

MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS &
MILITARY FAMILIES

“Leading
veterans, service members,
and their families
through life’s transitions.”

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

State Government Article § 9-946 (MSAR # 14170) &
State Government Article § 9-928(c) (MSAR # 5567)

Governor
Wes Moore

Lt. Governor
Aruna Miller

Secretary
Anthony Woods

Deputy Secretary
Ross Cohen

Deputy Secretary, Military Family Policy and Programs
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Annual Report

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Secretary's Message

It is my privilege to share the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) annual report for 2024. This year's report highlights the progress we have made together in improving the lives of veterans, service members, and their families. These accomplishments reflect our shared commitment to supporting Maryland's military connected community.

In 2024, we reached significant milestones that reflect our steadfast commitment to serving those who have served. Among our proudest achievements was the passage of 24 bills aimed at improving the lives of veterans, service members, and their families. These bills expanded healthcare access, created new employment opportunities, and strengthened essential support systems statewide. To better represent the communities we serve, we renamed our department, reaffirming our dedication to supporting veterans, service members, their families, and caregivers. Additionally, we established a Deputy Secretary position focused on Military Family Policy & Programs, created the Commission on Veterans and Military Families, and designated Maryland's first Veterans Suicide Prevention Day—further underscoring our commitment to addressing critical needs.

Our Benefits Program had a record-breaking year, filing 4,732 claims—the most since 2016—resulting in over \$41 million in monetary benefits for veterans, dependents, and survivors. We expanded our reach by opening a new benefits office in Cecil County and increasing staff at other locations, ensuring more veterans and families could access the support they deserve.

This year, the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund launched its first online application process, making it easier for veterans and military families to request emergency financial assistance. In 2024, the fund awarded nearly half a million dollars in grants to help prevent foreclosures, evictions, car repossessions, and utility shutoffs, providing critical support to those in need.

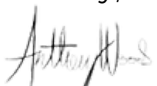
Our Cemeteries and Memorial Program honored 3,241 veterans and dependents with dignity and respect. This year also marked an important change, as National Guard and Reservists became eligible for burial in Maryland Veterans Cemeteries—a meaningful step in recognizing their service.

Through Maryland Joins Forces (MJF), we continue to lead collaborative efforts that deliver tangible results. This year, we achieved 18 memoranda of agreement with partners committed to supporting military families. Highlights include hosting a "Rock Your Profile" workshop with Fort Meade and LinkedIn, and storytime events for military-connected children in partnership with Blue Star Families and United Through Reading. These collaborations also extended to higher education, with American University awarding its first MJF scholarship to a military-connected graduate student. Together, we are building a stronger community and setting a national example for supporting military families.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the dedication of our staff and the unwavering support of our community partners. Your contributions help us make meaningful changes in the lives of veterans and military families, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

As we look toward 2025, I remain inspired by what we have accomplished together and am optimistic about what lies ahead. Thank you for being part of this important journey.

Sincerely,



Anthony C. Woods

Secretary of Veterans and Military Families

WHO WE SERVE: Maryland Veteran Population



Period of Service*

World War II	1,925
Korean Conflict	10,424
Vietnam Era	93,462
Gulf War Era	190,811
Peacetime	73,295

Age Distribution*

17-44	74,586
45-64	133,279
65-84	128,049
85+	24,183

Homelessness****

Veteran homelessness in the United States reached a historic low, with 32,882 veterans experiencing homelessness—a 7.5% decrease from 2023 and a 55.6% reduction since 2010.

The VA Maryland Health Care System made significant progress in addressing veteran homelessness in its catchment area this fiscal year, successfully housing 611 veterans, with 94.3% of these veterans maintaining stable housing and not returning to homelessness. Additionally, the system engaged 536 unsheltered veterans, connecting them with housing and essential wraparound services to support their long-term stability and well-being.

