



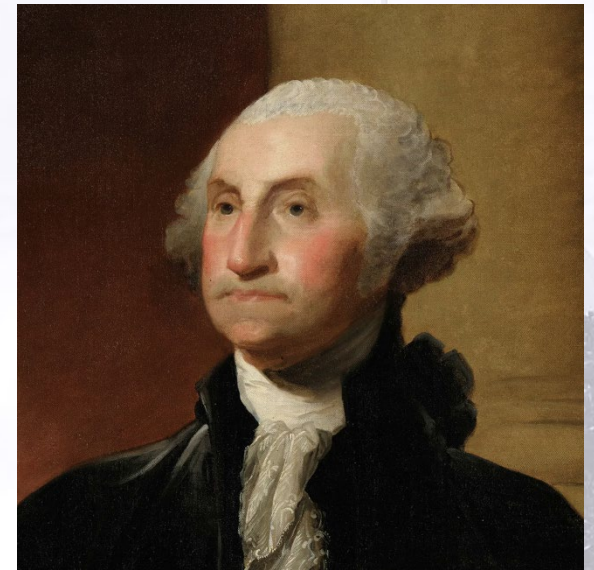
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (ADVA)

“Proudly Serving America’s Finest”

Presented by:
Rear Admiral Kent Davis, USN (Ret.)
Commissioner



“The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.”



President George Washington



A PARTNERSHIP



U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS
("USDVA" or "VA")



ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS
("ADVA")



VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

- ❖ VHA - Veterans Health Administration
- ❖ VBA - Veterans Benefits Administration
- ❖ NCA - National Cemetery Administration

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration



VA Hospitals & Community- Based Outpatient Clinics - Medical/Mental Healthcare

**Vet Centers – Social &
Psychological Services,
Readjustment
Counseling**





VHA Facilities in Alabama

VA Medical Centers:

Birmingham
Montgomery
Tuscaloosa
Tuskegee

Vet Centers:

Hoover
Huntsville
Mobile
Montgomery

VA Clinics:

Bessemer
Birmingham
Childersburg
Dothan
Fort Rucker
Gadsden
Guntersville
Huntsville
Jasper
Mobile
Monroeville
Montgomery
Oxford
Selma
Sheffield
Tuscaloosa/U. of Alabama



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Benefits Administration



- ❖ Pension
- ❖ Disability Compensation
- ❖ Education and Training (e.g., GI Bill)
- ❖ Vocational Rehabilitation
- ❖ Home Loans
- ❖ Insurance
- ❖ Survivors Benefits

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery Administration



Provides a dignified burial and lasting memorials for veterans and their eligible family members and maintains national veterans' cemeteries.



State/Territory Departments of Veterans Affairs





Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) Mission

*To **promote awareness** and **assist** eligible Veterans, their families, and survivors to receive from the state and federal government any and all benefits to which they may be entitled under existing or future laws.*





Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) “By the Numbers”

- Founded in **1945** by Alabama legislature.
- Approximately **1,200 state and contract employees**.
- Very small Headquarters in Montgomery, with **70 facilities** around the state of Alabama.
- Serves approximately **400,000 Alabama Veterans**
- **Approximate \$230 million annual budget (FY2025)**
- Overseen by a **17-member State Board of Veterans Affairs (SBVA)**: Governor and 16 other members



SBVA's Organizations (and number of members)



