

# STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT 2023 AGENCY REPORT



New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services  
407 Galisteo St., Room 134  
Santa Fe New Mexico 87501

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Tribal Liaison

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (the Department) participated in relevant aspects pertaining to the State Tribal Collaboration Act (NMSA 11-18-3 NMSA 2009) during the New Mexico State Government's fiscal year 2023. The Department participated in both formal and informal interaction with several Pueblos, Tribes and Indigenous Nations throughout the state and region.

The Department participated in:

- COL. (Ret.) Donnie Quintana appointed NMDVS Cabinet Secretary
- NMDVS leads Veterans Advisory for Governor's office, having (2) Native American Veterans from the Pueblo of Isleta and Navajo Nation
- Continued collaboration with VA and National Association of County Veteran Service Officer (NACVSO) Benefits Training in assisting Native American Veterans with Accreditation
- Have doubled in numbers to hire VSOs in each Veterans Service offices, (To present, have (24) VSOs on hand)
- Held (9) Monthly NM Native American Veterans Collaborative meeting, (3) Quarterly meetings in person, receiving support from Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes.
- Attend and Support PACT Acts/Resource Fairs for Native American Veterans on Tribal Lands
- Continued Collaboration with the Native American Training Institute (NATI) and the Southwest Native American Veterans Association (SWNAVA) keeping open dialogue for the Spring 2023 and upcoming training conference in the for Spring 2024
- Continued collaboration with the NM Indian Affairs Department (NMIAD) and respond to those veterans with immediate needs for guidance and assistance.
- Collaborating with VA Tribal Liaison to assist and support Suicide Preventions on all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes connecting to Resource Fairs
- Collaborating with each Pueblo, Nation, and Tribe in Health, Benefits and Education Outreach ie. VBOC, Women's Veterans Conference, Suicide Training and VSO Training
- Assist and Support Pueblo of Isleta with Veterans Symposium Fair for Veterans Day

- Continued data sharing and information exchanges with Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos in providing a Survey to all NM Native American Veterans Representatives.
- Continued virtual and onsite participation with all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes in Collaboration with access to over 40 organizations, Agencies, and providing benefits, services, and resources to tribal lands and near tribal lands.
- Conducting onsite and virtual services to provide State and Federal Claims Clinics.
- Assist Navajo Nation Veterans with two Missing Headstones
- VA Burial Benefits and State Veteran Memorial information provided in monthly collaborative meetings.
- Assist with US Flags at time of Death to those immediate funerals on Tribal Lands
- Provide continuous on-going mentorship of Native American VSO's including the Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes.
- Attend National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Annual Conference
- Attend Navajo Nation Inauguration
- Attend Internet / Tribal connect virtual meet.
- Attend Military / Veterans Day/and Indian Day at the Legislation
- Invited to attend Pueblo of Zuni Veterans Social Dinner
- Assist with Veterans Steering Committee
- Collaborate with Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes with wheelchairs, walkers, and other resources.
- Working and assisting Borderline Native American Veterans for appointments to Federal Claims process
- Invited to attend Memorial Day as Special speaker with Southern Ute Nation
- Continued collaboration and partnership with Native American VSOs in assisting all NM Veterans
- Annual training to Building Cultural Equity with Native Nations

## **II. AGENCY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND**

## A. Mission Statement

Mission: To provide the highest quality care, service, and advocacy for veterans and their family members

Vision: To recognize and serve all generations of veterans and their family members and approach every day as Veterans' Day

## B. Agency Overview

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services is the state government agency statutorily created in 2003 to provide veterans with a cabinet-level agency to address their needs. Department services are partitioned into nine (9) programs, aggregated by common statutory purpose and outcome:

### **Field Operations Division**

There are (16) field offices of the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services located throughout the state. Each is staffed by an accredited Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) to assist veterans and their eligible dependents with filing for their federal and state benefits. In addition, VSOs also have regularly scheduled outreach visits to rural and frontier surrounding communities.

### **Administrative Services Division**

The DVS Administrative Services Division ("ASD") is responsible for all financial management, accounting & budgetary execution, Human Resources & Staffing, and procurement support. ASD is also responsible for completion & submission of the Department's Financial & Managerial Annual Audit, asset management, to include IT equipment & assets, Grant management compliance with all federal & State laws, rules, and regulations.

### **Veterans State Benefits Division**

The Benefits Bureau ensures eligible veterans, and their dependents receive state benefits to which they are entitled. These include property tax Exemption, property tax waiver, military specific license plates, ie. Disabled veteran, purple heart

recipient, woman veteran and each of the branches of service, State of New Mexico Park Passes, monuments and museum passes, hunting and fishing privileges.

### **State Approving Agency Bureau**

The primary responsibility of the State Approving Agencies (SSAs) is to ensure the quality and integrity of programs of education and training for the use of GI Bill benefits. The scope of responsibility: high schools, adult education centers, employers providing on-the-job training and apprenticeship training, license and certification testing, vocational training and apprenticeship training, license and certification testing, vocational training, as well as all certificate and degree levels of post-secondary education. The SAA promotes and safeguards quality education and training for veterans, ensures greater educational and training opportunities to meet the changing needs of veterans and assists the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill. There are currently 136 GI Bill approved facilities in New Mexico, 103 are active.

