

STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT 2025 AGENCY REPORT



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

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the State-Tribal Collaboration Act (NMSA 11-18-3, 2009), the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) demonstrated a consistent and proactive commitment to collaboration with Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes (NPT) throughout fiscal year 2025. The Department engaged in over 35 Tribal-focused events, outreach initiatives, and partnership meetings across the state and region to amplify support for Native American veterans and their families.

Notable accomplishments included hosting the inaugural **Native American Veterans Collaboration Meeting**, facilitating **monthly outreach through the Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Resource Fairs**, and forming strategic partnerships with Tribal entities, colleges, nonprofits, and federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. NMDVS also collaborated with the Native American Training Institute (NATI) to deliver the **NATI Veterans Symposium** and supported several Pueblos—including Santa Clara, Laguna, and Tesuque—in securing grants to host veteran-focused events and programs.

Department representatives attended ceremonial events, educational summits, mental health wellness fairs, legislative sessions, suicide prevention workshops, and planning meetings for major regional collaborations. These efforts not only strengthened working relationships with Tribal governments but also advanced culturally responsive programming and streamlined access to veteran services throughout Tribal communities.

Additional highlights include supporting the **"Why We Served" Smithsonian exhibition** in Fort Garland, honoring Mr. Burton Platero, from the To'Hajiilee Navajo Chapter as a 100-year-old Native Veteran at the state capitol during the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department's American Indian Day at the Legislature, and initiating a pathway for VA accreditation for Tribal Veteran Service Officers across New Mexico NPTs.

These activities reflect NMDVS's ongoing dedication to Tribal engagement, veteran empowerment, and integrated service delivery.

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services enacted or participated in:

Tribal Engagements & Collaboration

- Attended tribal resource fairs and outreach events across Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes
- Initiated monthly NM Veterans Tribal Collaboration Meetings with Tribal Leaders and Executive Assistants
- Conducted Quarterly Tribal Liaison Meetings and ongoing outreach with Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Association
- Participated in Indian Day at the NM Legislature honoring tribal veterans
- Attended inaugural meeting with Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory at Fort Defiance, AZ
- Supported planning and coordination for Veterans events with the Jicarilla Apache, Santo Domingo, Santa Clara, Tesuque, Laguna, Nambe, Taos, and Zuni tribal communities
- Partnered with tribes for VA Accreditation Pathways; 39 Tribal communities enrolled in NACVSO Training via NMIAD grant
- Presented Tribal Program at Hesperus Native American Veteran Entrepreneurship Bootcamp
- Attended inauguration of Jicarilla Apache Nation President Adrian Notahsinnie (USMC Veteran)

Healthcare & Behavioral Wellness

- Supported suicide prevention workshops across Native communities
- Partnered with DVS Healthcare for Veterans outreach and behavioral wellness events
- Participated in NMDOH Tribal Roundhouse for Native American Veterans healthcare awareness
- Represented DVS at Gather of Nations Pow Wow with VA Healthcare collaboration

- Attended World Health Wellness Fair at Santo Domingo Pueblo
- Provided state benefits assistance to over 100 veterans and families in San Juan County
- Attended behavioral health-focused legislative days with DVS Healthcare
- Partnered with VA Healthcare for outreach and monthly services access
- Attended NM Native American Indian Suicide Prevention Workshops

Veterans Conferences, Retreats & Recognition

- Hosted inaugural NMDVS Veterans Conference at Buffalo Thunder Casino & Resort
- Participated in Tribute to Women Veterans Day with Albuquerque Veterans Organizations
- Attended NMDVS Women Veterans Conference
- Collaborated with Native American Training Institute to host NATI Veterans Symposium at Isleta Resort & Casino
- Attended planning meetings for Northern NM LC-18 Veterans Retreat at Nambe Falls
- Supported PTSD-focused Veterans events with Pueblo of Tesuque
- Attended various Homeless Stand Downs in Gallup, San Juan County, and Navajo Nation
- Supported Gold Star Mothers Memorial Phase II dedication at Farmington Berg Park
- Assisted with flood-related holiday relief for Mescalero Apache and Santa Clara Pueblo veterans

Education, Exhibitions & Public Events

- Engaged in planning and outreach for the Smithsonian “Why We Served” Exhibition at Fort Garland Museum
 - Invited tribal veterans to participate and lend memorabilia
- Conducted outreach at NM State Fair

- Supported “Honor Song” Premier hosted by Sovereign Mind Productions
- Participated in MMIW event at Shiprock Gym offering family support services

Legislative & Leadership Outreach

- Cabinet Secretary attended meetings with Pueblo of Nambe Governor and tribal leaders
- Delivered DVS program briefing to Congressman Vasquez
- Attended NM State Tribal Summit, Reception & Educational Sessions
- Recognized centenarian veterans at the 2025 NM Legislative Veterans Day events

II. AGENCY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND

A. NMDVS Tribal Liaison Mission:

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services is dedicated to collaborating with the State's Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes to build healthier communities by connecting all veterans and their families to the highest quality care, services, and eligible benefits through advocacy and collaboration.

