



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

Dodge County Veterans Services

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED



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Department Overview

Dodge County Veterans Services is here to help veterans and their families navigate services, provide support and coordinate opportunities to connect with other veterans. We strive to keep veterans and their family informed on all relevant veteran information with legislation or benefit changes.

Dodge County Veterans Services has VA Accredited representatives to help from the start of the application process to the final decision. We are not Department of Veterans Affairs employees; we are county employees here to be the advocate for benefits earned. Our office serves as a liaison between the veteran and the VA. Veterans Services helps navigate through the barriers veterans face when using the benefits they have earned through their service to our country.

Our office is able to provide assistance with a variety of benefits and services at the federal, state, and local levels. Veterans and their families can get assistance with the following:

Service Connected Disability Compensation	WI GI Bill
VA Health Care	Veteran Identifier on Driver's License
Long Term Care	Property Tax Credit for Totally Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses
Veteran Pension	State Park and Trail Pass
Board of Veterans Appeals	Registration for WI Veterans Homes
Veteran Readiness and Employment	Aid to Needy Veterans Grants
VA Home Loan Guaranty Program	License and Permit Fee Waivers
Veterans Affairs Life Insurance	Retraining Grants
Home Improvement & Vehicle Adaption Grants	Homeless Veteran Assistance
Dependency and Indemnity Compensation	Veteran Relief Fund
VA Survivor Pension	Requesting Official Records
CHAMPVA	Reissuance of Medals
VA Caregivers Programs	Dodge County Patriot Project
Dependents Education Assistance	Referrals to CVI, VORP, Vet Center
Burial Allowances	Funeral Honors & Burial Flags
Burial in a National or State Cemetery	Flags and Flag Holders for Graves
Education Benefits	Government Markers, Medallions, Urns & Plaques
Correction of Military Records	& More

Staff & Accreditation

Katlynn Rhyner – Director, Veterans Services Officer

Accreditations: Veterans Administration, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The American Legion (AL), and Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Jessica Bull – Veterans Benefits Specialist

Accreditations: Veterans Administration, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), and The American Legion (AL)

The Veteran Administration (VA) Accreditation by the VA Office of General Counsel is for the sole purpose of providing legal representation services to claimants. Accreditation requires yearly continuing education typically taught by attorneys or VA employees to maintain credentials. The accreditation also allows our staff full access to federal databases, benefit management systems, and files to further assist our veterans and their families. This allows the Dodge County Veterans Services to file claims and appeals and argue those claims in front of Law Judges up to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington D.C. at no cost to the claimants.



Katlynn Rhyner



Jessica Bull



Poe - Service Dog

Dodge County Veterans Service Commission

Chapter 45.81 of the Wis. Statutes provides for each county to have a County Veterans Service Commission consisting of three residents of the County who are veterans appointed for staggered three-year terms by the County Board Chairperson.

Veterans Service Commission Members

Harvey Lewis – Chairperson

Mike Weynand – Member

Robert Patrouille – Member

The Commission administers the Dodge County Veterans Relief Fund which provides short-term, temporary financial assistance to all resident veterans and their dependents. The Commission investigates claims for financial aid, determines eligibility, and authorizes financial assistance for applicant veterans and dependents. The Commission may delegate administrative duties to the County Veterans Service Officer, who serves as its Executive Secretary.

Financial Assistance Provided to Dodge County Veterans and their families:

- \$1,680 in gift cards (gas, groceries, hot meals)
- Emergency Relief Fund
 - o 19 Total Applications Received (Increase of 280% compared to 2023)
 - o 11 Approved & 8 Denied Applications
 - o \$12,056.29 in assistance for rent/mortgages, utilities, funeral expenses, etc.