### **Veterans Business Outreach Center Program**

The New Mexico Veterans' Business Outreach Center ("VBOC") is the Department of Veterans' Services business development division created in 2010 through a successful grant application with the US Small Business Administration ("SBA"). The "VBOC" was created to help the "SBA" assist entrepreneurial minded veterans, transitioning active-duty personnel, National Guard & Reserve members, and their spouses with starting or growing a small business. The "VBOC" does outreach and has formed partnerships with the New Mexico SBA, SBDC, SCORE, WESST, and other small business assistance entities to provide the highest quality of assistance and support to the New Mexico veterans and their families.

### **Healthcare Coordination Division**

The Healthcare Coordination Division coordinates VA, state, and local healthcare alliances within the NMDVS. In this role, the division performs an advocacy role to ensure New Mexico's veterans are aware of their health benefits and how they can more easily navigate the New Mexico VA Healthcare system—as well as the El Paso VA Medical Center for veterans in the Las Cruces area, and the Big Spring (TX) VA

Medical Center for veterans in the eastern/southeast part of New Mexico. The division is also responsible for fostering partnerships with local healthcare entities that serve veterans and their families in our state. This division also manages a highly rural transportation grant.

### **Veterans State Cemetery Grant Program**

The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program supports the construction, administration, and execution of state veterans' cemeteries. The New Mexico Veterans' Cemeteries are hallowed grounds that provide a final resting place, which honors and memorializes veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices made while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. Currently, there are three State Veterans Cemeteries: Fort Stanton; Gallup and Angel Fire. The Carlsbad Veterans Cemetery is projected to be completed in 2024.

### **Women Veterans Program**

The Women Veterans Program develops strategies to ensure women veterans are accessing their eligible benefits and services. Provides guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the public on women veteran issues. Works with local veteran groups to advocate and educate on the unique issues facing women.

### **Tribal Liaison**

The Tribal Liaison is committed to working with and responding to all joint Native American Veterans' related issues and concerns for the State Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes. Serves as a State Agency's point of contact with ongoing communication and will provide resources, guidance, and assistance to all Native American Veterans.

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Initiatives - In addition to STCA (11-18-4.c (1):**

A new MOU will be drafted between the NMDVS and the Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes stating all NMDVS Departments and Manager level programs will be working with all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes.

Similar MOU initiatives will include the Borderline Native American Veterans that will include The Southern Ute Nation

**III. AGENCY EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT POLICY (11-18-4.c (1)(3))**

In coordination with tribal authorities, the Department often assists tribal veterans with veterans' court issues.

Department staff members who regularly work with Pueblos, Tribes and Nations have been identified to attend the Cultural Competency training by the State Personnel Office (SPO). all staff members participate in taking training.

**IV. CURRENT AND PLANNED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES (11-18-4.c (5))**

- a. Provide a description of current and planned programs and services provided to or directly affecting Native communities and the funding for each program

The Department is committed to promoting fixable exchange between Department personnel, Department administration, and Pueblos, Native Nations, and Tribes. However, the Department routinely collaborates with Native Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos in mutually beneficial projects for implementation of our respective veterans' programs. The Department's programs in which Native Americans participate and/or might have interests are shown below:

**Programs and Services Potentially Affecting American Indians or Alaska Natives**

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Description of Services</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Cabinet Secretary's Office	In partnership with NMIAD, develop guidance and best practices with the Pueblos, Nation and Tribe Offices of the Veterans Affairs that foster collaboration and advocacy.	General Fund
Healthcare Coordination	Helps veterans navigate the VA healthcare system, by assisting with coordination of their needs and ensuring they are aware of their benefits.	General Fund
State Veterans Benefits and Veterans State Cemeteries & Memorial	Administer statewide benefits for eligible veterans and their dependents. Ensure compliance with the National Cemetery Administration.	VA Funds/General Funds
Women Veterans' Coordinator	Provide guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the public on women veteran issues.	General Fund
Tribal Liaison	The Tribal Liaison is committed to working with and responding to all joint Native American Veterans' related issues and concerns for the State Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes. Serves as a State Agency's point of contact with ongoing communication.	General Fund

b. Main agency accomplishments and challenges regarding work with tribes and native organizations including significant state-tribal issues, recommendations and/or priorities addressed in FY23:

The Department continues to work with the Tribes, Native Nations and Pueblos using a variety of outreach opportunities and will continue to develop ways to improve communications and provide medical treatment to veterans. Such as:

- Tribal Liaison full time commitment in working with Pueblo's, Nation's, and Tribe's
- Uniting as NM Native American Veterans Collaboration. Building relations by having monthly virtual meetings, and quarterly in person meetings.
- National Association of County Veteran Service Officers Accreditation (NACVSO) Training and VA Administration Accreditation for in Pueblos and Tribes VSO's (Assisting those already working as VSOs to for update to accreditation courses, waiver first year NACVSO membership) currently participating in VA Accreditation.