1



3



1



1



3



1



3



1



2

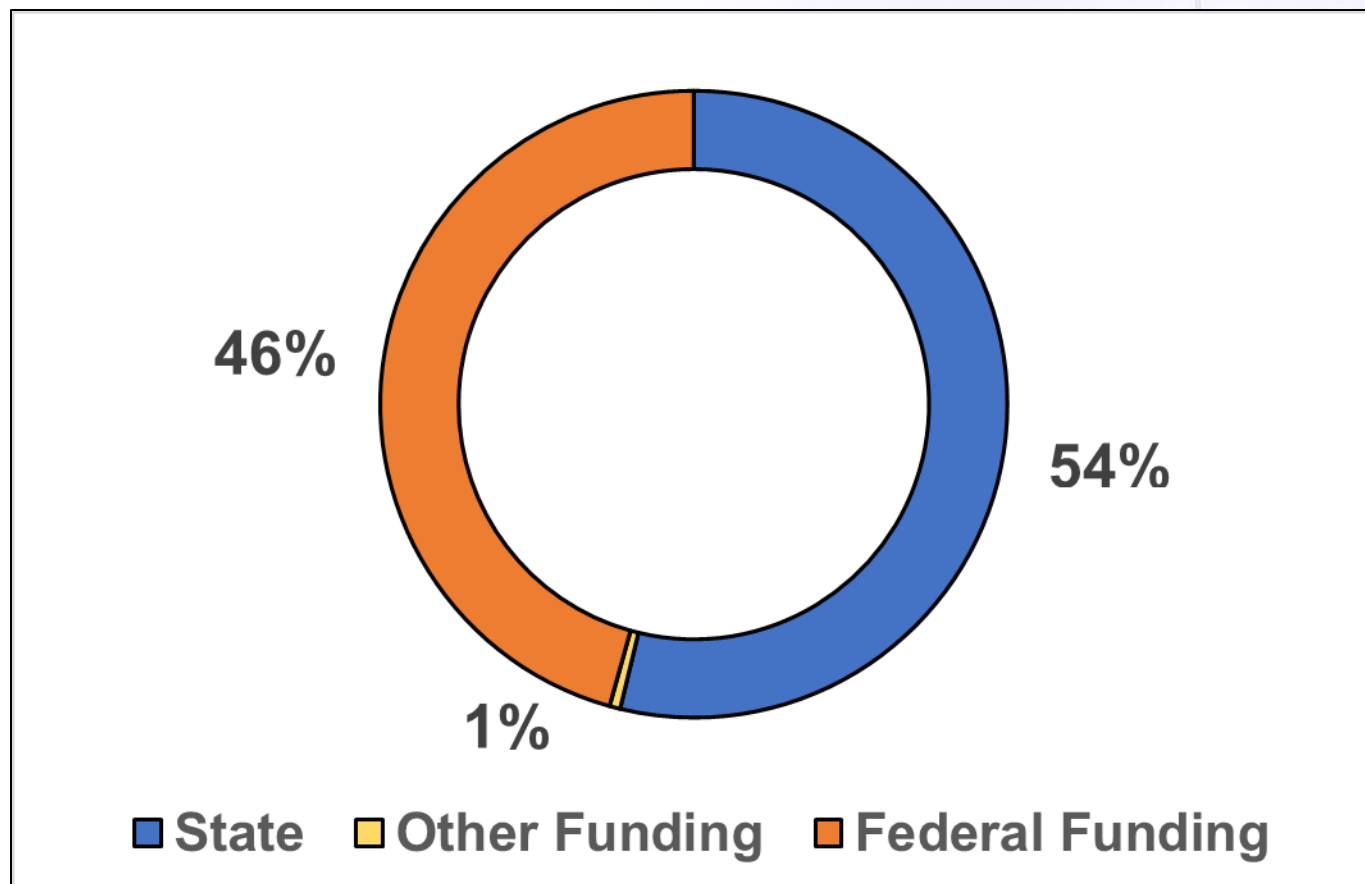


Additional External Oversight

- Alabama Department of Public Health, Division of Healthcare Facilities - Annual Survey, Complaint Survey and Life Safety
- Federal Veterans Health Administration - Annual Inspection and Focused Survey as needed regarding state veterans homes
- Alabama Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Alabama Board of Examiners of Public Accounts
- Office of the State Auditor (Almost 9,000 property line items)
- National Cemetery Administration inspections of cemetery



ADVA's Funding Sources





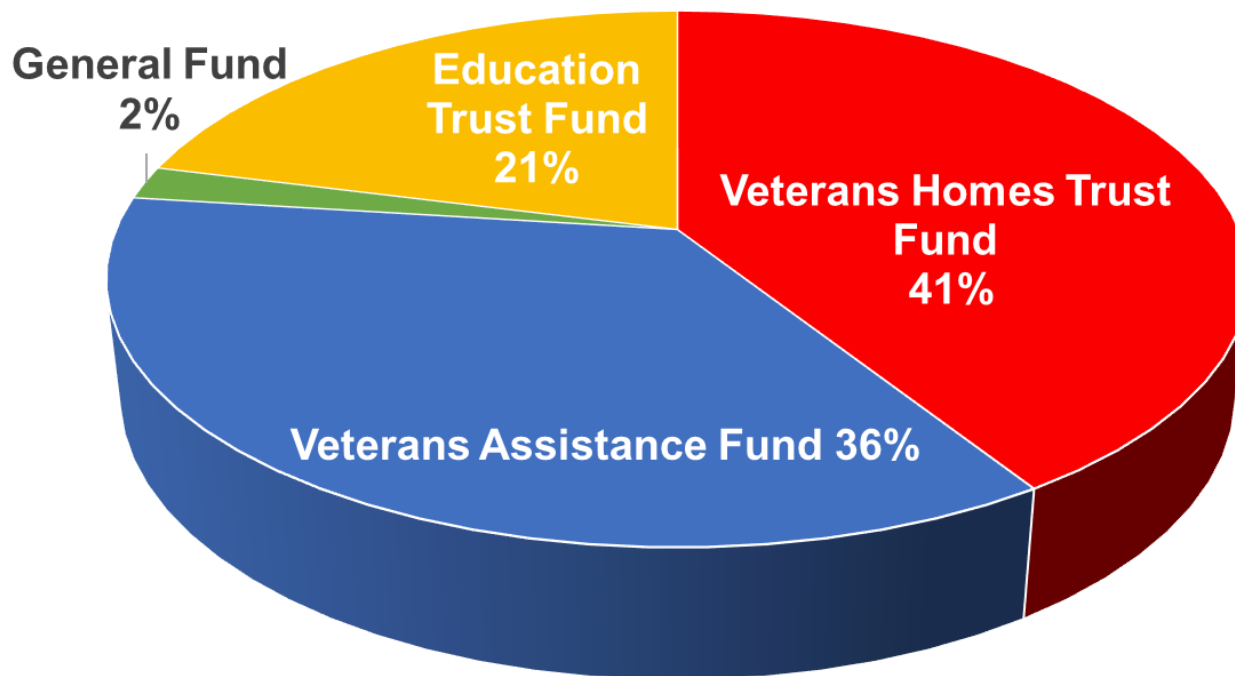
ADVA's Accounts

Fund Name	Receipts	Expenditures
General Fund (GF)	State General Fund - State Legislature	Administrative and operating expenses of the Department; salaries and benefits; travel; equipment; and office supplies
Education Trust Fund (ETF)	Education Trust Fund - State Legislature	Books, fees, and tuition of the Alabama GI Dependent Scholarship beneficiaries; salaries and benefits of employees
Veterans Homes Trust Fund (VHTF)	Federal per diem; bed lease; state income tax check-off; donations	Administrative and operating expenses of the state offices located at the veterans homes; salaries and benefits of homes directors and clerks and related office expenses; federal per diem paid to healthcare provider
Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF)	Ad valorem tax; federal reimbursement for construction; certain veteran license plate revenue; salvaged equipment	Expenses for the veterans homes (state per diem, repair and maintenance expenses, supplies and equipment, capital outlay projects); salaries and benefits of employees; cemetery expenses and operations.