Updated Guidelines for the Emergency Relief Fund to reflect the following:

Request Limitations:

- Prior to second request being considered in one year, veteran/applicant must show proof of financial planning through one of the Budgeting Resources listed in “Dodge County Community Resources” Booklet. Maximum amount paid for first request: \$2,000. Additional Requests made in the 12 month time frame: \$1,500. Assistance cannot be paid for two consecutive months for the same issue.

Special Authority:

- This special authority also expands the eligibility for assistance to include those veterans with a character of discharge of Under Honorable Conditions and under legislative changes (Don't Ask Don't Tell, Covid Refusals etc).

Resolution 23-57 “Authorizing a General Fund Transfer for Veterans Service Office to Replenish the Veterans Relief Fund” was approved by the County Board to create the Veterans Relief Fund as a nonlapsing restricted account. This resolution transferred \$19,168.72 back to the *Veterans Relief Fund* in the Dodge County Veterans Service Office budget for funds that lapsed 2020-2023.

Our Impact

The impact of the benefits Veteran Services provides to our county goes beyond the initial claim or benefit granted. Majority of these benefits are paid monthly for the remainder of the Veteran or claimant's life.

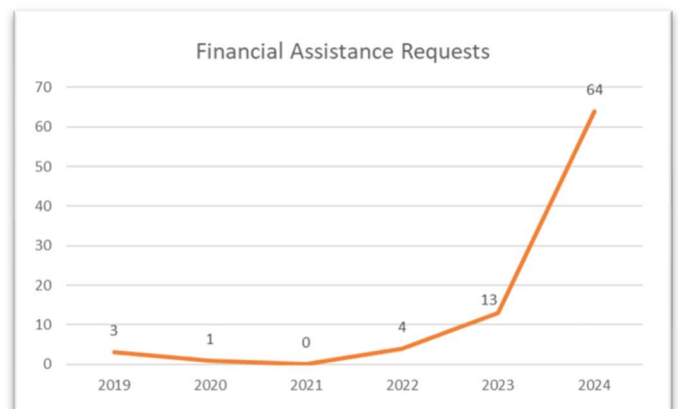
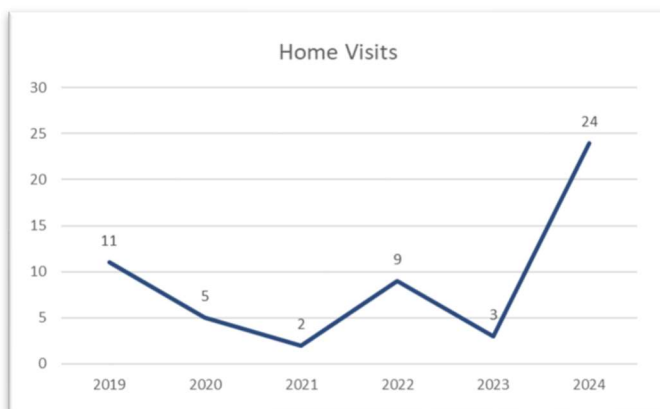
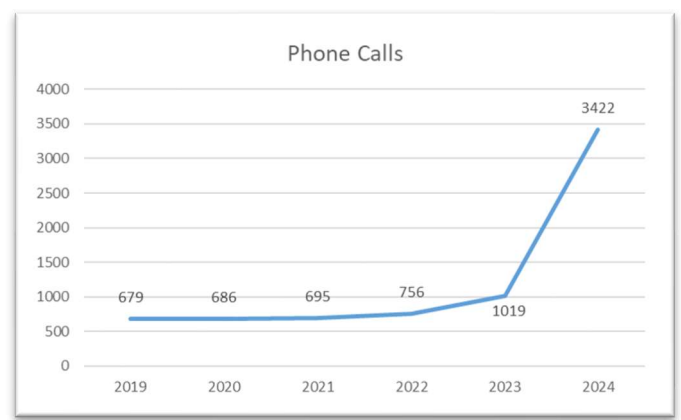
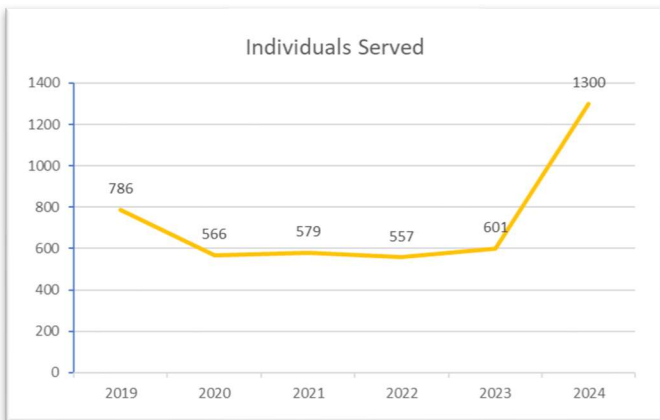
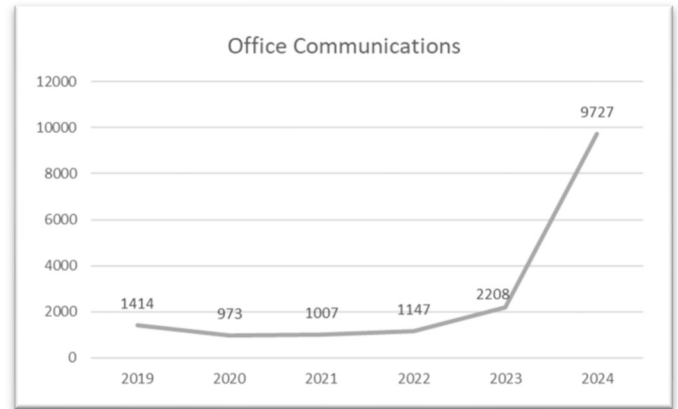
Dodge County Veterans Services has an active case load varying from 200-250 claims. With each staff member having around 115 at any given time. Veteran's deaths are also tracked by our office. In 2024, there were 352 new veteran profiles created in 2024. These are individuals who have never worked with our office before.

