

Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission

October 23, 2024

Hybrid In-Person & Virtually

Call to Order – 8:30 AM PT

Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, at the Idaho State Veterans Home – Lewiston (821 21st Ave. Lewiston, ID 83501) and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees

Commission Members in attendance: **Chairman Josh Callihan** (Virtual), **Art Gimpel**, **Jinny Cash**, **Eugene Brown** (Virtual)

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Chief Administrator **Mark Tschamp** (Virtual), Deputy Chief Administrator **Tracy Schaner**, ISVH-Boise Administrator **Rick Holloway** (Virtual), ISVH-Lewiston Home Administrator **Mark High**, ISVH-Pocatello Home Administrator **Josiah Dahlstrom** (Virtual) OVA Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**, Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries Bureau Chief **Jacob Faulkner** (Virtual), Business Support Bureau Chief **Paul Spannkebel** (Virtual), Financial Officer **Debbie Spence**, Human Resources Officer **Bri Watkins**, Community Resource Specialist **Mitzi Cheldelin**, and Management Assistant **Kevin Wallior**.

Also in attendance: **Adam Jarvis** DFM Analyst (Virtual)

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Callihan asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on July 17, 2024. Noted that there were some errors with the Community Outreach portion. **Commissioner Brown** motioned for approval of the minutes with those corrections made. **Commissioner Cash** seconded. The motion was approved with unanimous assent.

Division Bureau Reports

Veterans Cemetery Report presented by **Jake Faulkner**

DPW 20-606 Boise Cemetery Expansion

1. Memorial Wall-Concrete walkways are being poured, and precast concrete caps are being placed.
2. Inground Urn Expansion-Completed.
3. Space Force Seal- Nearly complete-Concrete required to be repoured 4 times.

DPW 24-601 Boise Bathroom Renovation (6 Total)

1. Public/Employee Bathrooms-Complete
 - a. Remaining DPW project funds w/ISVC additional funds
 1. Admin Bldg.-Interior paint and LED lighting complete.

DPW 25-600 Boise Maintenance Shop Expansion

1. Regional design professional currently working on fee proposal.
Deferred Maintenance- Both Boise and Blackfoot received substantial road repair and seal coat. Additional work to be completed the spring of 2025.

Veteran Interments

Jul	Cemetery Boise: 39	Cemetery Blackfoot: 5	
Aug	Cemetery Boise: 47	Cemetery Blackfoot: 6	
Sep	Cemetery Boise: 52	Cemetery Blackfoot: 4	
YTD	Cemetery Boise: 216	Cemetery Blackfoot: 15	Total Cemetery Bureau: 231

Dependent Interments

Jul	Cemetery Boise: 31	Cemetery Blackfoot: 3	
Aug	Cemetery Boise: 20	Cemetery Blackfoot: 2	
Sep	Cemetery Boise: 22	Cemetery Blackfoot: 3	
YTD	Cemetery Boise: 73	Cemetery Blackfoot: 8	Total Cemetery Bureau: 81

Burial Equity Act Interments

Jul	Cemetery Boise: 2	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Aug	Cemetery Boise: 1	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Sep	Cemetery Boise: 1	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
YTD	Cemetery Boise: 4	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	Total Cemetery Bureau: 4

Burial Equity Act Dependent Interments

Jul	Cemetery Boise: 0	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Aug	Cemetery Boise: 1	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Sep	Cemetery Boise: 0	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
YTD	Cemetery Boise: 1	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	Total Cemetery Bureau: 1

Volunteer Hours

Jul	188
Aug	225
Sep	220
YTD	633

Other Important Events/Information

ISVC Boise' Group Honors event will be held November 6th at 1300 for all interred Veterans that have not received Military Honors.

Idaho Veteran Wreath (IVW) program has been successfully established. IVW will replace Wreaths Across America at the Boise Veterans Cemetery. All funds raised will be directly utilized to support Idaho Veterans and their families. The event will be held December 14th.