NMDVS Tribal Liaison Vision:

New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services' collaborative relationship with each Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes will ensure all Indigenous Veterans and their families in this state are educated about, and the have an opportunity to, attain all earned benefits through collaborative and synchronized efforts of all community service organizations.

B. Agency Overview

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services is the state government agency statutorily established in 2003 to serve the needs of New Mexico's Veterans and their families. As a cabinet-level agency, NMDVS ensures that veteran-related concerns receive the highest level of state attention and advocacy.

The Department delivers services through eight core program areas, each structured around shared statutory goals and measurable outcomes. These program areas include:

- Tribal Liaison
- Field Services Division
- Benefits Division: State Benefits, Cemetery, and Memorial Programs
- Women Veteran Program (WVP)
- State Approving Agency (SAA)
- Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)
- Healthcare Coordination Division
- Administrative Services Division

Together, these programs represent NMDVS's comprehensive and strategic commitment to enhancing the quality of life for Veterans across New Mexico.

NMDVS Mission Statement

Build healthier communities by connecting all Veterans and their families to the highest quality care, services, and eligible benefits through advocacy and collaboration.

NMDVS Vision Statement

All Veterans and their families are educated about and have an opportunity to attain all earned benefits through collaborative and synchronized efforts of all community service organizations.

Core Services and Programs

Veteran Tribal Liaison: Serves as the NMDVS key point of contact, fostering relationships and building new connections across New Mexico's Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes. We are committed to empowering Native American Veterans through improving access to resources and strengthening advocacy efforts.

State Benefits: Manages state Veterans' benefits, memorials, and state cemeteries.

Benefits include:

- New Mexico state park/museum passes
- Veteran property tax exemptions
- Veteran property tax waivers
- Veteran license plates
- Education scholarships
- Discounted hunting and fishing licenses

Operates State Veterans Cemeteries:

- Gallup State Veterans Cemetery
- Fort Stanton State Veterans Cemetery & Fort Stanton Historical Merchant Marine Cemetery
- Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery
- Taos State Veterans Cemetery (Projected to open in FY26)

Additionally, State Benefits operates the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Angel Fire including a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. We administer the National Guard and Reserve Burial Equity Act, allowing state Veterans' cemeteries to provide an honored final resting place for qualified National Guard members, Reservists and their qualified dependents. We oversee the Forgotten Heroes Burial Program for unclaimed or indigent Veterans, and the State Veterans' Funeral Honors Program which trains and supports 32 Veteran Service Organizations Funeral Honors Teams statewide.

Field Services: Provides direct support to Veterans and their eligible dependents through comprehensive benefits counseling and claims assistance. Accredited Field Service Officers prepare and submit claims directly to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in accordance with Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations. With 19 offices located throughout the state, the division ensures accurate, timely, and ethical representation of Veterans' claims while promoting equitable access to earned benefits across all New Mexico communities.

Healthcare Coordination: Educates Veterans about available health benefits and connects them to community resources. We oversee transportation programs funded by both VA and the state, ensuring Veterans have access to medical appointments. The program also manages homeless assistance services, suicide prevention initiatives, and social work support to advocate for Veterans' well-being and overall care.

Women Veterans' Program (WVP): Provides dedicated support and advocacy to ensure women Veterans and their families receive high-quality services. The WVP conducts outreach to educate women Veterans about available federal, and state benefits and actively champions equitable access to all programs and services for Veterans.

Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC): Supports Veterans, reserve component members, their eligible spouses, and widows/widowers with business planning, funding, marketing, and other essential resources to start or grow a business. VBOC offers Boots to Business and Reboot programs, equipping transitioning service members and Veterans with foundational knowledge to explore business ownership. VBOC also provides mentorship, training, and networking opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial success.

