

House Committee on Veterans Affairs:

Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services
March 14, 2023



Rhode Island Veterans Home

480 Metacom Ave., Bristol, RI

- We remain steadfast in our commitment to providing the residents of the Rhode Island Veterans Home an environment that is safe and truly improves their quality of life.
- While many residents and staff are now vaccinated and boosted with the bi-valent vaccine, COVID-19 is still present in Rhode Island, so we must still undertake mitigation efforts. In coordination with the Rhode Island Department of Health and our federal VA partners thorough screening, testing and vaccination procedures have been utilized to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- In 2022, in addition to the weekly local entertainment and individual neighborhood activities, RIVH facilitated over 20 off-campus trips and 35 on-campus concerts and entertainment events.
- Enhancements were made to the facility and operations to better serve our Veterans. The Home transitioned from paper-based medical records to a new electronic medical record system.



SFY 2024

The Veterans Home plans to bring resident census to maximum capacity, filling 192 nursing-level of care beds. Reaching 192 residents is contingent upon the status of COVID-19. We cannot and will not admit more residents than we can provide safe and appropriate care: \$1.7M

Rhode Island Veterans Home (continued)

Resident Services and Benefits

Included Services

- Room and board, including meals
- Private room with private bathroom
- Nursing services
- Primary care physician
- X-ray services
- In-house lab testing and results
- Transportation to VA medical appointments
- Dental cleaning and exam by dentist
- Prescribed medications
- Mental health services
- Psychiatric reviews as medically prescribed
- Most medically necessary DME and supplies
- Resident personal laundry cleaning
- Palliative/end-of-life care
- Community magazines and newspapers
- In-room television
- Cable and Netflix on common area TVs
- Gym
- Stamps for personal mail
- Audio books
- Barber/hair stylist
- RIVH planned activities, trips and entertainment

Additional Financial Benefits

- \$150 monthly Personal Needs Allowance, which is triple the amount allowed at other nursing homes
- Allowance for cost of Medicare/supplemental health insurance
- Allowance for income taxes
- Spousal housing allowance for lower-income residents
- Allowances for certain military decorations and campaign medals
- No requirement for seven-year lookback to draw down assets
- No requirement to sell homes, property, draw down savings, 401(k), etc.

Maintenance Fees Reimbursement as of 2/15/23

CAP – February 2013 through June 2020

A total of \$4,621,564.84 has been refunded for the approved CAP.

-17 refund checks for resident Veterans have been hand-delivered.

-33 refund checks for deceased and discharged Veterans have been hand-delivered.

-There are three remaining refunds pending for the deceased and discharged Veterans.

CAP – October 2010 through January 2013

A total of \$600,486.30 has been refunded for this approved CAP.

-One refund check to a resident Veteran has been hand-delivered.

-10 refund checks for deceased and discharged Veterans have been hand delivered.

-There are six remaining refunds pending for the deceased and discharged Veterans.

Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

301 S. County Trail, Exeter, RI



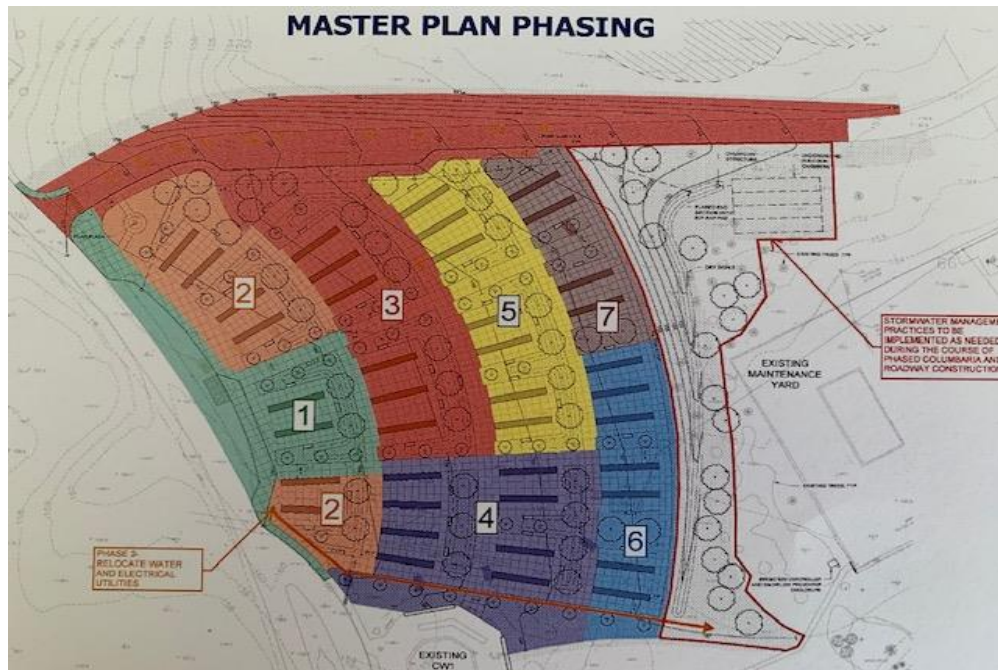
- The Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery is a dignified, solemn resting place for Veterans and their eligible spouses or dependents. The Cemetery is situated on 280 acres in Exeter.
- Averaging about 100 internments each month, RIVMC remains one of the busiest state Veterans' cemeteries in the nation.
- There are additional costs associated with the federal Burial Equity for Guard and Reserve Act passed in 2022, as well as the VA mandate that state Veterans' cemeteries inter all eligible Veterans and spouses/dependents, regardless of residency, beginning in 2024.
- The Veterans Memorial Cemetery is also investing in capital improvement projects through RICAP, including construction of a maintenance facility.