Boise Veterans Home Report presented by **Rick Holloway**

	Census								
	Nursing Care			Medicare A		Residential/Domiciliary Care			
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	
July	2,396	77	97%	38	1.2	0	0	0%	
August	2,406	78	97%	5	0.2	0	0	0%	
September	2,333	78	97%	22	0.7	0	0	0%	
Total/Avg	7,135	78	97%	65	0.7	0	0	0%	

Census is capped at 80, and hovers between 77-80 depending on hospitalizations. There is a waiting list.

Customer satisfaction remains high. 97% Satisfaction rating with an average score of 4.85/5.

DPW – Maintenance continues to be an ongoing issue with such an old facility. A/C units required valve repairs in both July (dining room rooftop) and August (kitchen). Backyard development began in July for a new resident communal area that will be needed when construction begins on the Veterans Home Replacement project.

Last IVAC we announced the Boise Home received a \$200,000 grant from the Borbonus Foundation, through IVAL, to purchase a new bus. We took ownership of that new bus in September.

Boise Home had a COVID outbreak in July There were 18 staff positives and 24 resident positives but no deaths or hospitalizations. Paxlovid and Remdesivir prescriptions worked.

Comments: Commissioner Gimpel pointed out that the last few IVACs he's noticed all the homes have announced COVID outbreaks. Chairman Callihan mentioned the VA Hospitals have also seen an uptick in cases. This seems to be the new normal.

Pocatello Veterans Home Report presented by **Josiah Dahlstrom**

	Census				
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
Jul	1,450	47	71%	26	0.8
Aug	1,455	47	71%	8	0.3
Sep	1,438	48	73%	0	0.0
Total/Avg	4,343	47	72%	34	0.0

Pocatello Home is currently at 76% census a slight increase from the report for this past quarter.

Pocatello did have a COVID outbreak, in which 50% of the residents tested positive. Unfortunately, one resident did pass due to a cardiac associated event.

Pocatello received a top rating in their Pinnacle customer satisfaction surveys. There was a lighthearted complaint that there were too many activities and events to be able to attend all of them.

Showcased a slideshow video of the various activities and events Veterans participated in during the previous quarter.

Pocatello wants to increase the employee response rate to the Annual Employee Engagement survey. Of those who responded 94% are proud to support our mission, 87% feel that safety is a big deal and 84% feel like their skills matter. Respondents did indicate room for improvement regarding internal communications.

Lewiston Veterans Home Report presented by **Mark High**

	Census				
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
Jul	1,467	47	72%	30	1.0
Aug	1,466	47	72%	0	0.0
Sep	1,402	47	71%	16	0.5
Total/Avg	4,335	47	71%	46	0.5

Census remains consistent with previous reports. The numbers don't tell the whole story. Lewiston regularly will reach a census of 51 only for a discharge or death to bring the number back down.

Celebrated with the community for Hot August Nights, the Rose Garden was the first stop for the event's Poker Run.

Annual VA survey occurred 7/9/24 thru 7/11/24. There were six findings which included, Accidents, Nutrition, Medication errors, Sanitary conditions, Infection Control and Life Safety from fire. Provided the VA with a Plan of Correction. In July, Lewiston also received the results from the 6/28/24 CMS survey and submitted a Plan of Correction to them before the due date.

Showcased a slideshow video of the various activities and events Veterans participated in during the previous quarter.

Post Falls Veterans Home Report presented by **Tracy Schaner**

	Census				
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
Jul	1,610	52	79%	35	1.1
Aug	1,685	54	82%	0	0.0
Sep	1,749	56	85%	0	0.0
Total/Avg	5,044	55	83%	35	0.4

The Post Falls Census has been increasing. Average of 55 (83%), currently 59 (92%). There is currently a waitlist. Stabilizing staffing to be able to increase admissions.

Volunteer hours are steadily increasing. Post Falls has a customer satisfaction rating of 5 stars.

