

# **NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD 2021 ANNUAL REPORT**



*Photo Credit: United War Veterans Council*

## **NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ACHIEVEMENTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

*“Veterans know better than anyone else the price of freedom, for they’ve suffered the scars of war. We can offer them no better tribute than to protect what they have won for us.” – President Ronald Reagan, 1983*

December 31, 2021

Mayor Eric Adams and Council Speaker Adrienne E. Adams:

Submitted for your review is the New York City Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) 2021 end of year report. This report shares highlights and concerns veterans shared with us during the Advisory Board's Public Hearing Sessions.

Additionally, the report shares our recommendations to the elected officials governing our city's veterans and the Department of Veterans Services (DVS).


Our public sessions are held every other month and provide our city's veterans a voice to share and give input into issues that plague the veteran community; or that can improve the services delivered to the community. These sessions are also a great place to find out what works and what does not.

A flyer is also included outlining the dates, times, and locations of each public session. Currently, we are having our sessions remotely, but it is hoped in the future we will be both remote and in person.

Finally, included in our report and submitted as an addendum for your review is the Department of Veterans Services annual report.

Thank you for your attention to Veteran issues during the developmental phase of your administration. The Veterans Advisory Board stands ready to work with you to improve the quality and level of services for all New Yorkers, especially our Veterans.

Please direct any questions or concerns to me at:  
WMcClintonVABNYC@gmail.com or I can be reached at 917-642-1785.

Sincerely,  
  
Wendy McClinton  
Chair, NYC Veterans Advisory Board

# NYC VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD PUBLIC SESSIONS



**CALLING ALL VETERANS! YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED TO HONOR THE SERVICE YOU GAVE!  
TOGETHER WE WILL MAKE NYC VETERAN FRIENDLY!**

**Wednesday, February 9th (Bronx)**

**Wednesday, April 13th (Queens)**

**Wednesday, June 8th (Staten Island)**

**Wednesday, August 10th (Brooklyn)**

**Wednesday, October 19 (Manhattan)**

All Sessions begin at 6pm sharp and are currently held via zoom. As NYC continues to open, we look forward to holding in person meetings with all Covid-19 protocols.

All Veterans, their family members and caregivers are encouraged to attend!

Please use the link below to gain access to the session.

**ZOOM Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86113259398?pwd=R1d2dk1BUWpLUVVlOXBsHo1ZFhRUT09>

If you are an organization that provides services that can assist NYC Veterans and their families, please contact the VAB to publicly share information about your organization to our veteran audience. If you have a question that you want answered at the public session, please use this **Email:** [nycveteransadvisoryboard@gmail.com](mailto:nycveteransadvisoryboard@gmail.com)

## NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

As of December 31, 2021, six of the ten members had current appointments, one member's term has been verbally extended by the Council; and a fifth appointment by the City Council remains unfilled.

Board Member	Borough	Email (@gmail.com)	Term Expires	Appointment
Wendy McClinton Chairman	Brooklyn	WMcClintonVABNYC	June 4, 2021	Council
Charles Hernandez Vice Chairman	Bronx	CHernandezVABNYC	March 31, 2021	Council
Mercedes Elias Secretary	Queens	MEliasVABNYC	February 17, 2024	Mayor
Todd Haskins	Manhattan	THaskinsVABNYC	February 17, 2024	Mayor
Joe Bello	Bronx	JBelloVABNYC	Council extended	Council
Paul Dietrich	Staten Island	PDietrichVABNYC	August 23, 2023	Mayor
John Rowan	Queens	JRowanVABNYC	November 19, 2021	Council
Peter Kauffmann	Queens	PKauffmannVABNYC	August 23, 2023	Mayor
Jennifer Kamrowski	Manhattan	JKamrowskiVABNYC	February 17, 2024	Mayor
Andrew Walcott	Brooklyn	AWalcottVABNYC	August 23, 2023	Mayor

### Revision of Board Under Approved By Mayor's Office

In previous end of year reports we recommended expanding the size of the board from its current number of 11 to 13. We made this recommendation to include important constituencies not only to the Board, but the community: a spouse of a veteran or deceased veteran, a Gold Star parent or child; or a registered caregiver of a veteran as defined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We recommended one individual be appointed by the mayor and one by the Speaker of the City Council on behalf of the Council. Introduction 2354-B was passed by the City Council on December 9, 2021. Over the course of 30 days, the Mayor did not sign or veto the bill. As a result, on January 10, 2022 this Introduction became law. This local law will take effect in 120 days.