ADVA's Account Proportions

ADVA FY25 Funding





ADVA's Major Veterans Services



Veterans
Service
Offices



Dependent
Scholarship
Program



State Veterans
Cemetery

Outreach and
Engagement/
Veteran Well-
Being



State Veterans
Homes



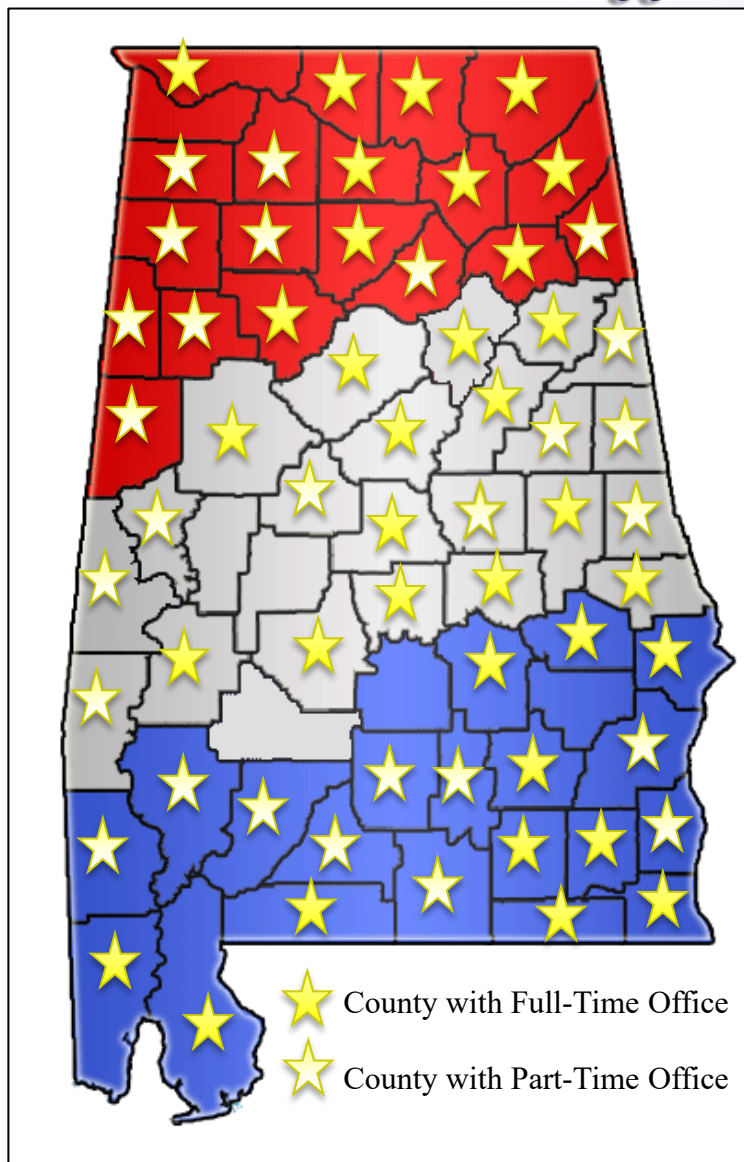
Veterans Service Offices



Veterans Service Offices



**62 total
offices in
Alabama**





Veterans Service Offices



- Free of charge advocacy, counseling, hands on assistance in submitting applications for VA compensation & pension claims. Assist with all other state and federal veterans benefits and services
- **Increase in workload due to 2022 federal PACT Act.**
- Referrals to other providers in both public and private sectors
- 12 new Veterans Service Offices over the past 36 months:
Chambers, Cherokee, Chilton, Clay, Coosa, Crenshaw, Henry, Lawrence, Shelby, Sumter, Washington, and Winston Counties.
- Our advocacy/representation of Alabama veterans extends to:
 - ✓ (1) administrative appeals process via our Appeals & Review office located in regional VBA facility; and
 - ✓ (2) court appeals via an MOU with National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP).



Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for any veteran with toxic-exposures and all veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.
- Every VHA enrolled veteran will receive an initial toxic exposure screening and a follow-up screening every five years.
- Requires research studies on mortality of veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, Post-9/11 veteran health trends, and veteran cancer rates.
- Authorizes 31 new VHA medical facilities across the country (none of those in Alabama, by the way).
- Adds more than 20 new “presumptive conditions” for burn pits and other toxic exposures.
- Includes “Camp Lejeune Justice Act,” which allows people who used contaminated water at the North Carolina Marine Corps Base to file lawsuits to recover damages for toxic exposure.
- **NOTE:** Provisions on potential toxic exposures at Fort McClellan, Alabama were heavily amended.



ADVA Veteran Generated Federal Revenue to Alabama

(in Fiscal Year 2023)

- ❖ **COMPENSATION & PENSION:**
\$3.6 billion to Alabama Veterans and their beneficiaries
- ❖ **MEDICAL CARE: \$1.9 billion**
- ❖ **VETERAN READINESS & EMPLOYMENT(VR&E): \$220 million**
- ❖ **EDUCATION: 23,000+ veterans** using GI Bill in Alabama
- ❖ **TOTAL FEDERAL VA EXPENDITURES IN ALABAMA: \$5.85 billion**





