



## Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Customer Service Annual Report



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### Cover Photos

*Front center: Governor Hogan proclaiming 2019 as the Year of the Veteran in Maryland along with more than 100 veterans, veteran service organizations and MDVA staff February 2019*  
*Lower left: Veteran Services Specialist Liaisons meeting and holiday tour of the Maryland Military Museum at the Fifth Regiment Armory, November 2018*

## FY19 Highlights

The Department of Veterans Affairs Customer Service Promise describes our approach.

FY19 highlights include:

Correspondence tracking and time to resolution (electronic, telephone, written, and in person):

- Twenty-four hour turnaround on correspondence
- All identified customer service survey responses receive individualized contacts

Customer Service Training:

- Staff completed refresher Google classroom training
- 93% training completion rate by August 26, 2019

Processing times of agency services:

- MDVA does not process online transactions outside of a Charlotte Hall Veterans Home donation button and Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program Fund donation button

Online publication updates and Frequently Asked Questions:

- Website updates are made on a weekly basis or, as necessary, immediately
- FAQ's placement on website home page
- Archived electronic newsletters available on the website

Social media engagement:

- Social media posts are made in alignment with electronic newsletter event notifications
- Expanded social media 'tagging' to reach more customers

Customer Experience Survey and Results:

- Survey results are shared weekly with executive staff and directors
- Individual contact made to all identified survey respondents
- Survey responses shared with directors for immediate intervention and resolution

## Recognition Given to Employees



September 2018  
Janet Thomas, Area Supervisor  
Service and Benefits Program  
Governor's Citation

*Janet Thomas received a Governor's citation for her dedicated service to MDVA and to the veterans of Maryland. Ms. Thomas is an Area Supervisor for MDVA's Service and Benefits program, working in the Easton office. Ms. Thomas has been working with MDVA for 23 years, and has an additional 19 years of service with the State of Maryland for a total of 42 years as a public servant.*

March 2019  
General Andrew H. Anderson  
Governor's Citation

*General Andrew H. Anderson received a Governor's citation for his 30 years of dedicated service to the Veterans Home Commission.*



## Leadership Analysis of FY19 and Summary of FY20 Approach

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is committed to providing exceptional customer service. With approximately 90 employees, from cemetery caretakers to program directors, the Department is diligent in its service to both internal and external stakeholders. Our focus, the men and women who have served this nation are deserving of nothing less than outstanding care as they seek benefits earned through military service.

MDVA completed customer service refresher training during the summer of 2019. The Department had a 93% training completion rate by August 26, 2019. Leave and lack of access to email mitigated a 100% completion rate. MDVA will look to conduct face to face training in 2020 for staff without access to email.

In FY19, the Department had 62 customer service survey responses. As of this date, 80% of respondents indicated being 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with their MDVA experience. For FY19, this is a 3% increase in overall customer satisfaction.

Moving forward into FY20 the MDVA will continue in its commitment to providing outstanding customer service and delivery of the Maryland Customer Service Promise. The Department has added a FAQ's (frequently asked questions) website post and has modified all printed marketing materials to highlight the Maryland Flag. The purpose of this redesign is to more effectively message to customers MDVA as a State Government Department and the services we offer as an organization.



*Pictured above: A Maryland Vietnam Veteran is pinned and welcomed home by Deputy Secretary Bob Finn on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 2018*



## Detailed FY19 Results and FY20 Plans

### Voice of the Customer - Survey Results

Between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019, MDVA received 62 responses to the customer service survey. Eighty percent of respondents indicated they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘somewhat satisfied’ with their experience. When responses are removed indicating dissatisfaction with the USVA, there are 60 responses. Of the 60 responses, 48, or 80%, report being ‘very satisfied’ or ‘somewhat satisfied’ with their experience. This is a 3% increase in overall customer satisfaction.

The Department saw a 5% reduction in survey responses indicating customers were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with service (13% down from 18%). MDVA continues to improve messaging to clarify our Department as a State agency as well as continue to resolve any complaints, regardless of subject matter, shared by customers.



<b>Overall Satisfaction Results: Total Responses 62</b>		
Very Satisfied	46	74% of respondents
Somewhat Satisfied	4	6% of respondents
Neutral	4	6% of respondents
Somewhat Dissatisfied	3	5% of respondents
Very Dissatisfied	5	8% of respondents

### Customer Service Training

As of August 26, 2018 93% of MDVA staff had completed a three-part customer service refresher training using Google Classroom. Employees watched the HUB customer service slide presentation, read Bruce Temkin’s “The Six Laws of Customer Experience”, and completed a 10-question quiz. Leave and lack of access to email mitigated a 100% completion rate. MDVA will look to conduct face to face training in 2020 for staff without access to email.

The Veterans Services Specialist Program in State Government continues to grow and strengthen collaboration across state agencies. Since September 2017, liaisons to this program have attended six meetings and a one-day training on veteran related programs and benefits. Agencies are developing new and innovative ways to support and improve the experience for veterans who are state employees.

## Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries

MDVA continues in its diligence to provide timely and responsive service. Examples of efforts include the FAQ's web page and redesigned marketing materials now highlighting the Maryland flag. The Department sends welcome home packets to returning veterans upon receipt of discharge paperwork.

### Best Practices

The MDVA Service Program now has secretarial staff in its busiest offices. This allows for an immediate phone response when a service officer is in the field. In addition, the Office of the Secretary continues to have support staff assisting with phone coverage. This addition has significantly improved customer service response times. The Service Program has two service officers placed in Prince George's County, home to the State's largest concentration of veterans.

Upon receipt of a survey indicating MDVA dissatisfaction, the liaison contacts the associated program director to seek immediate resolution. Open lines of communication between program directors helps quickly and efficiently resolve expressed dissatisfaction.

### Plans for Improvement

MDVA continues in its diligence to assist veterans, family members, and all internal as well as external stakeholders. The Department is exploring ways to increase the number of surveys completed by direct customers of MDVA.

## Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

### Making Agency Services Available Online

MDVA Outreach manages website content, the bi-weekly electronic newsletter, and social media presence (Facebook and Twitter). The Program distributes a bi-weekly electronic newsletter to over 120,000 email subscribers.

### Processing Times for Customer Transactions

MDVA processes online donations to the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program Fund. Charlotte Hall Veterans Home maintains a donation button on its website, [www.charhall.org](http://www.charhall.org). This button allows individuals to make donations in support of the veterans living there.

### Adjusting Hours to Meet Customer Demands

MDVA continues to work regular business hours, evenings and weekends. The MDVA Secretary and Deputy Secretary frequently attend evening and weekend events. The MDVA Cemetery Program is a 365-day operation. The Cemetery Program has weekend contractual staff to reduce the load placed on full time personnel. The addition

of these contractual employees has alleviated stress and improved service from an internal customer perspective.

In addition, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home is a 24-hour/365-day operation. The MDVA outreach program frequently attends evening and weekend events. Most staff work every Memorial and Veterans Day. With the utilization of email and social media, MDVA staff have the ability to respond to the needs of customers at virtually all hours. The MDVA website also has a contact us button which allows customers to email [mdveteransinfo@maryland.gov](mailto:mdveteransinfo@maryland.gov) 24/7.



### Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience

MDVA Outreach manages both a Facebook and Twitter account. Posts are scheduled and shared on a regular basis with more than 3000 followers. A goal for FY20 is to use video to educate customers on veteran benefits and services. These videos will be shared on social media, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as on the MDVA website.

### Customer Service Survey Highlights from FY19

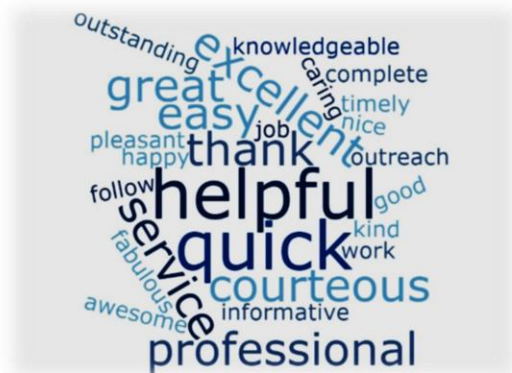
“I wish every agency ran like MDVA.” (6/29/2019, regarding the Department in general)

“Keep up the awesome job of human contact in a day of too much automation.” (6/18/19, regarding the Cemetery Program)

“Thank you for providing professional and courteous service in this manner.” (6/17/19, regarding the Cemetery Program)

“Michael Cantrell was fabulous to deal with.” (2/11/19, regarding the Service Program)

“My query was answered very quickly and completely. I recognize the Outreach staff is small and extremely busy; I appreciate their hard work.” (12/17/18, regarding the Outreach Program)



### Media Coverage

May 2019

*Mid Shore Recovering Veterans Group with Royce Ball*  
WCTR, 106.9FM, 1530AM

*Secretary George Owings, Director of Service and Benefits Phil Munley & Director of Outreach Dana Burl*

In what would be his final show, Reporter Royce Ball interviewed MDVA to discuss



services and benefits and approaches to Outreach. The interview began with a discussion on the significance of Memorial Day.

June 2019

*WBAL 1090 Interview with Ann Kramer*

*Director of Outreach Dana Burl*

The purpose of the article and on air interview was to discuss the Governor's designation of 2019 as the Year of the Veteran and to discuss the experience of World War II Veterans, especially those who served during the D Day Invasion of Normandy.

### Conclusion

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) strives every day to ensure our customers, both internal and external, experience the very best in customer service. The Department is proud of the improved customer service survey results this fiscal year. The Department had 93% customer service refresher training compliance and looks forward to achieving 100% in the coming months. MDVA continues to work towards staff training in suicide prevention and mental health first aid. Over the course of the next fiscal year, the Department will continue to develop innovative ways to improve the customer experience.



**BACK COVER**