## **RATIONALE FOR LOCAL VETERAN POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

### **Why Should the City Support its Veterans?**

We believe that New York City, as well as the non-profit and private sectors, have both moral and economic imperatives to support our veterans. New York City benefits from these investments:

**Freedom and Security – the Moral Imperative:** All residents of New York benefit from the freedom and security provided by our armed forces. The Federal Hall National Memorial reminds us of the observation of our first President, George Washington who noted that ***“the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation.”*** In our order to ensure our continued success it is critical that we support those who have served.

**Federal Spending and Tourism – the Short-term Economic Imperative:** New York City also benefits disproportionately from federal spending and tourism. Activities such as Fleet Week, New York’s July Fourth Celebration, New York City Veterans’ Day Parade (*“America’s Parade”*), the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum, and the Canyon of Heroes all are connected to our nation’s military veterans and produce significant commerce. Additionally, many of New York City’s programs qualify for federal funding, which makes them more effective and economically efficient for the City. Lastly, as the economic capital of the world, many Veteran Service Organizations (VSO’s) and veteran-focused non-profits either call New York City home or host significant operations and events here, which also adds to the commerce and culture of the city. All this provides a compelling rationale to support strong local veteran policies.

**Veterans Make Great Citizens – the Long-Term Economic Imperative:** Veterans and their families are this country’s greatest renewable resources and attracting them to New York City supports our continued success. Veterans tend to have higher earnings and lower unemployment than non-veterans once their transition is complete. Veterans also tend to be more civically active and have lower incarceration rates than non-veterans. Increasing our veteran population will continue to add to the vibrant fabric of culture in the city.

These moral and economic imperatives provide a sound rationale for investment in local veteran policies and programs particularly since many of these provide a direct and measurable positive economic return for New York City.

## SUMMARY OF VAB ACTIONS IN 2021 AND PLANS FOR 2022

**Below is a summary of the key activities for 2021:**

**Advised the Commissioner on the Continued Pandemic Response:** The VAB was actively involved in engaging with DVS to help shape its pandemic response, actively helping with food distribution centers and providing resources to veterans continuing to face challenges of the pandemic.

**Conducted 5 Meetings:** This year with the pandemic continuing to impact the city, we hosted virtual meetings to support the goal of giving a voice to the public. We continued to observe a higher level of attendance virtually than in-person meetings hosted prior to the pandemic.

**2022 Meeting Schedule:** We have tentatively scheduled the 2022 VAB Meetings on the following dates. All meetings will be held virtually until further notice bearing in mind health and safety concerns relating to the pandemic:

Date	Borough
Wed Feb 9	Bronx
Wed April 13	Queens
Wed June 8	Staten Island
Wed August 10	Brooklyn
Wed October 19	Manhattan

**Convened Government and other Leaders to Connect Veterans with Services:** At each of the VAB meetings, the staff of DVS, as well as representatives from the VA and other government and non-government organizations were present. Our goal this year was to highlight the initiatives and services of many non-profit organizations throughout the greater New York City area. This created an opportunity to connect veterans directly with the services they provide.

**Engaged with DVS, City Council and the Veteran Community on Strategic Priorities and Policies Relating to Veterans in New York City:** The VAB actively engaged with all three of its key stakeholders to help prioritize resources and raise issues. This included meetings with elected officials as well as members of the veteran community. Throughout the course of the year, we had incredibly active participation at our community meetings, highlighting specific issues within the community which we wanted to highlight here, so they can be appropriately addressed.

- ✓ **Issues with City Parks Departments.** Concerns were raised regarding the use of park houses in the Bronx, where veterans were kicked out of the park houses during the pandemic so that they could be used for voting centers or housing children for school.