Total Veterans*	360,098
Women Veterans*	55,699

Race/Ethnicity Distribution***

White, Not Hispanic	60%
Black/African American	31%
Hispanic/Latino	5%
Asian	2%
Other (including two or more races)	4%

Income**

less than \$49.9K	21%
\$50K to \$99.9K	31%
\$100K or more	25%

Educational Attainment**

High school graduate	24%
Some college or associates degree	32%
Bachelor's degree or higher	40%

Veteran Unemployment Rate***

Veteran	2%
Non-veterans	3%

VA Benefits Utilization**

Education beneficiaries	23,335
Receiving disability compensation	97,855
Receiving pension	2,273
Enrollees in the VA healthcare system	157,337

Maryland Veteran Suicide Data

According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs available suicide data in 2022, 55 veterans died by suicide. In 2021 89 veterans died by suicide and in 2020 79 veterans died by suicide.

*www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp/: Veteran population projections 2020-2050 (reported to the nearest 1000)

**www.datahub.va.gov/stories/s/8vmb-86pa (VA data sources from 2021)

***usafacts.org/topics/veterans/state/maryland/ (Source: American Community Survey)

****news.va.gov/press-room/veterans-homelessness-reaches-record-low-decreasing-by-7-5-since-2023/

DVMF PROGRAMS

SERVICE AND BENEFITS PROGRAM

The DVMF Service and Benefits Program assists veterans, dependents, and survivors, in obtaining benefits from the VA, the U.S. Department of Defense and the State of Maryland. With offices statewide, benefits specialists have access to VA claim tracking systems which allows personnel to provide the most accurate information. Since October 15, 1979, the program has served as a repository for DD214s for veterans released from active duty who return to Maryland. The program partnered with VA in 2024 to host four claims clinics/resource fairs.

The Service and Benefits Program accepted power of attorney for 1,909 veterans and verified veteran status for 329 Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise Program applications. The program opened a new full-time office in Elkton and a new outreach site in Rosedale. Staffing was increased in Glen Burnie, Bel Air, Frederick, and Gaithersburg.

FY24

149,217 contacts

5,073 claims filed

94% claim approval rating

\$44.7m in VA payments

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

“Katherine Perkins, my MD VA VSO, has been excellent throughout the entire process. I highly recommend her for anyone needing VSO assistance.” -Air Force Veteran



CHARLOTTE HALL VETERANS HOME

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, established in 1985 and proudly "Serving Those Who Served," is situated on 126 beautiful acres in St. Mary's County. This 444-bed facility provides assisted living and skilled nursing care for Maryland veterans and eligible spouses, offering a tranquil and supportive environment for those who have served our nation.

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home's Assisted Living program earned the Bronze National Quality Award from the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living, reflecting its dedication to quality and continuous improvement. The Home also achieved accreditation from The Joint Commission for nursing center care, underscoring its commitment to excellence.

Since 2023, under PruittHealth's leadership, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home increased its census, transitioned to a fully dedicated in-house nursing team, eliminating reliance on outside agency nursing staff and hired full-time personnel to ensure consistent, high-quality care. These efforts have transformed the culture of care, enhanced performance, and strengthened oversight, reflecting our shared dedication to the well-being of Maryland's veterans and their families.

**Moving Forward:
Sykesville Veterans Home**

In 2024, the 128-bed Sykesville veterans home architect's design team focused on the design development phase for the home. Additionally, the team examined the property's slope and exact physical location as well as where services would be located within each of the three floors.

The home will feature 64 residences for memory care and 64 residences for skilled nursing veterans and spouses.

The home will include a community center, wellness center, beauty/barber shop, gift shop, movie room, physical therapy/gym, and chapel. Additional medical services will include a dialysis unit, pharmacy, optometry suite, and dental care suite.

The architect is currently working to complete the design development phase and construction drawings. The goal is for drawings to be complete by summer 2025.