Approaching the 2-year anniversary of the facility and still awaiting resolution regarding the HVAC and DOAS punch list items. A new project director at DPW has shown a greater faculty holding the architects and contractors accountable.

There will be a special Veterans Day ceremony and legislative tour on Veterans Day. We've invited the Governor as a keynote speaker. Still awaiting notice/confirmation if he'll be able to attend.

OVA Report presented by **Bill Heyob**

OVA statistics comparing 1st Quarter FY-2025 YTD totals to FY-2024:

	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Increase/Decrease
Interviews YTD	2,385	2,324	+ 61
POAs Filed YTD	1,664	1,797	- 133
Claims Filed YTD	2,818	3,628	-810
Appeals YTD	64	147	- 83
BVA Hearings YTD	12	19	+ 7
Veterans Seen by OVA in Vet Courts	121	108	+13
State Emergency Grants Approved	4	1	+ 3

Notable changes from September 2024 and September 2023. September 2024 had 858 office interviews (+ 138), 808 claims filed (- 349), and 515 POAs filed (- 44).

Noteworthy Issues Currently Happening with the VA

- 2025 COLA increase is 2.5%
- NSC Burial Allowance and Plot Allowance on/after 1 October 2024 is \$978 (was \$948)
- New Rating Tables in December for Mental Health Conditions, Sleep Apnea and Tinnitus
- VA released new rules on Character of Discharge for anyone who received less than Honorable Discharges- Those previously denied may now qualify for Healthcare/Compensation
- VA is supposed to consider those who served in Karshi-Khanabad (K2) base in Uzbekistan post-9/11 the same as serving in SW Asia/PACT Act Presumptive conditions
- As of October 1, 2024, Veterans will automatically be registered in the Burn Pit Registry based on Department of Defense Records. Veteran can Opt-Out if they do not want to be in the Registry

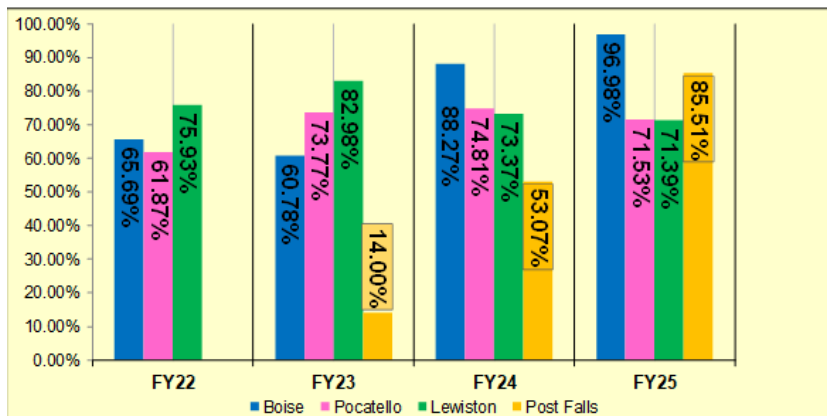
Significant Events within the OVA

- Personnel Changes- Wes McAuslan (served as a VSO for nearly 9 years) departed 29 June. We conducted interviews on October 8th and hired Traci Colton as our newest VSO. Traci is currently the American Legion Department Service Officer, Retiree from the Idaho Army National Guard and has been working as the Elmore County VSO for the past 8 ½ years
- Location Changes- We are currently establishing an office in Mountain Home which will be in the VAMC CBOC in Mountain Home. Traci Colton will be serving in that office once it is fully operational.
- We conducted the 2024 Annual County and Post Service Officer Training at the Riverside Hotel in Boise from August 7-9 with approximately 80 attendees. The 2025 Training will be held on August 27-29th
- VFW Service Officer Training was held in Annapolis, MD from September 22-27. I attended with Frank Fabbri, Emberly Bertasso and Rodrigo Madrigal. Joe Riener, Iris Higgins Robert Smith, Jim Philpott and Eric Bobinski attended virtually.
- The new Quarterly IDVS/OVA Bulletin will be released soon.