State Approving Agency (SAA): Reviews, evaluates, and approves eligible programs at educational institutions and training establishments in New Mexico for those individuals wishing to enroll and utilize their GI Bill® education benefits. In addition, to help ensure institutions remain in compliance, the SAA conducts supervisory, technical assistance, and risk-based surveys.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

Administrative Services: Provides essential support services for NMDVS. Ensures effective and efficient financial administration, contract and procurement processes, official recordkeeping, policy implementation, resource management, Human Resources, IT support, compliance and risk management, and facilities management.

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 Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes have been identified to attend the Cultural Competency training by the State Personnel Office (SPO). All staff members participate in the 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 expanded collaboration between Department personnel and Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes. NMDVS, routinely collaborates with Native Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes 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		
Programs	Description of Services	Funding
Cabinet Secretary's Office	In partnership with NMIAD, develop guidance and best practices with the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribal Offices of the Veterans Affairs that foster collaboration and advocacy.	General Fund
Healthcare Coordination	<p>Educates Veterans about available health benefits and connects them to community resources. We oversee transportation programs funded by both VA and the state, ensuring Veterans have access to medical appointments. The program also manages homeless assistance services, suicide prevention initiatives, and social work support to advocate for Veterans' well-being and overall care.</p> <p>The Highly Rural Transportation Program plays a critical role in ensuring Native Veterans residing in underserved rural areas have reliable access to transportation for medical appointments, bridging the gap between distance and essential care.</p>	<p>General Fund</p> <p>VA Grant Funds</p>

State Veterans Benefits and Veterans State Cemeteries & Memorials	Administer statewide benefits for eligible veterans and their dependents. Ensure compliance with the National Cemetery Administration.	VA Funds General Funds
Field Services	Continue collaboration with Tribal Representatives and Service Officers to ensure funded training opportunities are extended	General Fund
Women Veteran Program	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 Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes. Serves as a State Agency's point of contact with ongoing communication.	General Fund
Veteran Business Outreach Center	Supports Veterans, reserve component members, their eligible spouses, and widows/widowers with business planning, funding, marketing, and other essential resources to start or grow a business.	VA Funds General Funds
State Approving Agency	<p>Reviews, evaluates, and approves eligible programs at educational institutions and training establishments in New Mexico for those individuals wishing to enroll and utilize their GI Bill® education benefits. In addition, to help ensure institutions remain in compliance, the SAA conducts supervisory, technical assistance, and risk-based surveys.</p> <p>GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at https://benefits.va.gov/gibill.</p>	VA Funds General Funds

b. Main agency accomplishments and challenges regarding work with tribes and native organizations including significant state-tribal issues, recommendations and/or priorities addressed in FY25:

The Department continues to work with the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes using a variety of outreach opportunities and will continue to develop ways to improve communications and coordinate benefits for Tribal Veterans. Such as:

1. Collaboration through in person interactions with Nation, Pueblo, and Tribe leadership to better understand needs and assist them to better serve their residents through offered specialized VSO training. Working with Field Services to reach Tribal Veteran Service Officers to create a pathway for VA Accreditation.
2. Employee knowledge and effectiveness: Ongoing collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) Benefits Training to support Native American Veterans with Accreditation. Additionally, NMDVS Field Director is working closely with the VA Transition and Economic Development Program (T-REP) and Office of General Counsel (OGC) on these matters.
3. Collaboration and cooperation: Conducted Quarterly (in-person) Governor's Veterans Advisory Council meetings, in numerous locations throughout NM. The council explores the needs of veterans, reviewing existing policies, and consulting with the state's veteran community to make sure that every veteran and their family receives the resources they are owed from their military service.
4. Strengthening relationships through ongoing engagement. In FY 2025, the Department deepened its commitment to Tribal engagement through a series of strategic partnerships and initiatives aimed at fostering stronger relationships with Native communities statewide. A cornerstone of this effort was the establishment of the Quarterly Tribal Liaison Meeting,

providing a consistent platform for dialogue, collaboration, and shared problem-solving with Tribal representatives. The Department also partnered with the Native American Training Institute (NATI) to co-host the inaugural NATI Veterans Symposium, a convening that elevated veteran-related issues within Tribal contexts. Additional collaborative efforts included joining the Veterans Affairs Healthcare Department at the two-day Gathering of Nations Pow Wow, amplifying outreach to Tribal Veterans, and co-hosting the San Juan County Homeless Stand Down with San Juan College. This event featured participation from Navajo Nation Chapter Houses across Shiprock, Kirtland, Fruitland, Bloomfield, Farmington, and Aztec, expanding services and visibility to communities across the Four Corners region.