Resident population

- 17% female
- 12% spouses
- 45% age 70-79
- 80% wartime veterans

CY24

- Average census: 255
- Occupancy rate 57%
- Contributions: \$169,347.20



CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL PROGRAM

The DVMF Cemetery Program maintains five veteran cemeteries, providing a final resting place for Maryland veterans and their eligible dependents. **This year, 3,374 veterans and dependents were interred at our cemeteries.** The cemeteries include Crownsville in Anne Arundel County, Cheltenham in Prince George's County, Eastern Shore in Dorchester County, Garrison Forest in Baltimore County and Rocky Gap in Allegany County. Interment services are provided Monday through Friday and cemeteries are open to the public 365 days a year.

Over the past five years, the Cemetery Program has averaged 3,519 interments each year.

Since the establishment of the Cemetery Program, the department has interred more than 125,417 veterans and dependents.



HIGHLIGHTS

Capital improvements:

- Cheltenham Cemetery: curbs replaced, potholes filled, drainage system improved, front gate repaired
- Crownsville Cemetery: irrigation system repaired, shelter walkway improved
- Eastern Shore Veterans Cemetery: Space Command flagpole at front entrance installed, POW/MIA and Women Veteran monuments established, Purple Heart monument refurbished
- Garrison Forest Cemetery: memorial pond installed, Space Command flagpole added
- Rocky Gap Cemetery: enclosed storage area built, grant from the MD Department of Natural Resources received to plant 25 trees on the grounds
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial: retaining wall built and 100 trees planted
- Gold Star Family Monument: grounds renovation project completed, grass planted, ADA compliant walkway, 20 space parking lot, and lights installed



Events:

- Six unaccompanied honors ceremonies held to inter 15 veterans
- Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies held at all cemeteries, WWII Memorial, and Vietnam Veteran Memorial
- Wreaths Across America events held at all cemeteries
- Cheltenham Cemetery honorably buried WWII KIA/MIA Buffalo Soldier Unit Veteran PFC Lemuel Dent



COMMUNICATIONS, OUTREACH, AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy (COA) Program is dedicated to proactively connecting veterans and their families with vital benefits, services, and incentives offered by federal, state, and local governments, as well as community organizations. Through innovative strategies and targeted outreach, the COA Program ensures veterans and their families are informed and supported.

COA serves as a key representative of DVMF on various commissions and councils, advocating for the veteran community on critical issues such as behavioral health, homelessness, workforce development, health equity, and employment. By amplifying the voices of veterans and fostering collaboration across sectors, the COA Program strengthens Maryland's commitment to serving those who have served.



FY24 Data Highlights

- 420 events attended
- 7,856 face to face or virtual contacts
- 2,448,695 newsletters opened
- 787,113 Facebook reach
- 12,615 Twitter reach
- 147,088 website visitors

TOTAL CONTACTS ACROSS ALL CHANNELS 4,217,732



WOMEN VETERANS/INCLUSION PROGRAM

Now in its third year, the Women Veterans Inclusion Program continues to grow, expanding its network and resources to meet the unique needs of women and underserved veteran populations.

Key 2024 accomplishments include:

- **Women's History Month & 6888th Central Postal Battalion Day:** Co-hosted the inaugural celebration honoring the 6888th Central Postal Battalion, the first all-minority Women's Army Corps unit deployed overseas during WWII. The event also celebrated women veterans' historic contributions.
- **Diversity Month Symposium:** Brought together diverse veteran communities to address unique challenges, foster inclusion, and celebrate achievements through meaningful discussions on equity and breaking barriers.
- **Women Veterans Recognition Day:** Partnered with Morgan State University and the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Businesses to honor 12 women veterans, including small business leaders, with Governor Citations for their contributions to Maryland's economy.
- **VA Collaboration & Fireside Chat:** Collaborated with the VA's Center for Women Veterans to advocate for equitable access. Participated in a Fireside Chat at the Library of Congress, exploring themes of resilience, leadership, and advocacy for women veterans.
- **Outreach & Digital Engagement:** Continued outreach to the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women and expanded its growing newsletter and chat series to provide critical resources and information

MARYLAND VETERANS TRUST FUND

The Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) was established by the State Legislature as a nonprofit organization in 2013 and is a testament to our commitment to Maryland veterans and their families. The VTF was created to provide once-in-a-lifetime temporary financial assistance and referral services to support our veterans and their families. We also extend our support to other partners providing services to veterans and their families, recognizing their invaluable role in our community.