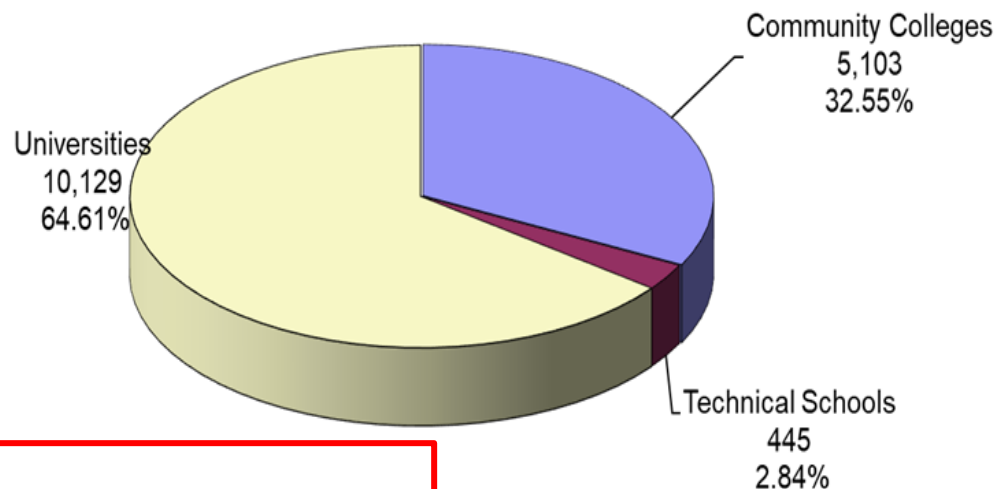
Dependent Scholarship Program



Student Distribution by School Type

October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023

Total Students Enrolled
15,667



Recent Changes:

- **2014/2017 Legislative Changes**
- **HB284 – Raises the tuition cap for the Alabama GI Dependent Scholarship from the DoD cap of \$250 per semester hour to \$400 per semester hour, effective July 31, 2024.**
- **Electronic/web-based applications**



Alabama G.I. Dependent Scholarship Program

BY SIGNING ON TO THIS SYSTEM YOU ARE AGREEING TO THE
SITE'S SECURITY POLICY.

[Sign On](#)

[Register](#)

[Reset Password](#)

Security Policy

This is a Government computer system and is intended for official and other authorized use only. Unauthorized access or use of the system may subject violators to administrative action, civil, and or criminal prosecution under the Criminal Code (Title 18 USC 1030).

All information on this computer system may be monitored, intercepted, recorded, read, copied, or captured and disclosed by and to authorized personnel for official purposes, including criminal prosecution. You have no expectations of privacy regarding monitoring of this system.

Any authorized or unauthorized use of this computer system signifies consent to and compliance with agency policies and their terms.



Application Platform

[Contact Us](#) [About Us](#)



QUALIFYING ALABAMA STATE SCHOOLS:

- Alabama A & M University
- Alabama State University
- Athens State College
- Auburn University
- Auburn University at Montgomery
- Bevill State Community College
- Bishop State Community College
- Central Alabama Community College
- Chattahoochee Valley Community College
- Coastal Alabama Community College
- Enterprise State Community College
- Gadsden State Community College
- George C. Wallace Community College
- J.F. Drake State Technical College
- Jacksonville State University
- Jefferson State Community College
- John C. Calhoun Community College
- Lawson State Community College
- Lurleen B. Wallace State Jr. College
- Marion Military Institute
- Northeast Alabama State Jr. College
- Northwest Shoals Community College
- Reid State Technical College
- Shelton State Community College
- Snead State Jr. College
- Southern Union Community College
- Trenholm State Technical College
- Troy University
- University of Alabama
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of Alabama in Huntsville
- University of Montevallo
- University of North Alabama
- University of South Alabama
- University of West Alabama



QUALIFYING ALABAMA PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

- Amridge University
- Faulkner University
- Huntingdon College
- Miles College
- Oakwood University
- Samford University
- South University
- Spring Hill College
- Stillman College
- Talladega College
- Tuskegee University
- U.S. Sports Academy
- University of Mobile





Outreach and Engagement/Veteran Well-Being



ADVA Website:

<https://va.alabama.gov>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/alsdva/>

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/alabama-department-of-veterans-affairs>

Twitter:

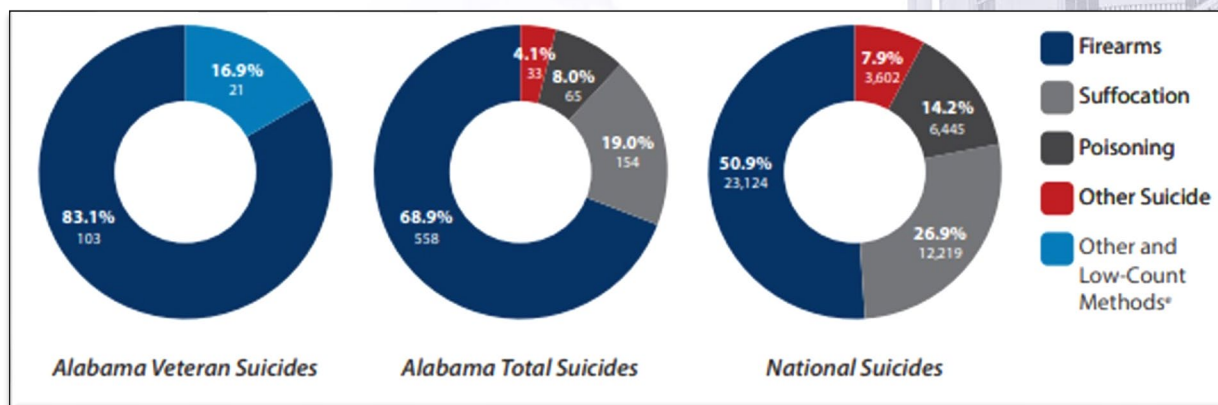
<https://twitter.com/AlVetAffairs>



The Challenge: Veterans at Special Risk



- Almost 18% of those who die by suicide in Alabama are Veterans when 9% of Alabamians have served in the military.
- 36% of Alabama Veterans who die by suicide are over 55.
- Male Veterans die by suicide at a rate 1.3 times than civilian counterparts; for women Veterans it is 2.1 times higher
- Over 80% of Alabama Veterans who die by suicide use a firearm (much higher than national average)