BREAK 9:30 AM – 9:45 AM

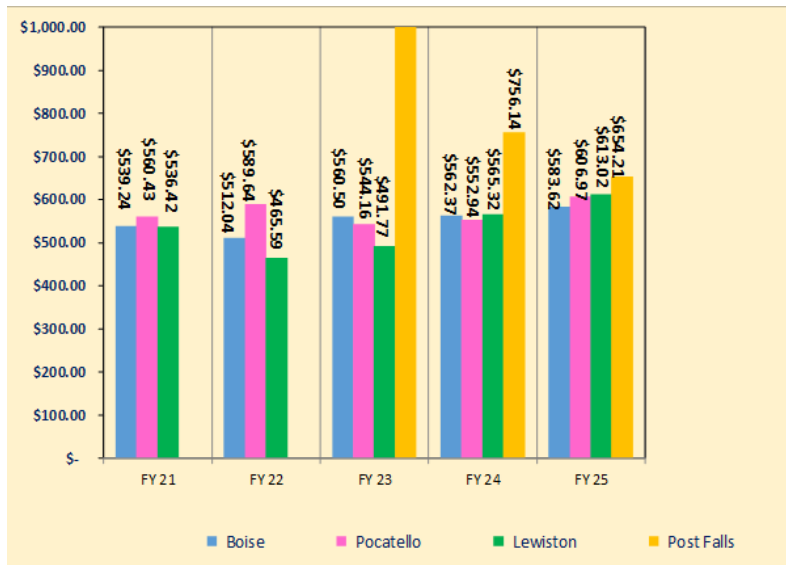
Fiscal Report – presented by Debbie Spence

Average Census YTD Comparisons between the Homes:



FY2025 Average cost per resident day was \$611.64.

Nursing Yearly Costs Comparisons per resident day:



FY2026 Budget Request of \$63,588,500; General Funds 2.8%. Budget request includes:

- 8 FTPs Reduction for Unfunded Positions (funds were used for hiring new staff and retention of current staff)
- Change in Variable Benefit Costs <\$15,000>
- Change in Health Benefit Costs \$568,100
- Change in Employee Compensation \$310,600
- PRN Temp Pool \$0 (reduce agency staffing in operating and develop temp pool of state employees in personnel)
- IT Maintenance and Licensing Services for Network and Hardware Devices \$120,600
- New Capital Outlay \$133,400 (wax dispenser, hygiene shower chair, lifts, IV pumps, dump truck, and shed storage)
- Replacement Items \$455,000 (vehicles, meal ticket machine, food slicer, bathing system, trash compactor, dishwasher, utility vehicle, computers, generator, bed frames, boiler pump, mattresses, and ice cube machine)
- Budget Law Exemptions/Other Adj.
 - Boise Home Replacement \$77,026,100
 - Lewiston Home Renovation \$34,462,500

FY2026 DPW Projects; Requested Permanent Building Funds for Projects:

- Concrete Edging Along Roadways/Pave New Access Road – Cemetery Boise - \$600,000
- Floor Replacement at Administration Office – Cemetery Boise - \$55,000
- Memorial Wall Project – Cemetery Blackfoot - \$250,000

- Solar Project – Cemetery Blackfoot – \$100,000
- Concrete Curbing Project – Cemetery Blackfoot - \$200,000
- Remodel IT Room – Central Support Office - \$180,000
- ADA Access to Memorial Statue – Cemetery – Boise - \$250,000

SWICAP – IDVS has no control. Plan to dispute the 38% increase from ITS over the previous year.

HR Report – presented by Bri Watkins

Update to paid parental leave. Foster care and kinship care leave have been added to the parental leave policy beginning October 1¹.

Continue to target hiring for CNA vacancies.