5. Mobile Outreach Vehicle acquisition. To expand access to services in underserved communities, the Department acquired a Mobile Outreach Vehicle staffed by two National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO)-certified Veteran Service Officers. This initiative enhances outreach capabilities and delivers essential support directly to Tribal and rural areas throughout the state.
6. Dedicated Tribal Track at the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services Annual Conference. The Department proudly hosted an annual Veterans' conference with a dedicated Tribal Veterans track, elevating the voices and needs of Native communities. This track facilitated direct engagement, education, and advocacy on issues unique to Tribal Veterans, encouraging deeper understanding and collaborative problem-solving among service providers, Tribal Veterans and tribal leadership.

FY 2026 Top 3 Goals/Objectives related to Tribes:

1. Expanded NACVSO-Certified Tribal Veteran Service Officer Training to enhance services for Tribal Veterans and their families, the Department will support the expansion of specialized training for Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSOs). In collaboration with NACVSO national trainers, the Department will coordinate and facilitate the delivery of certification training to 27 Tribal VSOs representing various Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes across New Mexico. As a dedicated support agency, the Department's role centers on logistical coordination, advocacy, and sustained partnership to ensure the long-term success of Tribal VSOs in delivering culturally informed, community-based veteran services.
2. Data-Informed outreach and service planning to better understand and serve the unique needs of Tribal Veterans, the Department will launch a comprehensive survey initiative. In tandem, it will work to establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with New Mexico Indian Affairs Department to support each Nation, Pueblo, and Tribe to formalize outreach efforts on Tribal Lands. This MOUs will support VSO training and service coordination, enabling more accurate assessments of Veteran populations across Native communities statewide.
3. Strengthening tribal engagement through targeted relationship-building. As part of its ongoing commitment to Tribal collaboration, the Department will broaden its presence at Tribal events and gatherings, with a particular emphasis on engaging Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes that have historically received limited attention from the Department's Tribal Liaison. This effort aims to foster new and meaningful connections, increase trust, and ensure that all Tribal entities have direct access to Departmental resources and representation. By attending more events and initiating proactive outreach, the Department will work toward a more inclusive and equitable approach to Tribal engagement, helping to inform policies and improve service delivery statewide.

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

- A. State Tribal Collaboration Act Training and Certification. All Department, field, and supervisory employees earned the STCA cultural awareness training and certification from SPO.
- B. Employee Notification about the STCA. Department managers, project leaders, and field employees are well-versed in the STCA policy that the Department adheres to. Additionally, all Department employees 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
Cabinet Secretary	Jamison A. Hererra Bataan Memorial Building 407 Galisteo St. Santa Fe, NM 87501-2374 (505) 546-8609 - Mobile jamison.hererra@dvs.nm.gov
Deputy Secretary	Eric W. James Bataan Memorial Building 407 Galisteo St. Santa Fe, NM 87501-2374 (505) 537-1309 - Mobile Eric.james@dvs.nm.gov
Tribal Liaison	Beverly A. Charley 4601 College Blvd. Rm 1715B Farmington, NM 87402 (575) 241-3322 – Mobile beverly.charley@state.nm.gov vetdvs.tribaliaison@state.nm.gov

Benefits Division Director/ Cemetery and Memorial Programs Director	Edward Mendez Lew Wallace Building 495 Old Santa Fe Trail Santa Fe, NM 87505 (505) 827-6307 – Office (505) 382-3760 – Mobile edward.mendez@dvs.nm.gov
Field Services Division Director	Robin Wilson 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 219-5564 – Mobile robin.wilson@dvs.nm.gov
State Approving Agency Director	Katherine L. (Kathy) Snyder 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 280-1047 - Mobile katherine.snydr@dvs.nm.gov
Veterans Business Outreach Center Director	Johnny Martinez 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 469-8501- Mobile johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov
Acting ASD Director/Chief Financial Officer	Danelle Lucero 407 Galisteo St. Santa Fe, NM 87501 (505) 827-6313 – Office danelle.lucero2@state.nm.gov
Healthcare Coordination Division Director	Krista Luna 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 383-2408 – Office Krista.luna@dvs.nm.gov
Women Veterans Program	Amberly Viner 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 372-9106 – Office Amberly.viner@dvs.nm.gov

VII. RELEVANT STATUTES 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

Acronym	Definition
NMDVS	New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services
STCA	State Tribal Collaborative Act
NMSA	New Mexico Statute Administrative Code
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NPT	Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes
VAHCS	Veterans Affairs Healthcare System
SPO	State Personnel Office

VII. AGREEMENTS

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