The claim time from the start to finish of a submitted claim can be an average of 4-6 months, but some take years to be finalized. In 2024, our office was directly responsible for \$954,877 in one-time payments and \$307,424 paid every month for the claims that were completed. Dodge County Veterans Services also completed debt waivers which resulted in one Veteran having their \$151,339 debt payment to the VA waived, and they were no longer responsible for payment. These payments come from the 314 claims that were adjudicated in 2024. Veterans Services completed an additional 351 federal, state and local benefits. With two full-time staff members, we were able to serve/contact 1,300 different veterans. This is not counting family members or assisting the same individual multiple times. Compared to 2023, this number increased by 216%.

Benefits and Services Provided	
Completed Benefit/Service Provided	2024
Compensation	270
NSC Pension	1
Dependency Indemnity Compensation	5
Death Pension	0
Burial Allowance	3
Waiver of Debt	4
VA Pay Corrections, Death Payments and Grants	5
Dependents	25
Property Tax Credit	29
Driver's License ID	55
WI GI Bill	1
Record Requests/Corrections	84
VA Health Care	52
Referrals to Elected Officials	2
Park Pass	35
Memorial Products	30
Assistance (Referrals to CVI, VORP, DFAS)	15
Federal Education	0
Burial Flag	0
Presidential Memorial Certificate	5
CHAMPVA	18
VA Life Insurance	2
Cemetery Pre-Registration	3
CareGiver Program	14
Correction to VA Pay	2
Cold War Recognition Cert	3
Adaptive Equipment Grant	0
WDVA Grants	2