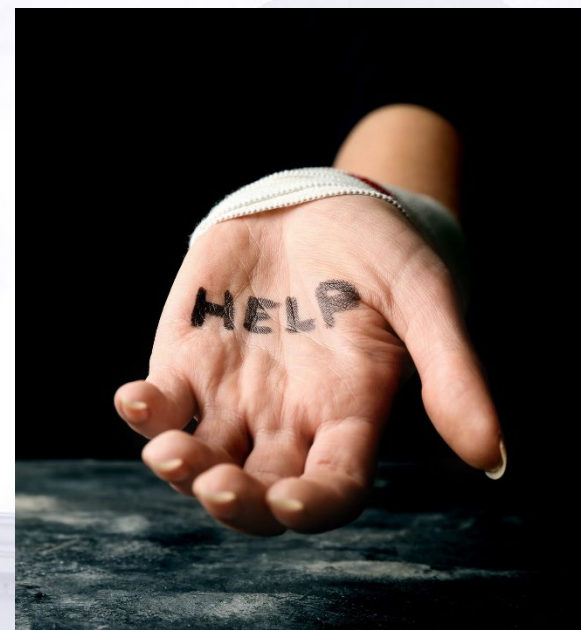




The Challenge: Veterans at Special Risk



- Nationally, approximately 17 Veterans die by suicide per day.
- **In Alabama, a veteran takes his/her own life every 2.4 days on average.**
- Only about 30% of all Veterans who take their own lives use VA healthcare. 11 of 17 Veteran suicides per day are not enrolled in VA care.
- Alabama's Veteran suicide rate is somewhat higher than the national Veteran average *but significantly higher than the national civilian average.*





Sample Partners on “Alabama’s Challenge”



State

- Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs
- State Board of Veterans Affairs
- Members of State Legislature (Reps. Rafferty and Oliver)
- Alabama Department of Senior Services
- University of Alabama
- Auburn University
- Department of Human Resources (Adult Protective Services)
- Alabama National Guard
- Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

Federal

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Private

- Still Serving Veterans
- Veterans Recovery Resources
- Volunteer Lawyers of Birmingham
- Krulak Marines
- Red Cross
- Civilian Marksmanship Program
- Alabama Hospital Association



Unique Factors Leading to Growing Opioid Crisis Among Veterans

- **Service-related physical injuries, in particular those leading to long-term pain (especially neck and back pain)**
- **Mental health issues incurred from military service (depression, anxiety, suicidal ideations, PTSD)**
- **Military Sexual Trauma**
- **Transition to civilian life issues (homelessness, social isolation)**
- **Stigma and reluctance to seek treatment**
- **Over-prescription and prolonged usage by military, Veteran, and civilian providers**





Defense Health Agency

“The opioid epidemic affects every demographic, but none as heavily as Veterans. **Research indicates that Veterans die from opioid overdoses at roughly twice the rate of the general population.** . . . Combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have taken a unique physical and psychological toll on Veterans and service members. Major innovations in battlefield medicine and protective equipment resulted in higher survival rates than in previous conflicts and higher rates of chronic pain. Severe pain was reported by 9.2% of Veterans and was 40% more common than in non-veterans. As in civilian healthcare settings, opioids were increasingly used in Veterans’ healthcare settings for the treatment of chronic pain during the early part of this century. Veterans exhibit high rates of mental health disorders and some may use opioids and other substances as a mean of coping with emotional pain and trauma. Researchers have found that opioid use disorder (OUD) often co-occurs with chronic pain and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a mental health condition that may develop following exposure to a traumatic event, such as deployment-related trauma. . . . **From 2010 to 2019, the rate of drug overdose mortality among Veterans increased by 93.4% for overdoses involving opioids.”**



Annals of Medicine *on the Growing Veteran Opioid Crisis*



“U.S. military veterans have been heavily impacted by the opioid overdose crisis, with drug overdose mortality rates increasing by 53% from 2010–2019. Risk for overdose among veterans is complex and influenced by ongoing interaction among physiological/biological, psychological, and socio-structural factors. **A thorough understanding of opioid-related overdose among veterans, one that goes beyond simple pharmacological determinism, must examine the interplay of pain, pain treatment, and stress, as well as psychological and social experiences—before, during, and after military service.** Comprehensive efforts to tackle the overdose crisis among veterans require interventions that address each of these dimensions. Promising interventions include widespread naloxone distribution and increased provision of low-threshold wrap-around services, including medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and holistic/complementary approaches. **Interventions that are delivered by peers – individuals who share key experiential or sociodemographic characteristics with the population being served – may be ideally suited to address many of the barriers to opioid-related risk mitigation common among veterans.** Community care models could be beneficial for the large proportion of veterans who are not connected to the Veterans Health Administration and for veterans who, for various reasons including mental health problems and the avoidance of stigma, are socially isolated or reluctant to use traditional substance use services. ”



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

“Veterans are twice as likely to die from an accidental opioid overdose compared to the general population. Active duty military personnel have a lower level of illicit drug use than civilians, but their abuse of prescription drugs is higher – and on the rise.”

Journal of the American Medical Association

“A study in JAMA Internal Medicine examined the prevalence of chronic pain and opioid use among 2,500 soldiers following deployment. **Forty-four percent had chronic pain, and 15 percent regularly used opioids – rates much higher than the general population.**”



Annals of Medicine *on the Link Between Opioids and Suicides Among Veterans*

“Suicide is a highly pressing issue among Veterans, especially those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, and an unknown proportion of fatal and non-fatal overdose events in Veterans may be the result of suicide attempts. Suicide risk has been shown to be higher among OEF/OIF/OND Veterans than among the general population, and **the unique experiences of Veterans often require that carefully tailored approaches to therapy be utilized.** Much has been written about the link between overdose and suicide. **Studies have detailed a strong relationship between substance use, suicidality and overdose in non-veteran populations, and opioid use is associated with suicide in Veterans.** . . . Clearly, treatment for Veterans with opioid use disorder (OUD) needs to be sensitive to the role that risk factors for suicidality, including psychiatric diagnoses and social isolation, can play in motivating substance use behaviors and the role that opioids can play in suicide attempts.”