- ✓ **Half price Metrofares for student veterans.** This was an issue approved several years ago, with only 400 of the 12,000 applications for the program being approved. The funding for this program was included in a prior City Budget by former Councilmember Deutsch and lapsed during the pandemic. Additionally, advocates have reported they have been lobbying the State to fund a half-fare Metrocard for all veterans. The VAB has included this issue in the recommendations portion of this report.
- ✓ **Concerns of disabled veteran street vendors.** Issues were raised regarding the discrimination of disabled veteran street vendors losing rights over non-veterans. The VAB has included this issue in the recommendations portion of this report.

**Future Objectives:** A key objective for 2022 and beyond will be to **continue to advocate for and work with** DVS and the administration to address better reporting and verification of performance indicators. This will allow the board to not only verify information provided by DVS; but help the board provide more effective advice on how to best support veterans in New York City.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are made in an effort to increase the efficiency of the Department of Veterans Services as well address issues brought to our attention by the community and the public based on feedback received during our public session meetings.

### Recommendations for the Mayor, City Council and DVS

**Dedicated Personnel within DVS Assigned as Claims Representatives:** Navigating the Federal VA bureaucracy to access benefits for which a veteran qualifies is incredibly difficult. This has become more challenging as many of the traditional providers of these services have lost support staff trained to complete these activities. In 2021 DVS started to provide direct assistance to veterans by helping them complete and file their VA disability claims to realize any federal VA benefits to which they may be entitled. DVS was able to certify their staff to serve as authorized representatives to submit claims on behalf of service members and their families.

However, due to the turnover rate at DVS, as well as other commitments many of the members on the staff have, it is our recommendation that dedicated claims representatives are identified who will understand the intricacies of the claims process. In addition to the claims filed and processed for the VA, these representatives would also be able to file claims for the property tax exemptions, which the state recently approved as a permanent benefit attracting veterans to reside in New York. **Additionally, we'd like to see the agency provide better metrics, which should include number of claims received, successfully processed and monetary outcomes for NYC's veterans.**

**Establish a Preference for New York City to Contract with Veteran Owned Businesses:** The Federal Government, State Government and most major U.S. corporations maintain preference programs to contract with veteran-owned businesses and yet New York City does not. While the city has taken a few steps to address, this continues to send a wrong message to our veterans. We believe the Adams administration, along with the City Council should change this. The cost to administer such a program would be minimal as it could be administered through the existing Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise ("MWBE") program. For New York City to be a national leader in local veteran policies it must find a way to support veteran entrepreneurship and veteran owned businesses through a contracting preference.

**Add Contracting Capability for DVS:** This has been a top priority of the VAB for each of the past four years and continues to be an issue, particularly with the community and veteran related non-profits. One of the most fundamental aspects of a city agency is having direct control over contracting resources. We believe the



lack of this ability has hampered DVS's effectiveness. DVS was on the verge of obtaining ACCO capability prior to the pandemic **but as the results of a hiring freeze, DVS was not able to hire someone.** Currently, all contracts to local Veteran Service Organizations or non-for-profits that provide direct service to veterans are currently executed through multiple city agencies. In addition to prioritization, there are unique contracting attributes that VSOs often carry, such as not being a 501(c)(3), which confuse and slow down the completion of contracts and disbursement of funds when centralized through DCAS. We believe this should be rectified in the **FY23** budget process.

### **Increase Interagency Cooperation Regarding Vendors Preferences for Veterans**

Street vending is New York City's oldest entrepreneurial venture for veterans going back to the 1894 when New York State legislators enacted the state laws promising wounded Civil War veterans could make a living as street peddlers, unfettered by legal restrictions. This was a small promise made to veterans by a grateful city and state- and a tradition that remains deeply rooted in the NYC veteran community today. As citizens of the city returned to office over the past year, veterans who own and operate street carts had a difficult time operating and maintaining their vendor's license. We are concerned about the lack of disabled veterans or veteran vendors being addressed or included in recent legislation, both from city and state legislators. We recommend creating an avenue for veteran street vendors to voice their concerns and issues, as they are a unique subsection of the vendors population. This would affirm the city's commitment to its veterans, while at the same time continue to support these veteran entrepreneurs.