Veterans Services 2024			
2024 Office Communications		Federal \$ Paid	
Type of Communication	Number	Reoccurring Amounts	\$ 307,424.00
Phone	3,455	One Time Payments	\$ 954,877.00
Office Visit/Walk In	702	Debt Waiver	\$ 151,339.00
Home Visits	24	Markers/Flags for Veterans Graves	
Veteran Email to/From	3,583	Flags	1745
Outreach Events	56	Plastic Markers	81
Outgoing Mail to Veterans	403	Bronze markers	5
Faxes	198	Veteran Deaths	
Incoming Mail for Veterans	188	140	
Other (Application Submissions etc)	1,097	Individuals Served	
Closed Cases		1300	
Federal Claims	314		
Federal/State/Local Benefits	351		

DCVSO Trends (2019-2024)



Budget

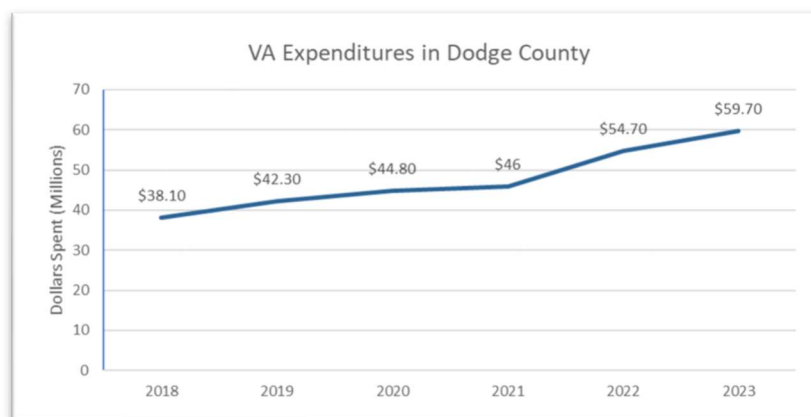
Dodge County Veterans Services operated with a budget of \$242,241 in 2024, but utilized \$171,038 (**70% of the 2024 budget**). Funded through Sales Tax, DCVSO makes up less than 0.1% of the total Dodge County Budget.

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs awarded two grants: CVSO Grant and DVA ARPA Funds. The CVSO Grant increased from the previous year of \$14,300 to \$17,875 which Dodge County Veterans Services uses to cover the salary of the Veterans Benefits Specialist position. The DVA ARPA grant was spent over 2023 into 2025 with a total of \$19,178 to be used to improve services and outreach to our Veterans and their families. These funds were used to improve our services for home visits and being able to provide the same services in the office as outside of the office along with outreach events like the Regional Veterans Benefits Expo and Dodge County Fair.

Dodge County Total CVSO Expenditure	12 Month Projection of Monthly Payments for Benefits Completed by DCVSO	One Time Payments on Benefits Completed by DCVSO	Total Federal VA Expenditures in Dodge County
\$171,038.00 (\$242,241 Budgeted - Used 70%)	\$3,689,088.00 (\$307,424 paid each month)	\$1,106,215.00	\$59,693,000
0.1% of the County Budget	ROI for CVSO Budget to Federal \$ directly to County Residents: 2056.88%	ROI for CVSO Budget to Federal \$ directly to County Residents: 546.77%	.

Important County Fiscal Impact Note:

Dollars received by veterans through the Federal or State DVA which are infused into a community by the veterans or family members may change hands three times; creating greater financial impact to the surrounding community and a subsequent increase in taxable revenue available to local government. Also, each dollar of VA medical care expenditure utilized by Dodge County veterans is a dollar potentially saved from their personal and/or insurance expense or, is a relief from the expense of utilizing Medicaid or Medical Assistance which can, as a result, provide additional financial savings benefits to local governments.



