



# Nevada Veterans Advocate Program



Director Kat Miller  
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Veterans Services  
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NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES

*Serving America's Heroes*



# Nevada Veterans Advocate Program



GOVERNOR BRIAN SANDOVAL



# The Problem

- ***Not enough VSOs.*** There are 28 accredited and active Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) in Nevada, 12 of whom are State of Nevada employees. With almost 300,000 veterans in Nevada, the need for VSOs far exceeds the supply.
- ***Funding Shortfalls.*** VSOs from some veterans service organizations are experiencing funding challenges which impact their ability to attend out-of-state training required to maintain accreditation with their departments and with the VA.
- ***Minimal Rural Coverage.*** Only three VSOs in Nevada have offices in rural areas. All other VSOs are in Las Vegas and Reno. While the State conducts mobile outreach and video teleconferencing appointments, without “boots on the ground” in a community, veterans remain underserved.
- ***Simple Questions not Immediately Addressed.*** Many veterans who come to a VSO for assistance have questions that can be answered by a trained advocate who does not need the in-depth training required for VSO accreditation.





# NVA Program

## *Connecting Nevada veterans to services and opportunities*

The Nevada Veterans Advocate Program (NVAP) trains participants to help connect veterans and their families to benefits and opportunities that improve their lives. The program is creating a State-wide network of knowledgeable advocates, ensuring that wherever a veteran lives, there is someone to help them access needed benefits. The program:

- Capitalizes on the selfless service of volunteers who want to help veterans
- Ensures that participants who advise veterans have **current** and **relevant** information
- Pairs advocates with VA Accredited VSOs for mentorship and continuing education
- Places trained benefit “connectors” in rural communities to help veterans who experience challenges accessing information





# Program Benefits

- Increased # of veterans aware of available services and opportunities
- Conduit for dissemination of information about benefits and for collecting information about local services
- Accredited VSOs are able to reallocate time to assist veterans with complex issues
- Increased presence in communities where veterans live = increased awareness of needs
- Boots on the ground in Nevada communities = expanded outreach





# NVA Roles and Responsibilities



- Impart information to service members, veterans and family members about available services and opportunities
- Gather information on local services and opportunities for course updates
- Identify veterans needs in communities throughout Nevada
- Assist set up/proctor Video Teleconferences
- Assist NDVS with community outreach



# NVA Program Elements

- Training (Online Course and Workshops)
- Certification and 3-Year Recertification
- Mentorship
- Information Sharing







# Program Update

- 103 NVAs certified or pending certification/ 343 currently enrolled in courses. 28% increase in information access
- 73 NVAs participate in the Mentorship Program; paired with VSOs
- Select Nevada Department of Health & Human Services and County Social Services employees taking courses
- Just over 25% of NVAs live in rural communities, helping provide information locally
- Increase from 14 to 48 Nevada cities with a VSO or NVA supporting the community
- NVAs help run our annual conferences
- NVAs assist at video teleconferencing sites
- NVAs have conducted 11 outreach events on behalf of the Department; 26 NVAs supported events are scheduled over the next year





# Next Steps

- By 2018 establish an active VSO or NVA in all 63 Nevada communities with a population of over 1,000 and within 50 miles of all Nevada's 128 communities
- Develop NVAs with specific expertise in Pension and A&A to assist with nursing home, assisted living, and homebound outreach
- Conduct the 2017 NVA Conference for Nevada Tribal Communities
- Add new courses and develop the recertification test
- Continue to target underserved areas for NVA development
- Grow NVA force to 5,000 volunteers statewide
- Grow NVAs into VSOs, "build the bench"



# Contacts

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