In FY24, the VTF increased staff capacity and converted to an online grant application, streamlining and accelerating the application review process.

2024 Donations and Contributions: \$528,239

2024 Grant Awards to applicants: \$492,780

The Maryland Veterans Trust Fund is a core service of the Maryland Department of Veteran and Military Families, led by the Department Secretary and an eleven-member Board of Trustees. Grant revenues for the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund consist of payments from state lottery revenues, the income tax check-off system, and corporate and private donors.





Now in its second year, Maryland Joins Forces is a DVMF initiative designed to mobilize partners across sectors to meaningfully address issues affecting veterans and military families. In 2024, the initiative grew to 18 partners with more on the way. DVMF held its first partner meet and greet in November to set a joint vision and develop action items to advance the mission of Maryland Joins Forces. The initiative is centered around five focus areas with specific outcomes in mind:

- (1) **Employment:** Reduce veteran & military spouse unemployment and make it easier for spouses to transition to the state without career disruptions.
- (2) **Food and Housing Insecurity:** Ensure no military connected family experiences food insecurity and eliminate homelessness amongst veteran families.
- (3) **Education:** Members of the military-connected community gain the skills and credentials they need to find meaningful employment and contribute to a thriving Maryland economy.
- (4) **Health and Wellness:** Military connected families live healthier lives – both physically and mentally with increased access to health and wellness resources.
- (5) **Volunteer Service:** Increase the number of opportunities for members of the military connected community to serve alongside their non-military connected neighbors to reduce the civil-military divide.



Partner Organizations:

- American Corporate Partners
- American University
- Armed Services Arts Partnership
- Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
- Blue Star Families
- Easter Seals
- Elizabeth Dole Foundation
- Hiring Our Heroes
- Leadership Transition Institute
- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council
- Modern Military Association of America
- Operation Homefront
- Platoon 22
- Team RWB
- Towson University
- Travis Manion Foundation
- United Through Reading
- University of Baltimore Bob Parsons Veterans Center



MARYLAND VETERANS SERVICE ANIMAL PROGRAM AND FUND



The Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program provides grants to organizations that train service dogs for placement with veterans or provide certified equine-assisted therapy to veterans. The foundational purpose of the Service Animal Grant Program is to reduce suicide risk for veterans and improve their mental health and well-being.

From FY22 through FY24, the program has had the consistent loyalty and support of the Maryland General Assembly as evidenced by increasing levels of funding. Total program funding to date is \$718,000, including the FY25 appropriation. **In FY24, nine nonprofit organizations each received \$18,000 in grant support.** These organizations are listed below, together with how the largest portion of their grant award was utilized.

FY24 Grant Awardees

Chesapeake Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (Harford County)

Supported costs for staff to expand equine-assisted therapeutic service programming for Baltimore City VA veterans in treatment for substance abuse.

Freedom Hills Therapeutic Riding Program, Inc. (Cecil County)

Supported four staff who obtained instruction and membership in PATH, Inc. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship).

Greenwell Foundation (St. Mary's County)

Supported veteran retreats, and costs for instruction and membership in PATH, Inc. for three staff.

Lifeline Horse Rescue and Rehabilitation, Inc. (Montgomery County)

Supported a mental health and equine specialist who provides equine-assisted psychotherapy for veterans, and the costs for a staff development/training software license.

Maryland Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (Anne Arundel County)

Supported professionally-trained staff who provide equine-assisted therapeutic services to veterans, and the costs to support PATH certification training for 3-5 staff.