Opioid Settlement Funds

On October 12, 2023, the State Board of Veterans Affairs (SBVA) unanimously passed a resolution for the Oversight Commission on Alabama Opioid Settlement Fund to designate 25% of the total opioid settlement to be allocated to the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) for investment and use by ADVA to work on behalf of Alabama's service members, Veterans, and families affected by the opioid crisis.

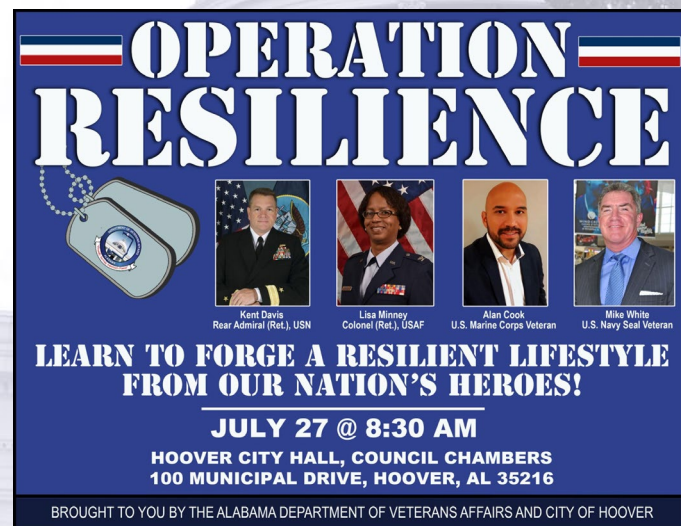
According to the resolution, Alabama Veterans and their families make up approximately 23% of Alabama's population, and Alabama has been the highest opioid prescription per-capita state since 2012.

"The risks of overdose and suicide that Veterans face need to be understood," said Scott Gedling, Vice-Chairman, State Board of Veterans Affairs. "Further, addressing drug overdoses in the Veteran population requires a more holistic approach to addressing Veteran mental health challenges. We must further address a myriad of factors that affect Veteran's and their family's well-being. The mass prescription of Opioids significantly contributed to the problem without addressing the other issues that affect Veterans. To truthfully say that Alabama is the best state in the country for Veteran care and provision, we must take action to protect those who have protected us."



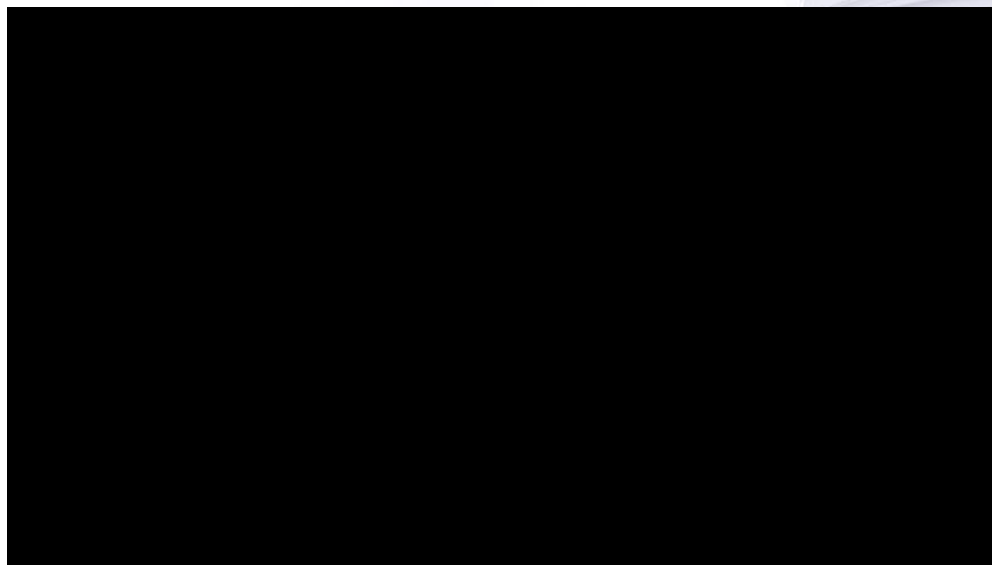
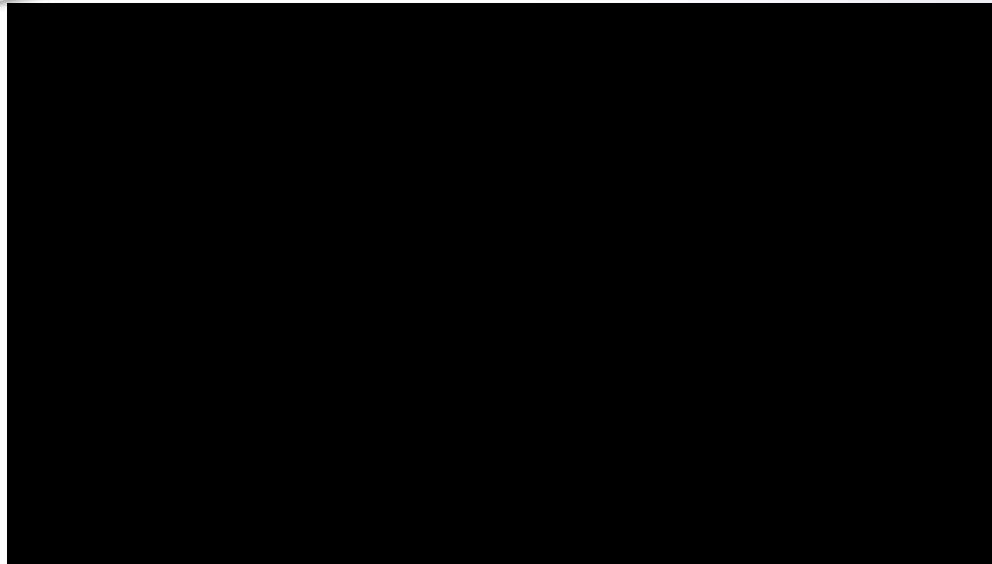
Outreach and Engagement