Benefit package is top tier. Agency staff make significantly more. While IDVS can provide a higher hourly base wage in some cases \$5, \$6, or even \$7 more per hour, staffing agencies are able to provide a nontaxable per diem that combined with the hourly is more than the hourly IDVS pays. IDVS is trying to establish our own temp pool to eliminate our usage of staffing agencies. Could be up to \$658,000 savings per year.

Established new relationships and in some cases rekindled old relationships with nursing training programs near our State Veterans Homes to create a pipeline of talent.

Julia Henry is a new HR specialist located in the Post Falls Home.

Business Support (ITS/Education) – presented by Paul Spannkebel

Education Report

Personnel – Shannon Patenoude was promoted to Program Supervisor and Abby Edgar was promoted to Program Specialist in August 2024.

Keeping Tabs on the Cooperative Contract Agreement with the VA:

1. FY25 Allocation approved for \$197,101.00
2. FY24 Allocation Updates.
 - a. Received Q3's reimbursement on 09/17/2024 in the amount of \$44,219.96
 - b. Received Q2's reimbursement on 06/06/2024 in the amount of \$85,160.42
 - c. Received Q1's reimbursement on 03/13/2024 in the amount of \$82,311.62
 - i. A \$6,564.00 COLA adjustment accepted by the Idaho SAA and submitted to VA in December 2023 raising FY24's allocation to \$211,692.00
 - d. \$205,128.00 approved by VA in September 2023

¹ Updated Parental Leave Policy from DHR. (https://dhr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/STATEWIDE_POLICIES/DHR-10_Paid-Parental-Leave.pdf).

3. FY23 Supplemental Approved by VA:

- a. Received July 10, 2024, in the amount of \$84,276.92

Total funding received in FY2024 was \$295,968.92 when including FY2023's supplemental received in FY2024. While FY2024 allocation is exhausted the FY2023 supplemental helps cover the team's expenses. The SAA will once again request a supplemental for FY2025 to cover the FY2024 funding shortfall.

VA Education Benefits Contribute to Idaho's Economy

FY24 - FINAL		
Gender of Beneficiary	Total Paid	Percentage of Utilization
Female	\$ 10,417,532.70	20.68%
Male	\$ 23,801,845.50	47.25%
Not Reported	\$ 16,157,177.66	32.07%
Grand Total	\$ 50,376,555.86	100.00%

3,508 Idahoan Beneficiaries served in FY24

FY23 - FINAL		
Gender of Beneficiary	Total Paid	Percentage of Usage
Female	\$ 11,796,730.58	26.81%
Male	\$ 28,112,802.80	63.88%
Not Reported	\$ 4,098,404.39	9.31%
Grand Total	\$ 44,007,937.77	100.00%

3,440 Idahoan Beneficiaries served in FY23

There was a 13% increase in education payments in FY2024. There was a 2% increase in Idahoan beneficiaries receiving benefits in FY2024 compared to FY2023. Whereas FY2023 saw a 0.08% decrease in beneficiaries utilizing benefits from FY2022

Program Activities in VA FY2024, Q4

ACTIVE FACILITY TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF IDAHO FACILITIES	PROGRAMS APPROVED
IHL	20	989
NCD	46	42
Apprenticeships (APP)	60	0
On-The-Job (OJT)	134	0
License/Certification & Prep-Courses	8	30
Totals:	268	1,061

The Education Team oversees 268 active facilities in last quarter, adding 3 new facilities in VA's Q4 to our rosters. In Q4, the team approved an additional 1,061 programs since Q3 (at new and existing facilities).