**Re-aligning Objectives and Resources for Veterans on Campus:** As a result of the pandemic; with many college campuses moving to provide 'virtual' versus 'in person' education, New York City saw a significant decrease in veterans attending schools. We believe New York City needs to provide greater funding and resources for programs to attract and actively recruit veterans to attend schools here, which will also create greater employment opportunities locally, post-graduation. The GI bill brings a significant amount of money into the city, with housing and tuition costs covered. One of the perks for student veterans is the **Fair Fares** program, which would cover half of the cost for subway and eligible bus fares and veterans were previously eligible for. With this specific perk, funding for the program would need to be allocated in the budget to ensure that student veterans are able to utilize this program.

**Additionally, with regards to vets on campus, currently one very large negative for the schools on Staten Island is that there is a 9% lower Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) from the federal level for students on Staten Island versus each other borough. This is because of the way the Federal Government calculates its monthly housing allowance (BAH); which ends up with Staten Island combined with Bayonne, New Jersey; rather than the other boroughs of NYC.**

**This results in a negative impact on other serving members of the armed forces**

who happen to live on Staten Island and therefore receive the lower BAH. Since this is a federal issue, the VAB recommends the Adams administration ask the congressional delegation to address this issue on its behalf. In addition, with regards to veterans attending schools, all veterans, including those family members using the GI Bill, should be eligible for the fair fares program determined with the BAH.

**Assess, Evaluate and Document the Impact of Our Programs:** Our vision statement includes reference to the *most effective* local veteran policies. These words were chosen carefully, and we are committed to recommending policies and programs focused on veterans that benefit all New Yorkers. To accomplish this, we believe DVS must be provided with the appropriate resources.

As such, we call upon the Adams administration and the City Council to provide additional funding specifically dedicated to evaluating and documenting programs, including:

- ✓ Document benefits and efficiency: We believe New York City has created extremely effective veteran programs and these are a model for the country. Documentation will allow us to prove that we have been good stewards of resources and attract additional State and Federal resources. Further, documentation will highlight the value that these programs provide to all New Yorkers.
- ✓ Assessment of data provided: In order to understand the value of data provided, the context surrounding the data must be understood in order to ensure the data is accurately representative of the success or failure of initiatives or programs. Statistics provided without context of length of programs, impact to overall population, and overall impact of results does not allow for a greater understanding of the efficiency of the DVS or allow the VAB to provide as much transparency to the veteran population within NYC.
- ✓ Document lessons learned: The veteran population in New York City is a relatively small one compared to other constituencies. Documenting the lessons learned from our programs could allow us to scale them to larger populations, thereby benefiting all New Yorkers. This model is already being applied to our veteran homeless and treatment court programs. We are encouraged by the opportunity to share our successes with other populations in the City.

**Providing Personnel Support for the VAB:** We again ask for administrative support to the VAB be codified into legislation to ensure continuity of support and communication with DVS. DVS offered a VA work study student to aid with the board, however one was not identified and the liaison to the VAB has changed multiple times over the course of the year. Within the legislation, we would like the support services provided to be detailed (i.e. what equipment, assets, etc) in order to reduce conflict of responsibilities between DVS and the VAB.

# **ADDENDUM**



James W. Hendon  
COMMISSIONER

Glenda V. Garcia  
INTERIM DEPUTY  
COMMISSIONER

December 31, 2021

To the Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board,

The year 2021 was a time of healing and recovery for our city as we continued to emerge from the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NYC Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) tirelessly carried on its mission by providing essential services and resources to the Veteran community throughout this time of change and adaptation. We also launched new programs to address the needs of our constituents and increased our outreach and engagement efforts through amplified communication strategies.

We encouraged Veterans and their families to get vaccinated, developed initiatives to empower Veteran jobseekers and entrepreneurs, and connected constituents to earned benefits. In addition, we bridged those in need to mental health and wellness services and remained steadfast in our dedication to housing Veterans experiencing homelessness.

As always, the Veterans Advisory Board served as an instrumental part of our work throughout the year thanks to its insightful feedback, collaboration, and through its virtual community meetings. DVS remains grateful for your leadership and continued guidance as we restore our city's vibrance in the days ahead.

To aid you with your 2021 annual report, I am writing to share highlights from our agency's accomplishments over the last year. This list illustrates our areas of focus and provides insight on where we will be channeling our efforts in the future as we continue to improve the lives and wellbeing of New York City's Veterans and their families.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JWH".

James W. Hendon

Lieutenant Colonel, US Army Reserve

Connect with us!