Promise Landing Farm, Inc. (Prince George's County)

Supported costs for staff who provide equine-assisted therapeutic services, and costs associated for two staff to attend PATH Advanced Prep certification.

Talisman Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (Queen Anne's County)

Supported two positions that provide services to veterans; provide support for PATH instruction and certifications for 2-3 staff; and purchase of equine equipment.

Warrior Canine Connection, Inc. (Montgomery County)

Supported continued operational costs for a service dog training program at Jessup Correctional Facility.

Wellspring of Life Farm, Inc. (Baltimore County)

Supported staff costs for equine specialists; costs associated with obtaining PATH certifications for two staff; and PATH Center Membership

VETERANS SERVICES SPECIALIST PROGRAM

Established in 2017, the Veterans Services Specialist (VSS) Program designated veteran liaisons in state government. Liaisons convene for education on VA resources and are charged with sharing resource information with veteran employees and constituents. They also refer veterans to DVMF for assistance.

In 2024, the VSS Program made significant strides in supporting Maryland's veterans and military families. Key achievements included resources such as the VSS Program Handbook and Liaison Directory, and expanding awareness through events like Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and Operation Green Light. The program also emphasized a "whole person" approach, with subject matter experts providing briefs to highlight comprehensive strategies for serving veterans and their families. The VSS Program collaborated to enhance service coordination and accessibility, ensuring seamless connections to benefits and services.



COMMUNITY PARTNER SUMMITS

In December, DVMF, in collaboration with Fort George G. Meade, hosted a Community Partner Summit: **Mission Strong**, the first of its kind, uniting DoD stakeholders, community partners, and leaders to address challenges impacting Maryland's military families and veterans.

The summit featured a fireside chat with Command Sergeant Major Richard C. Moore, Fort George G. Meade, and Secretary Tony Woods, followed by breakout sessions focused on supporting military-connected children, empowering military spouses, and facilitating smooth transitions for Veterans and service members. The summit fostered enhanced collaboration, identified critical needs, and developed innovative solutions to strengthen Maryland's military-connected community.

Building on its success, DVMF aims to host similar community partner summits at other installations across the state.

"I am so proud to be a Marylander! The fireside chat was incredibly insightful—I had no idea how much the state accomplished this year for Veterans and military families. It was inspiring to connect and collaborate with other leaders in my community who are also dedicated to serving the military community." ~Summit Attendee



CONSTITUENT SERVICES

The Constituent Services Program has assisted 739 constituents in the past year. The cases addressed through the program span a wide array of issues, including obtaining DD214 records, coordinating appointments with service offices, providing emergency financial assistance, addressing housing insecurity, and accessing state veterans benefits.

Nearly 70% of inquiries come directly from veterans, while nearly 20% originate from veteran and military family members. The most common requests for assistance are accessing VA benefits and claims as well as access to financial assistance.

As the Constituent Services Program continues to grow, DVMF aims to ensure that the needs of veterans, service members, and their families are fully met. The growth of the program will enable the department to better identify emerging needs, guide resource allocation, and pinpoint areas for future engagement to support Maryland's veterans and their families.





BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Maryland Veterans Commission

This commission meets quarterly and advises the Secretary on issues related to veterans, including veteran related legislation. Commissioners represent the Department at commemorative events and present Governor's Proclamations on special days to include Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The Commission has one active sub-committee, Combating Substance Misuse Impacting Maryland Veterans and Their Families. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor to five-year terms. The Governor also names the Chair.

In addition to the eight congressional districts, the following organizations or categories are represented:

- American Ex POW's
- American Legion
- AMVETS
- Catholic War Veterans
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Jewish War Veterans
- Korean War Veterans Association, Inc.
- Marine Corps League
- Maryland Officer's Association of America
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- National Association of Black Veterans
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Pearl Harbor Survivors Association- (honorary nonvoting member)
- Polish Legion of American Veterans
- Reserve Organization of America
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- Iraq/Afghanistan War Veteran
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Women Veterans Member

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Maryland Veterans Home Commission

The Veterans Home Commission advises the department on issues related to state veteran homes. They interact with veterans and other organizations to disseminate information concerning Charlotte Hall Veterans Home.