SFY 2024

In order to best honor the Veterans interred at the Cemetery and ensure Rhode Island's Veterans cemetery remains a beautiful and solemn resting place, RIVETS is proposing converting six (6) of eight (8) seasonal positions to four (4) FTEs. : \$515,839

Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

(continued)



In FY2022, the Cemetery completed construction on a new set of Columbarium Walls. These two walls are Phase 1 of a multi-phase project that will eventually build 40 walls containing 14,000 niches, allowing RIVMC to continue offering niche inurnment services for the next 50 years.

In FY2023, the Cemetery dedicated two new memorials: The Gold Star Family Memorial and the Elks Memorial. Additional planned memorials include the Portuguese Veterans Memorial, the Invisible Wounds of War Memorial and the Native American Veterans Memorial.

Future investments include naming and signing of roads, A&E for crypt initiative and construction of crypt field and equipment procurement.

Rhode Island Veterans Resource Center

560 Jefferson Blvd, Warwick, RI

- The RIVETS Community Services Grants address the needs of Veterans and military families, which aligns with the Veterans Services Strategic Plan.
- Student Veterans bring a wealth of experience and strengths to Rhode Island, but they may face unique challenges when transitioning from the military to civilian life. RIVETS provides services at the Westerly and Woonsocket Educations Centers, ensuring they are successful while enrolled in a course of study, upon graduation, and beyond.