Program Activities Totals for Year-end FY2024

ACTIVE FACILITY TYPE	ACTIVE IDAHO FACILITIES	PROGRAMS APPROVED	DISAPPROVED PROGRAMS	WITHDRAWN FACILITIES	PROGRAMS WITHDRAWN
IHL	20	2987	111	0	NA
NCD: Vocational Training	29	610	44	3	7
NCD: Vocational Flight	1	17	0	0	NA
NDC: High Schools	16	4	0	0	NA
Apprenticeships (APP)	60	34	10	6	9
On-The-Job (OJT)	134	0	0	0	NA
License/Certification	4	3	0	0	NA
Prep-Courses	4	29	0	0	NA
Total:	268	3,684	165	9	16
<i>% of Change (FY23 to FY24):</i>	↓3%	↑30%	↓51%		

VA Goals for FY2024

- Education Team met or exceeded the VA metrics for FY2024, we anticipate a satisfactory rating from the VA in November 2024.
 - **Completed 100% of all new approval** packages within 39 calendar days
 - **Completed 98.8% of reapprovals within 24-months** [VA Target was 90%]
 - **Completed and submitted 100% of RBSs** (Risk-Based Survey)
 - **Completed and submitted 100% of 14 Supervisory Visits**

IDVS Goals for FY2024:

- **Education’s CRM and Database went live 10/4/2024 for existing NCD and IHL facilities**
- **Education’s liaison activities brought value-in collaboration to Idaho’s SCOs:** Six months of preparation in collaboration with the Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce & Idaho State University to cohost its 2nd annual Veterans’ Education Summit
 - Over 3 days, October 9th through October 12th, the Education Team conducted a full day of SCO training on 10/9/24 and participated in panels on day two and three.
 - IDVS’ Education Team offered a full day of training for Idaho’s certifying officials.
 - In attendance, virtually, was VA’s Deputy Director of Education, James Ruhlman delivering Legislative Updates and VA’s National Training Team (NTT) offering 2 hours of training to Idaho certifying officials – credit which can be utilized to meet VA required SCO training hours for AY2025.

Education FY2025 Focus:

IDVS Goals

- Focus on increasing approval productivity in 2025, with the goal of completing 100% required full reapprovals by September 31st, 2025.

- Continue to increase program opportunities for Idaho Veterans and their families.
- Implement CRM database functionality for all facility types:
 - New facility applications
 - OJT/Apprenticeships
 - Prep Courses
 - Testing facilities

VA Goals

- **Assigned 1 RBS (Risk-Based Survey)** [VA Target is 100%]
- **Assigned 10 Supervisory Visits** [VA Target is 100%]
- **New Facility** inspection visits requirement [VA Target is 100%]
- **New Approvals** completed within 39 days [VA Target is 90%]
- **Complete all full reapproval** packages within 36 months of prior full review [VA Target is 90%]

Veterans Education Summit in Pocatello

IDVS' Education Team cohosted the second annual Veterans Education Summit in Pocatello Idaho. The summit was a partnership with the Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce (IVCC) and this year's host school, Idaho State University.

- Summit took place on October 9th through October 11th, 2024
- A total of 87 participants signed up and attended.
- Of the 86 participants, 26 were in person participants.
- Day One of the summit was a full day of training for SCOs. Training was provided by VA's National Training Team, Idaho's VR&E Director David Maxwell, and by Idaho's SAA Team.
- Day Two and Three topics focused on legislation updates from Senator's Crapo's office, presentations from IDOL, a best practice panel discussion, Idaho Department of Education, and the Next-Steps and Launch teams.

Community Outreach – presented by Mitzi Cheldelin

Engagement July 1 – September 30:

- Veterans – 269
- Civilians – 114
- Mixed Events – 4,717
- Events – 29
- Counties Visited – 22/44

Highlighted Events hosted by Community Partners this quarter:

- Idaho Housing Round Table, to discuss housing challenges Veterans face.

