



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND, VA 23219

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*American Legion*  
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*Association of the United States Army*  
*Disabled American Veterans*  
*Fleet Reserve Association*  
*Korean War Veterans Association*  
*Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.*  
*Marine Corps League*  
*Military Order of the Purple Heart*  
*Military Officers Association of America*  
*Military Order of the World Wars*  
*National Association for Uniformed Services*  
*Navy Seabee Veterans of America*  
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*Paralyzed Veterans of America*  
*Reserve Officers Association*  
*Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*  
*Veterans of Foreign Wars*  
*Vietnam Veterans of America*  
*Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association*  
*Virginia National Guard Association*  
*Women Marines Association*

December 18, 2015

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## Position Paper 2016-03 Virginia Veteran and Family Support Services

1. **Objective:** Put in place the service-delivery structure necessary to meet the behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services needs of Virginia's veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families into the next decade and beyond by hiring all Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) direct services staff as Department of Veterans Services (DVS) full-time employees.
2. **Background:**
  - a. The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) was established in law by the 2008 Virginia General Assembly to ensure that services to veterans and their families are readily available in all areas of the Commonwealth.
  - b. Now known as VVFS, the program provides a statewide delivery and response system for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services needs.
  - c. VVFS provided 5,465 services in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, rising to 7,755 in FY2015. Service numbers are expected to top 8,000 in FY2016 and continue to rise.
  - d. Virginia is home to approximately 781,000 veterans and is forecast to rise to 790,000 veterans in 2020. Included in this population are over 300,000 who served since September 11, 2001. The Virginia National Guard and Reserve components have been called upon as never before to deploy to combat zones.
  - e. The challenges of the current conflicts are enormous. Data indicate that 38% of Soldiers and 31% of Marines report psychological symptoms. Among members of the National Guard, the figure rises to 49%. Psychological symptoms are markedly higher among those with repeated deployments. Families are also significantly affected.
3. **Discussion:**
  - a. VVFS is a model state program that addresses service gaps for veterans/families.
  - b. Over the last seven years, VVFS has evolved from a program for our war wounded only to a *No Wrong Door* program for all Virginia veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists not in federal service, and their families.
  - c. The existing VVFS service-delivery structure, which operates through regional consortia of Community Service Boards, worked well when the program was launched in 2008; however, it is no longer optimal to meet current demand for services, nor is it optimized to meet expected future growth.
  - d. Under the current model, VVFS has operational responsibility for VVFS direct services and outcomes, but not the operational authority or accountability. VVFS operates through contracts with five financial and 11 hiring authorities.
  - e. Converting VVFS to an all-state employee workforce will give DVS the responsibility, authority and accountability for program operations, and will enable true enterprise standardization for delivery of services.
  - f. As a result, outcomes will be improved for Virginia veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families, and VVFS will be properly resourced and structured to meet current and projected demand.
4. **Recommendation:** That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate an additional \$2,147,591 (GF) and authorize 39 new positions for VVFS in FY17 to convert VVFS to an all-state employee workforce. FY18 funding should be \$98,831 (GF) above FY17 levels.