@NYCVeterans  
[www.nyc.gov/vets](http://www.nyc.gov/vets)

1 Centre St, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ste 2208,  
New York, NY 10007  
P: 212 416 5250  
F: 212 312 0950

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## **Overview of DVS Accomplishments: 2021**

### **Year in Review**

Throughout 2021, the NYC Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) expanded its service offerings to make New York City a more Veteran friendly place to live, learn, and work.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, DVS housed its 1000th homeless Veteran. Even as the pandemic raged, our Veteran Peer Coordinators continued to serve our most vulnerable Veterans in need, and by the end of the year, DVS placed an additional 51 Veterans in permanent housing. Additionally, DVS staff returned to providing in-person services at City-run shelters by the start of the Summer.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Mayor de Blasio signed Executive Order 65 to codify the city's efforts to support and empower Veterans on several fronts. Included was the mandate to create VetConnectPro, a digital employment platform intended to increase the number of veterans who apply to and get hired for municipal jobs. The Order also mandated the training of city staff to improve military cultural competency across agency hiring managers. In addition, the order called for increased data sharing between agencies to identify Veteran clients through the inclusion of a "Veteran indicator question" on all city intake forms. Executive Order 65 also called for the creation and administration of a survey to help DVS learn more about the Veteran community's demographic traits and service needs.

As such, in mid-March, DVS launched the Veteran and Military Community Survey. The survey delved into numerous topics such as age, income, housing, employment, and health care status to produce a detailed portrait of the Veteran population and provide crucial insights into their needs. The survey exceeded its target sample size for statistical significance by capturing more than 3,000 responses from the community. The findings from this survey will be released in 2022.

Throughout the spring, DVS also met with Community Boards across the five boroughs to strengthen neighborhood connections and promote awareness about the agency.

In May, DVS held its first community event in more than a year to honor Memorial Day. DVS partnered with Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx to host an event that brought more than 150 Veterans and their families together to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Attendees participated in the day's ceremonies by placing flags that were generously donated by the Bob Woodruff Foundation on more than 6,500 Veteran graves.

The month of May also marked another pivotal achievement for the city; over Memorial Day Weekend, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) announced that **Veterans** can take any city civil service exam free of charge. This new policy helps reduce financial barriers since exam fees can range from \$40 to \$101, making it easier for Veterans to find careers in city government.

Employment and Veteran entrepreneurship were two key areas that DVS focused on throughout the rest of the year. To that end, in July, DVS launched VetBizNYC, an

interactive map that identifies Veteran Owned Businesses (VOB) across the city to support the local economy, promote Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) certification, and to foster small business development. More than 300 businesses have been added to the map so far. The businesses represent a cross section of industries including construction, restaurants, gardening, organizational consulting, and retail goods. It also includes business contact information and city/state procurement certification status for each featured business. VOBs interested in being included on the map can fill out an online form on our site.

On Oct. 19th, DVS recognized the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Post-9/11 Service with a ruck march and ceremony hosted in conjunction with the United War Veterans Council (UWVC). Members of the community marched across the Brooklyn Bridge, raised a flag over the 9/11 Memorial, and concluded the day with a wreath-laying ceremony in lower Manhattan at Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza. The event paid tribute to the Veterans of the Global War on Terror. Over one hundred Veterans, city officials, uniformed military, and military families, as well as advocates, took part in the commemoration.

On Veterans Day, and in accordance with Executive Order 65, DVS launched VetConnectPro, a first-in-the-nation employment tool designed to connect veteran jobseekers to employment opportunities in the public and private sectors. A model for other cities, the site provides Veterans with access to special technology features, including a proprietary military skills translator, a robust dashboard with job postings from city agencies, information about earned benefits, and free professional development training courses. The translator, operated by JobPath, can interpret and match over 7,000 military occupational skills to thousands of available jobs by leveraging specs from the Department of Labor and the Society of Human Resource Managers. The site also includes information about civil service exams, fee waivers for veterans, and special hiring programs for people with disabilities.

After a hiatus in 2020, DVS hosted its annual Veterans' Day Breakfast with over 450 attendees, the largest in the agency's history. The event took place at the start of the parade route near Madison Square Park. After the event's conclusion, DVS staff marched with the Mayor and other Veteran Service Organizations in the largest Veterans Day parade in the country.