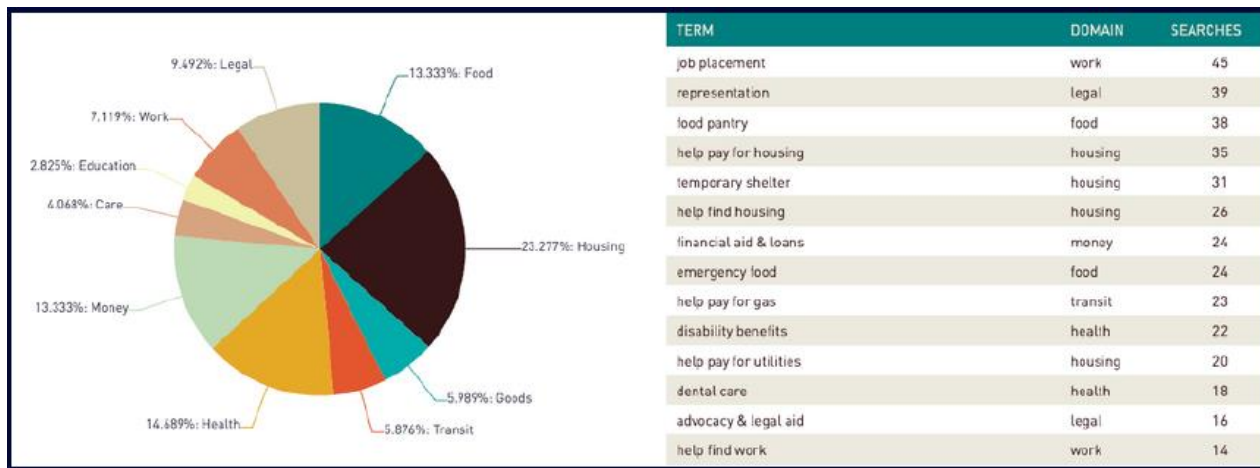
- Annual County Commissioner Conference
- Incarcerated Veterans Prison Visit
- Boise 4th of July Parade honoring 116th OIF III Deployment
- OIF III 20-year Reunion
- Aaron Butler Purple Heart Run
- North Idaho Housing Resource Fair
- SPAN Suicide Prevention Walk and Benewah Veterans Outreach Support SFC Dustin Ard Special Forces Commemorative Steel Shoot
- Mission43 9/11 Miles of Remembrance
- Boise Police Department Crisis Intervention Training
- Boise Homeless Veterans Standdown

Contributions through Outreach:

- Raised \$27,536.05 in direct Veteran Support thanks to Community Partners. Highlighted organized support from our community partners and volunteers:
- This quarter we had many car repairs, rent payments, and utilities as well as assistance for cremation, hotel stays for homeless, and rehabilitation.

Ongoing Projects

- Joining Forces Idaho – Eastern Idaho has received wonderful feedback for its monthly meetings. It continues to grow traction with support from the Salt Lake VA in eastern Idaho and local organizations that strive to serve veterans.
- Governor's Challenge
 - The Ask the Question campaign completed its Health Care Provider Toolkit and with support from Boise VA, moved into phase two, presenting to multiple Terry Reilly Health Services (TRHS). The feedback was tremendous and within one month, roughly 81 veterans had been identified in their patient population and connected to resources. With feedback from TRHS, we will solidify our SOP's, finalize supporting material and the team will begin presenting statewide in May 2025.
 - Team 3 Safe Storage has been making great strides in Northern Idaho working with local law enforcement and Veterans Outreach Centers. An Outreach Center Toolkit for counties and local law enforcement has been started as well as information on safe storage.
- Idaho Veterans Guide – Report from July 1 – September 30, 2024
 - 232 Programs Added (4,369 Total)
 - Local – 172 added, 2,425 total
 - State – 28 added, 1,045 total
 - National – 32 added, 899 total
 - 56 Programs Claimed
 - Top 5 Local Engaged Programs –IDVS Office of Veterans Advocacy; Idaho Foodbank, Food Locator; US VA Vocational Rehabilitation; ID Assistive Technology Project, Loans; Boise Rescue Mission, Veterans Program.
 - Site Activity: 2,547 sessions; 1,846 searches.
 - Site Search Trends:



Central Support Office Updates

Deputy Chief Administrator's Remarks presented by Tracy Schaner

VA finally released the priority list for the VA Construction Grant Program on September 30. Boise 9th, Lewiston 15th, and Pocatello 16th. The top 10 projects on the list will receive funding. Hoping the FY2025 priority list will release on the normal schedule in January or February. We still need to secure a BABAA waiver to move forward. Don't anticipate movement regarding that until following the election. NIST contract with the VA to determine products available in America. December 9 likely will be awarded a full grant or conditional which will give another 180 days to get the waiver approved.