Global War on Terror Memorial Commission

The Global War on Terror Memorial Commission was established in November 2023 through Executive Order 01.01.2023 to honor Maryland's veterans, service members, military families, caregivers, and survivors impacted by the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The Commission seeks to ensure their service and sacrifices are commemorated in a meaningful and enduring manner.

Maryland's contribution to the GWOT includes:

- 115,000 Marylanders who served in uniform.
- 129 service members who lost their lives.
- Countless military families and caregivers who provided steadfast support.

The Commission was composed of 9 appointed commissioners and 3 ex-officio members. The Commission's experiences include GWOT veterans, service members, and military families and represent the geographic diversity of the state.

Commission on Veterans and Military Families

In 2024, the Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families (CVMF) was established to position Maryland as the premier state for veterans and military families. Guided by Chapter 10 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the Commission focused on developing strategic legislative and budgetary recommendations to improve the lives of Maryland's 350,000 veterans, 50,000 active-duty service members, and their families. Through collaboration and data analysis, the CVMF identified key priorities, including fostering integrated military-civilian communities, promoting sustainable employment opportunities, expanding higher education access, and creating pathways to address food and housing insecurity. The Commission's work continues through June 30, 2025.

The DVMF Secretary or his/her designee is appointed and serves as a member of the following commissions, councils or boards.

- Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission (COA)
- Maryland Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention (COA)
- Governor's Workforce Development Board
- Maryland 250 Commission
- Maryland Commission on Health Equity (COA)
- Maryland Interagency Council on Homelessness (COA)
- Commission to Establish a Maryland Women Veterans Memorial (COA)
- Commission to Establish a Global War on Terrorism Memorial
- Opioid Response Advisory Council (COA)
- State Coordinating Committee for Health and Human Services Transportation (COA)

Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
Five Years of Progress

Data Point	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Five Year Totals/ Averages
VA claims submitted	4,170	2,798	3,715	4,423	5,073	20,179
New/ increased cash benefits	\$32 million	\$30 million	\$37 million	\$38 million	\$45 million	\$182 million
Veterans Home census	307	300	295	251	255	282 (avg) residents
Cemetery interments	3,159	3,929	3,470	3,663	3,374	17,595 Burials
Total grants to veterans/ family members in need	\$138,538	\$230,000	\$246,000	\$402,000	\$493,000	\$1,509,318 in Grants
Newsletter subscribers	146,201	167,616	198,995	206,307	220,056	220,056 Subscribers

Operational Budget

Program	FY24/FY25 Budget
Service and Benefits Program	\$2,344,252/\$2,489,428
Cemeteries	\$7,179,079/\$7,173,621
Memorials (budget includes \$177,000 for the War Memorial)	\$447,046/\$453,938
Charlotte Hall Veterans Home	\$47,899,160/\$57,125,690
Sykesville Veterans Home	\$0/\$47,881,000
Executive	\$2,175,188/\$3,067,884
Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program (FY24 and FY25 \$212,000GF for the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program)	\$653,019/\$669,598
DVMF	\$60,697,744/\$118,861,159

References/Resources

USA FACTS <https://usafacts.org/topics/veterans/state/maryland/>

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VA 2024 National Suicide Prevention Annual Report
<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-FINAL-508.pdf>

VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics
https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp

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VA Veteran Population Projections 2020-2040
www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Demographics/New_Vetpop_Model/Vetpop_infographic2020.pdf

DVMF Leadership Team

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The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families is a State Government Executive Department with a service mission to lead veterans, service members, and their families through life's transitions.

Department of Veterans and Military Families Programs:

Maryland Joins Forces
Service and Benefits Program
Charlotte Hall Veterans Home
Cemetery and Memorial Program
Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program
Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

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