State & Federal Benefits in Dodge County

WI Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits

Veterans and Surviving Spouse's Property Tax Credit

- 188 individuals claimed this credit on their 2024 taxes
- Average of \$3,744.10 per credit back to the veteran or spouse
- 46 new property tax applications submitted in 2024

2024 Professional/Occupational License Fee Waiver Applications: 7

2024 Wisconsin GI Bill Applications: 39

2024 WisDOT Veteran Identifier Applications: 132

Recently Separated Veterans: 49 (individuals released from Active Duty with a Dodge County Zip Code as home of record)

WDVA Veteran Grave Registrations for Dodge County: 56

Federal VA Expenditures in Dodge County FY2023

Veterans: 5,880 (Decreased by 80 from the prior year)

Total VA Expenditure: \$59,693,000 (Increase of \$4,983,000 from the prior year)

Compensation and Pension Payments: \$26,051,000

Education and VR&E: \$1,404,000

Life Insurance and Indemnities: \$70,000

Medical Care: \$32,168,000

Unique VA Patients Residing in Dodge County: 1,822

See last page of this report for specific benefits included in each category. FY2024 Numbers will be released in June 2025.

2024 Highlights



Dodge County Fair



WI CVSO/TVSO Conference



Regional Veterans Benefit Expo hosted by Dodge County Veterans Services and Jefferson County VSO

(CVSO with Secretary of WDVA James Bond)



Donations from Local Organizations and Businesses for our Emergency Relief Fund



Dodge County Veteran is honored for his service in Korea



CVSO Gives Memorial Day Speech in Beaver Dam



2024 Year in Review

Dodge County Veterans Services remained active throughout the year in various community functions, outreach events, and continuing education in addition to the typical day-to-day operations of the office. One of the main goals in 2024 was to make our services more accessible for individuals.

One of the ways in which we increased our outreach to Veterans and their families was the implementation of the DCVSO Monthly Newsletter. This highlighted different benefits, who we are, grants available, and legislative changes that impact our veteran community. The newsletter was sent to around 1,500 individuals each month with an open rate of 46-54%.

Aside from the monthly newsletter, DCVSO increased outreach in the community with public appearances. Our Veterans Benefits Specialist spoke about her service in the Marine Corps to multiple schools in Dodge County for Veterans Day. The CVSO gave a Memorial Day speech in Beaver Dam to remember our veterans and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We also implemented quarterly informational sessions at the Watertown Public Library and held monthly walk-in hours at the VA Clinic in Beaver Dam. The Beaver Dam Army Reserve unit requested us to speak at their family day event in December which allowed our CVSO answer questions on various benefits. Our office held an informational meeting for the Fox Lake Correctional CO Veterans. Dodge County Veterans Services co-hosted a Regional Veteran Benefits Expo with Jefferson County Veterans Services. This was the second year of this event in Watertown. We also had a booth at Dodge County Fair.

WI CVSO/TVSO Conference was held in Green Bay by the Brown County VSO. The conference is over the course of 5 days and covers our continuing education requirements. Some of the topics covered this year included Indigent Burials/Unclaimed Remains, Presentations by the Veterans Law Office of Katrina J. Eagle, BDD Claims, Appeals, Pension, and CRSC/CRDP training. Jessica Bull completed her accreditation training with WDVA in February 2025 just two months after starting. This is a major accomplishment as accreditation can take up to a year.

Marshfield Medical Center's Hospice program invited our office to participate in their Veteran Pinning Ceremonies. Our CVSO was able to attend a pinning for a Koren War Veteran, and we will be participating in future ceremonies. This is not a large event, but this is a way we can recognize individual veterans for their service and sacrifice.

2024 was a busy, but productive year. Our goal in 2025 is to be able to serve our current clients and meet with those who have never heard of our office before.



Veteran & Family Testimonials

Our “why” is our veterans and their families. We say “our veterans” as they are much more than just another number or client coming into the office. Our passion comes from them, their stories, and how we can serve them. Our “why” is driven by the feedback we receive from our veterans and their families. What we do not only impacts and can improve their life, but their families. The services we provide can have have a lasting impact for years to come.

Some of the feedback we received this year:

Thank you again for all you [have] done for dad!!! You really have made a difference in his life. You have changed his experiences and memory of the VA!

I gotta say, first off. Have never met another Vet Service Officer in any County anywhere who cares more than you.

