



Yesenia Mata  
COMMISSIONER

Glenda Villareal  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

03/18/26

**To the Chair of the Veterans' Advisory Board,**

As we reflect on Calendar Year 2025, I am proud of the progress the New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) made in support of New York City's Veterans, Service Members, caregivers, survivors, and military families.

This year brought several meaningful legislative and policy accomplishments. DVS supported the extension of the Cold War Veterans Property Tax Exemption to eligible property owners in New York City. We also helped institutionalize the Vallone Veterans Initiative through City Council and Mayoral funding, ensuring that each Council District Office hosts a Veterans of Foreign Wars-accredited Service Officer one day per month to assist Veterans and their families.

At the state level, DVS supported expansion of the Veterans Tuition Award to include non-combat Veterans with at least four years of military service and to allow unused benefits to be transferred to a spouse, survivor, or child. At the federal level, DVS worked with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs to advance reforms requiring the electronic sharing of transition data with accredited state and municipal partners, improving outreach to transitioning Service Members.

These accomplishments built on the broader work DVS carried out throughout 2025. Throughout the year, the agency served more Veterans and military families through direct services, referrals, and partnerships focused on benefits assistance, housing stability, education, employment, entrepreneurship, mental health, and family support.

DVS continued helping Veterans and their families navigate earned benefits, connect to housing and homelessness-prevention supports, pursue education and career opportunities, access mental health resources, and build stronger community ties across the five boroughs.

That work also included several high-impact initiatives that strengthened support and visibility for the Veteran community. Through its partnership with HelloFresh and State partners, DVS helped distribute more than 2 million meals to New York's Veterans.



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DVS also marked a third successful year of the NYC Boss Up Veteran Entrepreneurship Program in partnership with the Department of Small Business Services. The program provided up to 10 selected winners with a \$20,000 grant and enrollment in SBS's small business education program to help Veteran and military family entrepreneurs build and grow their businesses.

In the cultural space, DVS hosted CineVet, a Veteran film showcase dedicated to honoring the service and sacrifices of Veterans through cinema. The showcase created a platform for Veteran storytellers and collaborators to share their work, engage with their communities, and foster greater understanding between Veterans and civilians.

Together, these efforts reflect DVS's continued commitment to expanding access, strengthening coordination, and improving outcomes for New York City's Veteran community.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. To assist the Veterans' Advisory Board with its 2025 annual report, I am sharing these highlights from the agency's work over the past year.

As the new Commissioner, I am looking forward to working closely with you all in the year ahead to continue strengthening services and opportunities for our Veterans, Service Members, and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yesenia Mata". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Yesenia Mata**  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Veterans' Services



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## **2025 Accomplishments Overview**

### **Cold War Veterans Property Tax Exemption**

DVS supported the successful extension of the Cold War Veterans Property Tax Exemption to eligible property owners in New York City, expanding access to tax relief.

### **Institutionalized the Vallone Veterans Initiative**

DVS helped institutionalize the Vallone Veterans Initiative through City Council and Mayoral funding, ensuring that each Council District Office hosts a Veterans of Foreign Wars-accredited Service Officer one day per month to assist Veterans and their families.

### **Expanded the Veterans Tuition Award**

DVS supported expansion of the New York State Veterans Tuition Award to include non-combat Veterans with at least four years of military service and to allow unused benefits to be transferred to a spouse, survivor, or child.

### **Advanced Federal Transition Data Reform**

At the federal level, DVS worked with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs to advance reforms requiring the electronic sharing of transition data with accredited state and municipal partners, improving outreach to transitioning Service Members. This change is reflected in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2025.

### **Strengthened Housing and Homelessness Prevention Work**

Housing remained a core part of DVS's work. In 2025, 153 Veterans and their families received housing through the DVS Veteran Peer Coordinator program, and 509 received homelessness prevention and aftercare assistance. DVS's housing work continued to include permanent placements, eviction prevention, rental arrears assistance, rapid rehousing, and landlord-tenant mediation.



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### **Distributed More Than 2 million Meals to New York Veterans**

Through its partnership with HelloFresh and State partners, DVS helped distribute more than 2 million meals to New York Veterans. This work remained a key part of the agency's broader effort to address food insecurity among Veterans and military families.

### **Reached 600 Veteran- and Military Spouse-Owned Businesses on VetBizMap**

In 2025, VetBizMap surpassed 600 Veteran- and Military Spouse-owned businesses across all five boroughs of New York City. This milestone reflects both the strength of the Veteran entrepreneurial community and DVS's ongoing efforts to identify, support, and elevate these businesses through greater visibility, connection, and access to opportunity.

### **Marked a Third Successful Year of the NYC Boss Up Veteran Entrepreneurship Program**

In partnership with the Department of Small Business Services, DVS continued the NYC Boss Up Veteran Entrepreneurship Program for a third successful year. The program provides up to 10 selected winners with a \$20,000 grant and enrollment in SBS's small business education program.

### **Hosted CineVet as a Cultural Platform for Veteran Storytelling**

DVS hosted CineVet, a Veteran film showcase dedicated to honoring the service and sacrifices of Veterans through cinema. The showcase creates a platform for Veterans and their collaborators to share stories, engage with their communities, and foster greater understanding between Veterans and civilians through documentaries, fiction, and experimental short films.