 87501-2374 (505) 827-6334 – Office (505) 382-3939 - Mobile sonya.smith@state.nm.us
Deputy Secretary and acting Administrative Services Director	VACANT
Benefits Division Director/ Cemetery and Memorial Programs Director	Edward Mendez Lew Wallace Building 495 Old Santa Fe Trail Santa Fe, NM 87505 (505) 827-6307 – Office (505) 382-3760 - Mobile edwardl.mendez@state.nm.us
Field Operations Division Director	Robin Wilson 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE Albuquerque, NM 87113 (505) 219-5564 – Mobile robin.wilson@state.nm.us
State Approving Agency Bureau Chief	Katherine Snyder 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE Albuquerque, NM 87113 (505) 280-1047 - Mobile katherine.snydr@state.nm.us
Veterans Business Outreach Center Director	Richard Coffel 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE Albuquerque, NM 87113 (505) 383-2401 – Office (505) 220-9932 - Mobile richardl.coffel@state.nm.us

Chief Financial Officer	Danelle Lucero 407 Galisteo St, Room 134 Santa Fe, NM 87501 (505) 827-6313 – Office danelle.lucero2@state.nm.us
Health Care Coordination Program Director	Diane MourningBrown 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE Albuquerque, NM 87113 (505) 383-2408 – Office Diane.mourningbrown@state.nm.us
Women's Veterans Program Manager	VACANT
Tribal Liaison	Beverly A Charley 4601 College Blvd. Rm 1715B Farmington, NM 87402 (575) 241-3322 – Mobile beverly.charley@state.nm.us vetdvs.tribaliaison@state.nm.us

VII. RELEVANT STATUTES AND MANDATES

Appendix A

Relevant Agency Regulations, State or Federal Statutes:

- Chapter 17 NMSA 1978
- State-Tribal Consultation Act - (STCA) 11-18-3 NMSA 2009; and
- Governmental Dispute Prevention and Resolution Act (12-8A-1 NMSA) as amended 2007

Appendix B

Glossary or Definitions of Special Agency Terms and Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
NMDVS	New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
STCA	State Tribal Collaborative Act
NMSA	New Mexico Statute Administrative Code
CFR	Code of Federal Regulation
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
VAHCS	Veterans Affairs Healthcare System
SPO	State Personnel Office

VII. AGREEMENTS

A list of any current or pending agreements with tribal nations, are at the site location.