SFY 2024

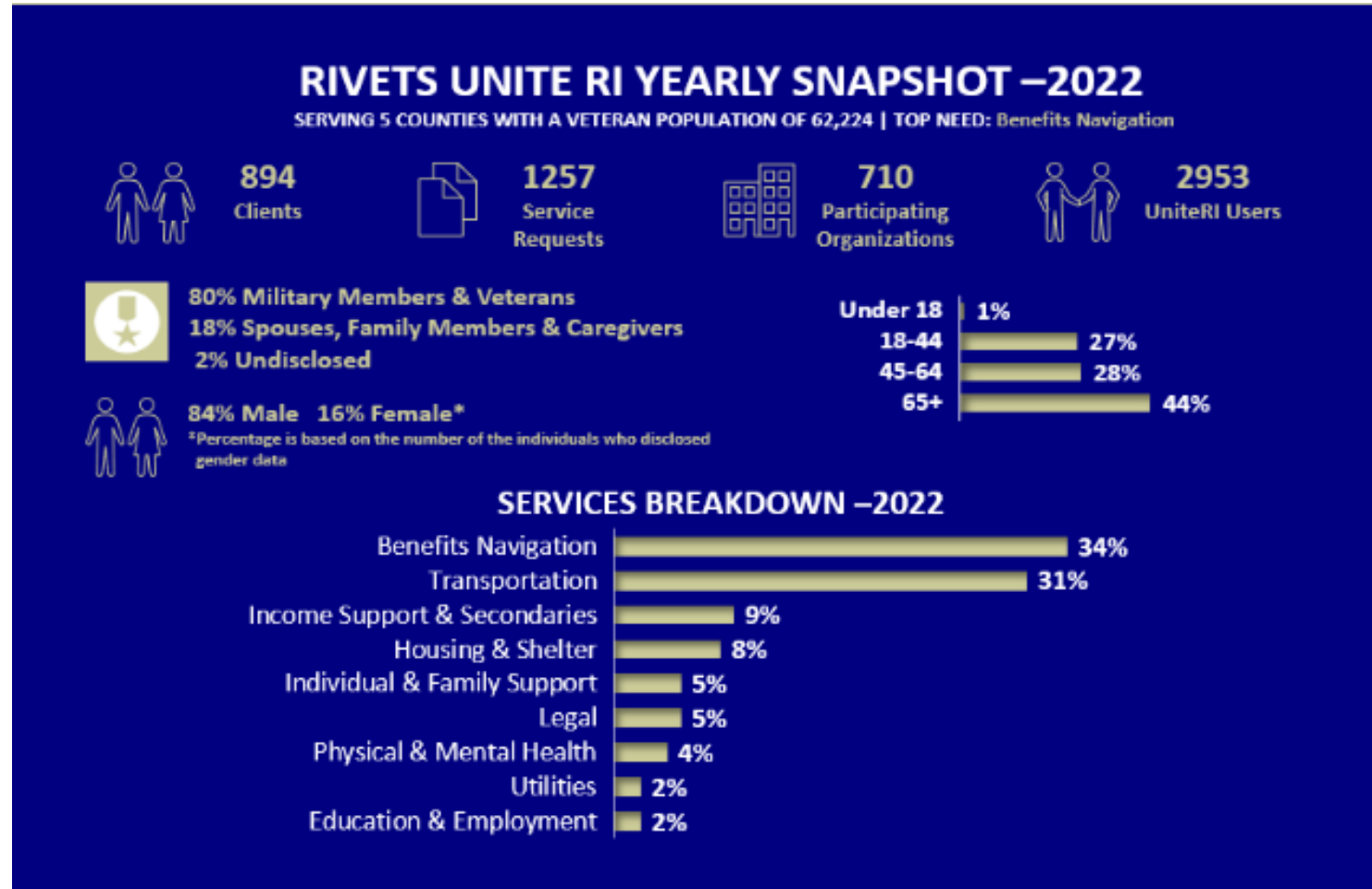
The Office of Veterans Services has approximately 65,000 paper DD-214s (discharge paperwork.) We aim to digitize these records for more efficient, secure, and accessible storage of these records: \$250,000

Operation Stand Down RI: One-time, pass through funding to support build-out of food pantry and clothing shed storage facility: \$50,000

Many injured, ill, and disabled Veterans identify access to reliable transportation, including services to get them to and from VA health care appointments, as critical and important to reintegration efforts: \$25,000

Rhode Island Veterans Resource Center

(continued)



Calendar Year 2022 was the first time RIVETS had two VA-accredited Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) on-staff. VSOs help ensure that claimants have access to responsible and qualified representation on their VA benefits claims while ensuring Veterans and military families are connected to appropriate programs and services.

The VSOs at RIVETS assisted 894 unique clients with 1,257 service requests in CY 2022.

As with RI's general population, the RIVETS client population skews older, with 44% of clients seeking assistance are aged 65 or older.



Annual Report 2022

Per RI General Laws, RIVETS shall report annually to the governor, speaker of the house of representatives, the senate president, and house and senate finance committees detailing the condition of the Veterans Home, the Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and the character of the work of Veterans affairs over the past year.

Veterans Services Strategic Plan: Operational Approach

CURRENT STATE:

Maintain thorough knowledge of individual and social factors contributing to issues that affect Veterans and active duty service members and their families, remain current on issues and trends impacting the work and mission of the office, form strong and successful partnerships locally, regionally and nationwide to address Veterans' issues.

Line of Effort 1: Provide quality care at the RI Veterans Home

Develop the right staffing model to ensure a high level of care

Line of Effort 2: Provide quality customer service at the RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery

Implement effective burial procedures

Line of Effort 3: Act as a resource hub for Veteran Services

Strengthen public and private partnerships

DESIRED END STATE:

Set conditions to reduce homeless Veterans, Veterans living in poverty, and Veteran unemployment rates; ensure Veterans receive proper medical care; continue quality customer service at the RI Veterans Home and RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery; and ensure every Veterans has and opportunity to succeed in Rhode Island.

Questions and Closing Remarks



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