That was followed in late November by a joint DVS and Department of Education ceremony to rename the District 7 Administration Building in the Bronx after local fallen veteran Sergeant Jose M. Velez. The building located at 501 Courtlandt Avenue represents a diverse district comprised of 41 different schools. DVS hopes this will be the start of an effort to have more schools, buildings, and memorials named after Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Global War on Terror.

In December, thanks to DVS' advocacy, two major housing developers were awarded grants from the New York State *Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI)* to create new units of supportive and affordable housing specifically for NYC Veterans. This is a major step toward eliminating the housing insecurity experienced by our most high needs Veterans.

Finally, DVS closed out the year with a “Winter Heroes” event in the Bronx. DVS partnered with the Claremont Neighborhood Center, Toys for Tots, and other philanthropic partners, such as Bookwell Travel and Bloomberg Philanthropies, to distribute children’s gifts, gingerbread house kits, coats, and bags of fresh food to Veterans families in need.

In 2021, we also sustained several ongoing programs and efforts:

## **Ongoing Agency Initiatives**

### **Communications**

The DVS Communications team sustained its content-rich weekly newsletter by growing its reach by 21% from the previous year. The agency also launched a revamped website with new information about housing and home ownership, mental health resources, and education benefits, among other resources. The year also marked the first time that the agency ran paid social media ads across all major platforms to promote the Veteran and Military Community Survey and VetBizNYC Map.

### **Crisis Intercept Mapping**

DVS and the Mayor’s Office of Community Health expanded the Crisis Intercept Mapping partnership to Queens in 2021. Mapping teams now function in Staten Island and Queens to focus on strengthening the delivery of evidence-based suicide prevention policies and practices for Veterans. These teams meet regularly and are comprised of community and Veteran medical centers, behavioral health providers, social service organizations, and other New York City agencies.

### **Food Outreach**

DVS continued to provide fresh food to the community by expanding the program to include active-duty military service members and their families. The agency continued its partnership with the Governor’s Office, HelloFresh, The Campaign Against Hunger, Black Veterans for Social Justice, and 20+ different military and Veteran Service Organizations. The program was also supported by generous funding from the New York State Health Foundation and the Bob Woodruff Foundation throughout the year.

Since its launch in July 2020, DVS has distributed more than 145,000 meal kits to Veterans, service members, and their families. In addition, HelloFresh generously donated 1500 turkeys to Veteran families for the Thanksgiving Holiday.

### **Ending Veteran Homelessness**

The DVS Housing and Support Services team continued moving Veterans into safe housing even during a national crisis of unprecedented proportions. Since DVS stood up its Housing and Support Services unit in 2015, the agency has housed 1,051 homeless Veterans. Additionally, since 2017, of those placed into housing, 257 have leveraged the HUDDVASH Continuum voucher administered by DVS and NYCHA.

### **Mission: VetCheck**

Mission: VetCheck continued to bridge the social isolation gap created by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2021. Mission: VetCheck provides resources and information about public services through supportive wellness check calls placed by dedicated volunteers through a partnership with New York Cares. Veterans are referred to DVS for additional support. The initiative has placed over 35,000 calls to date.

### **VA Disability Claims**

Over 6,500 Veterans living in New York City may possibly be eligible to receive Veteran Administration (VA) benefits due to their time in service. The DVS Claims Unit continued to assist Veterans in the review, preparation, and packaging of claims, including those related to Disability Compensation, Survivors Pension, Indemnity Dependency Compensation (DIC), and Education. Since July 2020, DVS has successfully actioned 198 claim submissions, the vast majority of which involved a claim of disability.

### **VetConnectNYC**

VetConnectNYC continued to bridge Veterans and their families to support from a network of vetted service providers. In 2021, DVS shifted the care coordination aspect of the platform to in-house operations, so that intake and referrals could be provided by our expert staff members, many of whom are Veterans or members of the military community. In addition to introducing a new peer-to-peer element to this work, this transition also enabled DVS to understand and track the needs of our community in real time. The system remains powered by our trusted partners at Unite Us, a national Veteran-Owned Business that is regarded for their work in the healthcare coordination space. In 2021, VetConnectNYC facilitated 1,009 service episodes for Veterans and their families who were seeking assistance.