- **“Alabama’s Challenge”**
 - Townhalls/Fairs
 - Operation We Remember
 - Operation Resilience
 - www.vetsforhope.com
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Conference, October 26, 2023
- **Sample External Partnerships:**
 - Operation Iron Ruck
 - Veteran Treatment Courts





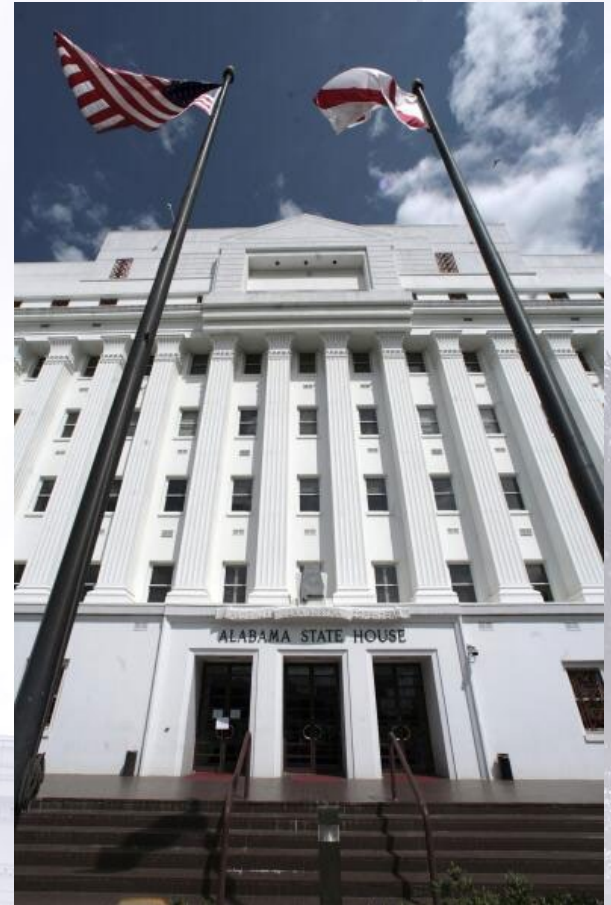
In 2020, a federal law was passed to implement a **988 suicide/crisis communication phone number** led by the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC rules required all phone service providers to direct all 988 calls to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.





Other Recent State Legislative Issues:

- **“Supporting Alabama’s Veterans” Grant Program**
- **Opioid Settlement Funds**
- **HB197/SB135 – Veterans Access to Care**





HB197/SB135 – Veterans Access to Care



State Senator Andrew Jones



State Rep. Chip Brown



State Veterans Homes



State Veterans Homes



⛶ State Veterans Home



Relevant Alabama Statute

Section 31-5A-4

Operation of state veterans' homes; award of contract.

The department shall contract with a non-governmental entity to operate a state veterans' home or homes for the care and support of elderly or disabled veterans in the State of Alabama. Contracts for the procurement of services required to manage, administer, and operate a state veterans' home shall be awarded on a competitive basis through the solicitation of proposals. The contract may be awarded to the vendor whose proposal is most advantageous to the state, taking into consideration cost factors, program suitability factors, management plan, excellence of program design, key personnel, corporate or company resources, financial condition of the vendor, corporate experience and past performance, and any other requirements deemed necessary by the State Board of Veterans' Affairs and expressed in its solicitation for proposals. Any contract awarded under this section shall be for a period not to exceed five years. The State Board of Veterans' Affairs is not required to select the vendor offering the lowest cost proposal but shall select the vendor who, in the board's discretion, offers the proposal most advantageous to the State of Alabama. . . .

(Acts 1988, 1st Sp. Sess., No. 88-776, p. 184, §3.)



Bill Nichols State Veterans Home
Alexander City
150 Skilled Care Units
Opened in 1989. Major renovation in 2015.



Tut Fann State Veterans Home
Huntsville
150 Skilled Care Units
Opened in 1995. Major renovation in 2020.



William F. Green State Veteran Home
Bay Minette
150 Skilled Care Units
Opened in 1995. Major renovation in 2020.

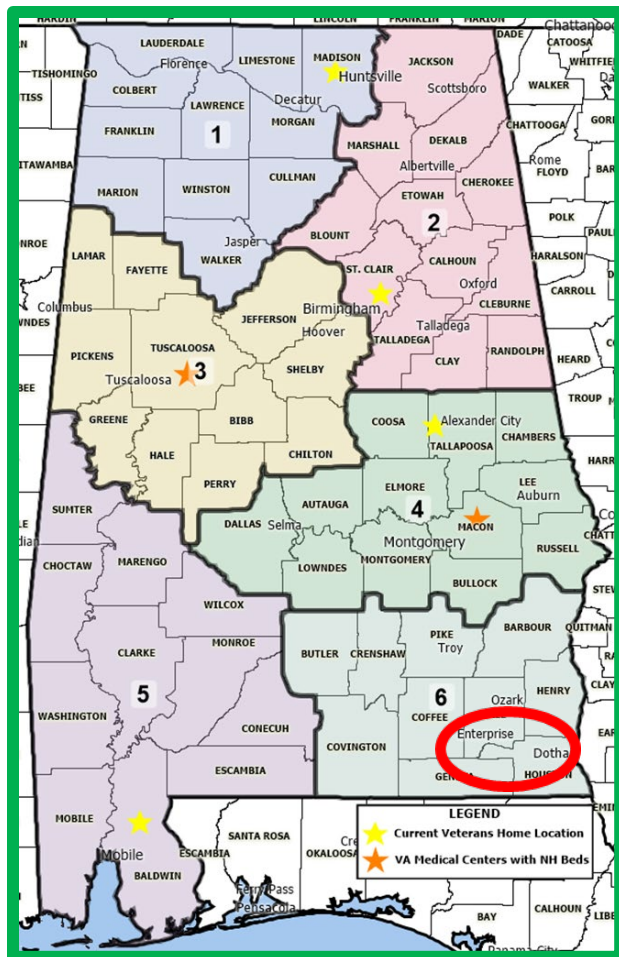


Colonel Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home
Pell City
80 Assisted Living Units/174 Skilled Care Units
Opened in 2012.