b. Goals for Fiscal year FY24 relating to tribes and native organizations—

- Continue to build relations with each Pueblo, Nation, and Tribe. Encourage Veterans program to initiate a VSO within the Pueblo, Nation, and Tribe.
- Establish a Memo of Understanding with Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes for involving all Department Services.
- Seek out Native American veterans to assist with State and Federal Benefits

1. The Department is committed to working with and responding to all joint State Veterans' related concerns for the State, Tribes, Pueblos, and Native Nations.
2. The Department will continue to seek out community and veterans outreach outlets to promote New Mexico Veterans within Native communities.
3. Collaborate with Federal VA partners (i.e., VBA and VAHCS to capitalize on services to our veterans in rural communities.

#### **V. TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION (11-18-4.C (2))**

##### **A. State Tribal Collaboration Act Training and Certification**

Department field and supervisory employees from multiple Divisions received the STCA cultural awareness training and certification from SPO.

- B. Employee Notification about the STCA Department managers, project leaders, and field employees are knowledgeable of the STCA policy that the Department abides by. Department employees also have access to the Tribal Liaison for consultations regarding the Act.

VI. KEY NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION (11-18-4.C (2))

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Position / Program	Key Names
<b>Cabinet Secretary</b>	<p>Donnie Quintana                      Bataan Memorial Building                      407 Galisteo St.                      Santa Fe, NM 87501-2374                      (505) 487-0220 - Mobile  <a href="mailto:donnie.quintana@dvs.nm.gov">donnie.quintana@dvs.nm.gov</a></p>
<b>Deputy Secretary and acting Administrative Services Director</b>	<p>VACANT</p>
<b>Benefits Division Director/ Cemetery and Memorial Programs Director</b>	<p>Edward Mendez                      Lew Wallace Building                      495 Old Santa Fe Trail                      Santa Fe, NM 87505                      (505) 827-6307 – Office                      (505) 382-3760 – Mobile  <a href="mailto:edward.mendez@dvs.nm.gov">edward.mendez@dvs.nm.gov</a></p>
<b>Field Operations Division Director</b>	<p>Robin Wilson                      4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg.2                      Albuquerque, NM 87110                      (505) 219-5564 – Mobile  <a href="mailto:robin.wilson@dvs.nm.gov">robin.wilson@dvs.nm.gov</a></p>
<b>State Approving Agency Bureau Chief</b>	<p>Katherine Snyder                      4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg.2                      Albuquerque, NM 87110                      (505) 280-1047 - Mobile  <a href="mailto:katherine.snydr@dvs.nm.gov">katherine.snydr@dvs.nm.gov</a></p>
<b>Veterans Business Outreach Center Director</b>	<p>Johnny Martinez                      4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg.2                      Albuquerque, NM 87110                      (505) 469-8501- Mobile  <a href="mailto:johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov">johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov</a></p>

<b>Chief Financial Officer</b>	Danelle Lucero 407 Galisteo St, Room 134 Santa Fe, NM 87501 (505) 827-6313 – Office <a href="mailto:danelle.lucero2@state.nm.us">danelle.lucero2@state.nm.us</a>
<b>Health Care Coordination Program Director</b>	Diane MourningBrown 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg.2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 383-2408 – Office <a href="mailto:Diane.mourningbrown@state.nm.us">Diane.mourningbrown@state.nm.us</a>
<b>Women's Veterans Program Manager</b>	Theresa Figueroa 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg.2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 372-9106- Mobile <a href="mailto:Theresa.figueroa@dvs.nm.gov">Theresa.figueroa@dvs.nm.gov</a>
<b>Tribal Liaison</b>	Beverly A Charley 4601 College Blvd. Rm 1715B Farmington, NM 87402 (575) 241-3322 – Mobile <a href="mailto:beverly.charley@state.nm.us">beverly.charley@state.nm.us</a> <a href="mailto:vetdvs.tribaliaison@state.nm.us">vetdvs.tribaliaison@state.nm.us</a>

## VII. RELEVANT STATUES AND MANDATES

### Appendix A

Relevant Agency Regulations, State or Federal Statutes:

- Chapter 17 NMSA 1978
- State-Tribal Consultation Act - (STCA) 11-18-3 NMSA 2009; and
- Governmental Dispute Prevention and Resolution Act (12-8A-1 NMSA) as amended 2007

## Appendix B

### Glossary or Definitions of Special Agency Terms and Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>NMDVS</b>	New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services
<b>STCA</b>	State Tribal Collaborative Act
<b>NMSA</b>	New Mexico Statute Administrative Code
<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulation
<b>NCA</b>	National Cemetery Administration
<b>VAHCS</b>	Veterans Affairs Healthcare System
<b>SPO</b>	State Personnel Office

### VII. AGREEMENTS

A list of any current or pending agreements with tribal nations are at the site location.