### **Veteran Voices Project**

The Veteran Voices Project (VVP) continued capturing the stories and experiences of local Veterans across the five boroughs in 2021. More than 40 new stories were added to the archive, including a recording from Congressman Charles Rangel who served in the Army during the Korean War. Four new pop-up exhibits were also established to provide community access points for VVP to be experienced by New Yorkers—the Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum, the Morris-Jumel Mansion Museum, Woodlawn Cemetery, and the Staten Island Museum.



## **Select Highlights & Milestones Impacting Veterans in 2021**

### **January 28**

#### ***Queens Crisis Intercept Mapping Meeting***

**DVS along with other partners host a discussion with borough health care leaders about best practices, opportunities, and gaps perceived across Queens to improve suicide prevention and mental health services for Veterans.**

### **February 23**

#### ***DVS houses its 1,000<sup>th</sup> homeless Veteran***

The HSS team is with these Veterans every step of the way, including procuring and processing necessary documentation, providing virtual and socially distanced tours of new apartments, working with partners to find furniture, and showing up on move-in days to help the Veterans move and ensure that they have the keys to their new home.

### **March 8**

#### ***Executive Order 65 is signed by Mayor de Blasio***

**Mayor signs Executive Order 65** to codify the city's efforts to support and empower Veterans with a call for improved data collection among city agencies, the creation of a digital employment tool, and the distribution of a community survey.

### **March 11**

#### ***Staten Island Crisis Intercept Mapping Meeting***

**DVS along with other partners host a discussion with borough health care leaders about best practices, opportunities, and gaps perceived across Staten Island to improve suicide prevention and mental health services for Veterans.**

### **March 18**

#### ***DVS launches the first-ever NYC Veteran and Military Community Survey***

The survey's purpose is to learn more about community demographics, identify service gaps, and improve care for the over 210,000 Veterans who live in New York City.

### **April 8**

#### ***DVS celebrates its 5th anniversary as a city agency***

The agency celebrated with a virtual office get together and a discussion of what the agency accomplished and what it hoped to achieve in the future.

### **May 31**

#### ***NYC waives Civil Service Exam fees for Veterans***

Over Memorial Day Weekend, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) announces that **Veterans** can now take any city civil service exam free of charge.

### **June 20**

#### ***DVS launches VetBizNYC***

The interactive map identifies Veteran Owned businesses (VOB) in the city to promote Veteran entrepreneurship, small business development, M/WBE certification, and support the local economy.

**July 8*****HPD and DVS partner on housing event***

The agencies host a two-week application drive to educate Veterans about applying to affordable housing lotteries through NYC Housing Connect and the City's Mitchell-Lama program. These educational events also highlighted resources to help Veterans access other affordable housing opportunities.

**Sept. 29*****DVS and NYPD Health and Wellness Resource Luncheon***

DVS and NYPD partner on a Health and Wellness Resource Luncheon to celebrate Veteran police officers who went through the Transcendental Meditation training.

**Oct. 19*****DVS and UWVC partner on 20th anniversary of GWOT commemoration***

DVS and UWVC partner to host a ruck march and ceremonial event at Vietnam Memorial Plaza to honor the first boots on the ground in the Global War on Terrorism.

**Nov. 7*****DVS opens pop-up at Staten Island Museum***

DVS opens its third pop-up exhibit to create a community access point for the Veteran Voices Project, an ongoing oral history project to preserve the stories of local service members.

**Nov. 11*****VetConnectPro launches***

The tool connects Veterans looking for work in the New York City public and private sectors to employment opportunities that match their interests and military skills.

**Nov. 11*****DVS hosts its annual Veterans Day Breakfast***

After being put on hold last year due to the pandemic, the annual DVS Veterans Day breakfast returns to NYC.

**Nov. 17*****Turkey Distribution to Veterans and their families***

**DVS distributed 500 turkeys that were generously donated by Hello Fresh to Veteran Service Organizations throughout the city.**

**Nov. 19*****DOE and DVS name Bronx Admin building after fallen veteran***

DOE and DVS name Bronx District 7 Admin building after fallen local veteran Sgt. Jose M. Velez. The building at 501 Cortlandt Avenue represents a diverse district of 41 schools.