Tracy was appointed to the VA's Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee. All travel associated will be paid for by NASVH or the VA depending on the function/meeting.

Tracy will be traveling to DC for the Veterans Day Ceremony. While there she will be meeting with the VA Secretary, the VHA Under Secretary, and the VA Extended Care GEC.

Chief Administrator's Remarks presented by Mark Tschamp

Idaho is lucky to have Tracy in a senior leadership position in a national advocacy group. This is supremely beneficial for Idaho and Idaho Veterans.

Significant changes. IDVS has created the Veterans Outreach and Community Support (VOCS) as a Bureau level organization. Mitzi Cheldelin has been named as the bureau chief. Marisa McCarter has been promoted to Mitzi's old position and Jason Legler has been hired to be Marisa's counterpart in the northern part of the state. The expansion of this office is a direct result of the success of the mission. Working to make a statutory change to ensure the VOCS mission is codified. Not asking for additional funds. This effort has received support from the Governor's office.

Commissioners asked: Are there discussions at the national level about how Idaho/IDVS compares to other states regarding outreach, State Veterans Homes, etc.?

Best practices are shared via NASVH and NASDVA. Our counterparts in other states will or won't choose to adopt those best practices depending on the landscape of their respective states regarding politics and funding. For example, Maine has a dental program that fills a gap in VA coverage for their Veterans. If feasible, we would like to implement something similar in Idaho.

State Employee Survey – there was a 50% staff response rate. We have developed an action plan to improve the areas that scored lowest. Those three items:

- Majority of staff don't expect anything to change based off survey results.
 - Plan of correction – address their concerns to show that we are listening.
- Dissatisfaction with pay and benefits.
 - Plan of correction – share market data to show the competitiveness of pay and benefits compared to other employers in the state.
- Expectations do not align with reality compared to before and after being hired.
 - Plan of correction – Communicate clear expectations of what is required and what is expected from employees to existing and prospective employees.

We want to retain our great staff to ensure we continue to provide exemplary service to our Veterans and their families.

Comments:

Chairman Callihan – do we anticipate the legislature to push back regarding the creation of VOCS?

We don't. There is no expectation of budgetary increase to service this program. We aren't asking for any extraordinary requests.

Chairman Callihan – worst case scenario, how would Idaho cover the shortfall if IDVS does not receive a VA Veterans Home Construction Grant?

The Governor's Office does not want to discuss this scenario until the VA for sure closes the door on a grant opportunity. They are aware of the possibility but do not want to consider it until all options are exhausted.

New Business

Commissioner Brown – the IDVS team continues to impress him. Congratulated both Mitzi and Tracy on their new positions. Chairman Callihan seconded this.

The Disabled Veterans Special Big Game Hunt program will continue. Even though the previous partner pulled out of hosting, Chairman Callihan and Kevin Wallior have come up with a plan forward to ensure IDVS sponsors two hunters. We believe it will be an even better opportunity as the Veterans we will sponsor will not be restricted to Elk and will have the opportunity to choose to hunt any of the 6 animals eligible under the Idaho Department of Fish and Game Disabled Veterans Special Big Game Tag: Deer, Elk, Pronghorn, Moose, Black Bear, or Mountain Lion.

The next IVAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 9, 2025, in Boise.

Chairman Callihan is open to a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Brown** motioned to adjourn at 11:00 AM MT. **Commissioner Gimpel** seconded. The motion was approved with unanimous assent. Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM MT

Kevin R. Wallior
Management Assistant
Idaho Division of Veteran Services