Command Sergeant Major Bennie G. Adkins State Veterans Home Enterprise, Alabama



- Approx. \$115 million total construction cost, shared between federal and state
- Will house about 174 veteran residents
- Will employ over 200 people
- Located near Fort Novosel
- A six-year project; **grand opening on September 13, 2024**













TOWN CENTER
THE CAMELIA CAFE

POPLAR PLACE MAPLE COURT
COURTYARD

SEEKORE
HEAVY DUTY FLOOR PROTECTION
MADE IN USA
CLASS III A
TBC 1000

SEEKORE
HEAVY DUTY FLOOR PROTECTION
MADE IN USA
CLASS III A
TBC 1000







5201

















State Veterans Cemetery

Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort, Alabama

- Veteran and Spouses Burial Services; Staffed by State Employees
- 106 Acre Cemetery opened in 2012, is expected to be open for 100 years; Planned expansion every 10 years
- Current Facilities (“Section 1”): 25+ Acres of Columbarium, In-ground Vault Fields, Cremains and Traditional Grave Sites, Admin. & Maintenance Buildings, and Committal Shelter
- 4,119 interments to date; 2024 has seen a 3.5% increase over 2023
- **Implemented “Burial Equity Act” for National Guard and Reserve members May 1, 2023**







Cemetery Expansion



- 100% VA Grant Funded. \$5 million NCA construction grant approved on October 1, 2021
- Added: 2,700+ traditional sites, 800 in-ground urn sites, 960 columbarium niches, and 100 memorial wall plaques
- Groundbreaking in Feb. 2023; Completion in February 2024











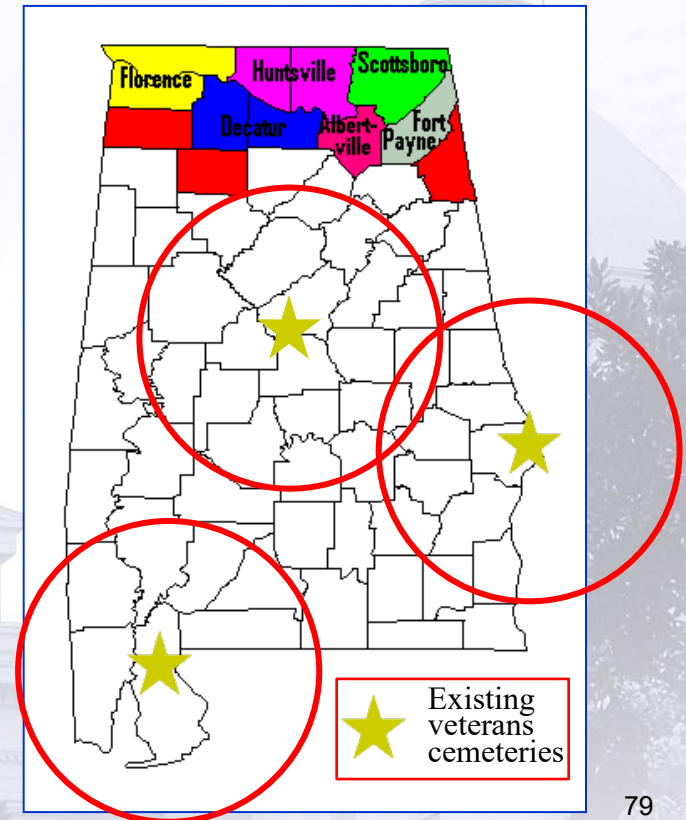




Upcoming Major Projects



Establishment of a State Veterans Cemetery in North Alabama





- *Second committal shelter at existing state veterans cemetery in Spanish Fort*

- *“Path of Honor” project at CSM Bennie G. Adkins State Veterans Home in Enterprise*

- *Complete reclassification of Veteran Service Officer positions*

- *“Supporting Alabama’s Veterans” Grant Program*

- *A sixth state veterans home*



Examples of Other States' Innovative Veterans Affairs Programs



1. Dental: **Florida** Bill 635 has created the Veterans Dental Care Grant Program; including all members of the Florida National Guard and Reserve who were discharged under honorable conditions, to provide oral health care to those who reside in the state.
2. Homeless Program: **Florida** has implemented a State Funded Homeless program in 2022, which is operated by the Department of Children and Families.
3. Legal Services Program: **Georgia** has a state-funded legal services program through the Georgia Bar and University of Georgia Law.
4. Partial Property Tax Exemption for Disabled Vets: Alabama has an exemption for 100% Disabled Veterans, but **Texas** has varying exemptions based on percentage ratings. An example, 10-29% Disability Rating can apply for an exemption of \$5,000 from the property's actual value, which results in lower property taxes.
5. Free Driver's License/Veterans License Plates: **Texas** offers Veterans with a 60% VA disability rating or higher a free drivers license and Veteran plates.
6. Immediate Residency: Veterans and dependents who relocate to **Arizona** qualify for immediate residency, which allows veterans to qualify for in-state tuition rates and other state benefits.
7. Military Job Experience as Credit Toward State Retirement: Rather than purchasing time, the **New York** State and Local Retirement System offers Veterans the opportunity to get additional credit toward retirement for "qualifying military service." There are several ways to get credit for qualifying service, and any such credit will be awarded on a case-by-case basis depending on which credit is "the most advantageous to the Veteran."



Proudly Serving America's Finest