**Dec. 18*****DVS Winter Heroes Event***

DVS hands out over 30,000 meals and hundreds of toys, gingerbread house kits, and coats at the Claremont Neighborhood Center in the Bronx thanks to the generosity of Toys for Tots, Bookwell Travel, and Bloomberg Philanthropies.



Daniel Steinberg  
Director

TO: Corey Johnson, Speaker of the City Council  
James Hendon, Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Services  
Wendy McClinton, Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board

FROM: Daniel Steinberg

DATE: December 10, 2021

SUBJECT: Local Law 23 Veterans Services Report for 2019

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Attached please find the 2020 Veterans Services Report pursuant to Local Law 23 of 2015. As you may be aware, Local Law 23 requires the Mayor's Office of Operations to collect and report specified data from a certain set of agencies that provide services to veterans, by category of benefit available to veterans and by veterans' borough of residence. If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact Lauren Quinones at [LQuinones1@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:LQuinones1@cityhall.nyc.gov) or 917-207-3318. Thank you.

Attachment

## Veterans Services Calendar 2020

Agency	Indicator Name	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020
DCA	Applications for general vending licenses submitted by veterans	427	372	373	330	116
DCA	General vending licenses issued to veterans	297	227	227	240	64
DCAS	Civil service examination applications received from applicants claiming veterans' credit	2,843	5,539	2,175	2,315	733
DOHMH	Fee-exempt mobile food vending licenses issued to veterans(active)	357	354	324	381	305
DOHMH	Food vending permits issued to veterans (active)	181	200	204	251	213
HPD	Mitchell-Lama housing applications received from veterans, or their surviving spouses, who have identified themselves as heads of household on their applications	95	133	143	138	95
HPD	Approved Mitchell-Lama applications for veterans, or their surviving spouses, who have identified themselves as heads of household	88	120	143	138	95
HPD	Veterans residing in rental units who use US Department of Housing and Urban Development/US Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers administered by HPD (snapshot)	122	135	163	204	208
NYCHA	Veterans residing in housing operated by NYCHA who use HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA	469	572	651	617	461
NYCHA	Veterans residing in rental units who use HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA	2,228	2,150	2,169	2,263	2,542

### Notes:

1. In 2018, the counts reported by NYCHA were updated to more closely align with the language in each indicator.
2. Between 2018 and 2020, NYCHA completed PACT-Unfunded Units conversions for the following developments: Independence, Baychester, Williams Plaza, 344 E 28th Street, Wise Towers, Murphy. This is reflected in the decrease in VASH vouchers in housing operated by NYCHA.

Veterans Services CY2020  
By Applicant's Borough of Residence

## DCA

### General vending license applications from veterans

Borough of Residence	Approved	Rejected	Total
Bronx	17	11	28
Brooklyn	16	17	33
Manhattan	4	6	10
Queens	8	7	15
Staten Island	16	10	26
Outside of NYC	3	1	4
Total	64	52	116

## DCAS

### Civil service exam applicants claiming veterans' credit

Borough of Residence	Applicants
Bronx	94
Brooklyn	178
Manhattan	64
Queens	152
Staten Island	56
Outside of NYC	189
Total	733

## DOHMH

### Licenses and permits issued to veterans

Borough of Residence	Mobile food vending licenses	Food vending permits
Bronx	67	44
Brooklyn	71	44
Manhattan	48	36
Queens	85	59
Staten Island	15	7
Outside of NYC	19	19
Total	305	209

## HPD

Mitchell-Lama applications from veterans/surviving spouses heads of household

Borough of Residence	Approved	Rejected	Total
Bronx	45	0	45
Brooklyn	10	0	10
Manhattan	28	0	28
Queens	7	0	7
Staten Island	5	0	5
Total	95	0	95

## HPD

Use of HUD-VASH vouchers administered by HPD

Borough of Residence	Used in rental units
Bronx	136
Brooklyn	31
Manhattan	29
Queens	7
Staten Island	4
Outside of NYC	1
Total	208

## NYCHA

Use of HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA

Borough of Residence	Used in NYCHA housing	Used in rental units
Bronx	96	1,257
Brooklyn	240	611
Manhattan	110	292
Queens	3	273
Staten Island	12	73
Outside of NYC	0	36
Total	461	2,542