I am truly grateful for you ladies and how you have gone above and beyond to help me. You sat down and listened to me even though I get my words jumbled and have a hard time communicating. I have struggled with assistance for years with my benefits. I can't believe what you are all doing here for people like me

Thank you guys so much for helping and taking time to help “Veteran” with his claim for the government. We couldn't have gotten anywhere without you guys. You were so patient with us (listening and taking care of his claim) Thank-you so much! We are amazed. Thank-you all for the time and caring you showed us.

Goals for 2025

2024 was a year of Dodge County Veterans Services being reestablished due to the turnover of staff and office relocation. With this being the first full year with two accredited employees since 2021, we were able to see a record number of veterans and their families. In 2025, our goal is to continue that trend and to meet with veterans in our community that didn't know Veterans Services was a resource they could use.

National Accreditation will be completed by our Veterans Benefits Specialist to complete her continuing education goals and to be fully accredited with all the same agencies that the CVSO is accredited with. This allows us to have maximum visibility within the VA to better serve our veterans.

Dodge County Patriot Project has been in the works for the last year, and we are finally to the point where the maps will be published. This is an ongoing memorial project to remember and honor our local veterans buried in Dodge County. The Dodge County Patriot Project will be open to the public and anyone who wants to participate in logging grave locations. We are hoping to have this project available to the public before Memorial Day.



In an effort to continue to be more accessible to the population we serve, Veterans Services will be implementing Walk-in Wednesdays and Townhalls. Walk-in hours will be for individuals to come in without an appointment for basic benefits such as Intent to Files, WI Property Tax Credit, education benefits, and emergency assistance. Before our walk-in services were held monthly at Beaver Dam VA, and we had limited availability the remainder of the month for walk-ins due to appointments. Now veterans will not have to wait 2-3 weeks for an appointment that could be completed on a walk-in day. Townhalls will be held twice in 2025 to discuss issues, answer questions, and gather feedback from veterans and their families.

Dodge County Veterans Services is looking into the possibility of adding an additional position into the office. Due to the demand of the office and to best meet the needs of our clients, another staff member would be beneficial. Currently, when comparing Dodge County Veterans Services to other counties with similar veteran populations, Dodge County Veterans Services has two employees compared to others having three/four employees. Adding another employee would offer a better VSO to Veteran ratio for our county.

About the Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures (GDX) Report

Veteran Population

- As of FY 2023, the estimated Veteran population data by state and county are based on the VA VetPop2020 model. This model is VA's source for official estimates and projections of the Veteran population.

Compensation and Pension

- The Compensation and Pension (C&P) category includes expenditures for the following categories: compensation payments, pension payments, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, and burial allowances. Most expenditures reported in this category reflect monthly payments made to individuals. Retroactive payments and one-time payments are also included.

Education and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment

- Expenditures in this category include: automobile and adaptive equipment, specially adapted housing, Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (Chapter 35), Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans (Chapter 31), Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance (Chapter 32), Montgomery G.I. Bill for Selected Reserves (Chapter 1606), Reserve Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 1607), Montgomery G.I. Bill (Chapter 30), and Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance (Chapter 33)..

Insurance and Indemnities

- This category consists of VA expenditures for death claims, matured endowments, dividends, cash surrender payments, total disability income provision payments, and total and permanent disability benefits payments. It includes Veterans Group Life Insurance, National Service Life Insurance, Service Disabled Veterans Life Insurance, United States Government Life Insurance, Veterans Reopened Insurance, and Veterans Special Life Insurance. It does not include Traumatic Injury Protection Under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, or Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

Medical Expenditures

- The specific programs reported for this category are: medical care, General Post Fund, medical and prosthetic research, and miscellaneous accounts. Choice Act funds are also included.

Unique Patients

- The count of unique patients is based on the home residence of the patient.

<https://www.va.gov/vetdata/expenditures.asp#two>