

505560000—Veterans Services Office

Human Services

Greg Diederich, Health Care Services Director

General Fund	2017-2018 Actual	2018-2019 Adjusted	2019-2020 Requested	2019-2020 Recommended	Increase/ (Decrease)
Expenditures					
Salaries & Benefits	\$426,062	\$500,329	\$521,499	\$521,499	\$21,170
Services & Supplies	77,650	58,668	83,760	83,760	25,092
Centrally-Budgeted Expenses	5,065	6,071	22,501	22,501	16,430
Fixed Assets	34,513	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditures	\$543,290	\$565,068	\$627,760	\$627,760	\$62,692
Expenditure Reimbursements	(150,000)	(160,000)	(160,000)	(160,000)	0
Total Appropriations	\$393,290	\$405,068	\$467,760	\$467,760	\$62,692
Earned Revenues By Source					
Aid From Other Governments	\$157,275	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0
Total Revenues	\$157,275	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0
Net County Cost	\$236,015	\$255,068	\$317,760	\$317,760	\$62,692
Staffing					
Allocated Positions	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	0.0
Temporary (Full-Time Equivalent)	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.0
Total Staffing	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	0.0

Purpose

The Veterans Services Office (VSO) assists veterans in applying for and receiving benefits for education, health, and welfare services from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); coordinates the distribution of educational materials, consultations, referrals, and outreach activities; and works collaboratively with the VA, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), and veterans service organizations in promoting the interests and welfare of veterans and their family members. The VSO serves as a liaison between the Board of Supervisors, other County agencies, and the public to ensure veterans receive the benefits and advocacy that they deserve.

The VSO serves and educates veterans, their dependents, and the community about behavioral health issues that can affect individuals transitioning from military service. Veterans earn a variety of benefits through their military service. Many of the 32,000 veterans living in San Joaquin County are eligible to receive these benefits from the VA.

Because veteran's benefits are not automatic, the VSO collaborates with governmental and non-governmental agencies to increase awareness, education, and cooperation

needed to enhance community involvement and ongoing supportive services for veterans and their families.

Although levels of service are discretionary, revenue from the State is based on workload measurements.

Major Budget Changes

Salaries & Employee Benefits

- \$21,170 Salary and benefits adjustments.

Services & Supplies

- \$10,114 Increase in facility maintenance costs.
- \$7,000 Increase in office expenses.
- \$4,000 Increase in travel costs.

Centrally-Budgeted Expenses

- \$13,880 Addition of Countywide Cost Allocation Plan charges.

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Program Discussion

The 2019-2020 recommended budget for the VSO totals \$627,760, which is an increase of \$62,692 from the 2018-2019 adjusted budget. This change primarily represents salary and benefits adjustments, increased facility maintenance costs, increases in office supplies and travel costs, and Countywide Cost Allocation Plan charges.

The VSO collaborates with various agencies to ensure that County veterans receive new monetary benefits, retroactive payments, and other forms of assistance. In 2017-2018, the most recent year for which full-year data is available, new benefits paid as a result of VSO efforts totaled \$5.5 million, while overall benefits received were approximately \$9.6 million, including retroactive payments and assistance from other agencies. The VSO effectively partnered with the Public Guardian's Office, Human Services Agency, and the Department of Child Support Services to ensure 139 veterans and their families received VA care, support, and monetary benefits. These coordinated efforts culminated into a Medi-Cal avoidance and public savings of \$232,878. The VSO actively and diligently advocated for these veterans and their families to ensure they received the best possible care and monetary benefits.

In 2018-2019, the VSO granted \$1,633,000 in college savings to 362 military dependent students with the California College Fee Waiver. Students receive no direct compensation but were authorized to attend California State Colleges, Universities, and community colleges with little to no financial burden. Due to increased outreach efforts, the VSO estimates 400 Fee Waivers will be awarded in 2019-2020.

In April 2017, the VSO was awarded a 12-month grant from CalVet in the amount of \$40,000 for mental health outreach, Veterans' Treatment Court (VTC) operations, and other supportive services. These funds were used in 2017-2018 to support a dedicated extra-help VTC Case Manager. Unfortunately, funding was not received for 2018-2019, but VSO has applied to CalVet for the same grant in the amount of \$50,000 for 2019-2020.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program combines Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the VA. The VA provides these services for participating veterans at VA medical centers and community-based outreach clinics. HUD has awarded funding for 259 HUD-VASH vouchers for the County's low-income and disabled veterans. Most of the vouchers have been used to assist in securing housing for homeless veterans, but some remain unused due to a lack of affordable housing units available. The VSO assists HUD-VASH social workers by referring and informing veterans of their HUD-VASH eligibility and preparing health care and disability claims.

Veterans Advisory Commission

At the December 5, 2017 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board considered the formation of a Commission on Veteran's Affairs to work in conjunction with the San Joaquin County VSO to provide a forum for various representatives working with the County's veterans.

The VSO enlisted the support of several veterans and community stakeholders to serve as planning advisors and supporters. Stakeholders were representative of faith-based, community-based, non-profit organizations, non-governmental, and governmental agencies. The planning initiatives took place over several meetings between May and September of 2018. Through the efforts and support of the stakeholders, the planning initiatives produced draft bylaws, mission and vision statements, and increased commitment to establishment of the advisory commission.

On November 6, 2018, the Board unanimously voted to adopt a resolution to establish the San Joaquin County Veterans Advisory Commission and approved the Commission By-Laws (R-18-143). On February 26, 2019, the Board appointed the first set of Commissioners to the Advisory Commission. The first Commission meeting was held in May 2019.

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Workload Data

	-----Actual-----			Est./Act. 2018-2019	Projected 2019-2020
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018		
<i>Veteran Visits</i>					
<i>Appointments</i>	1,650	1,708	1,800	1,523	2,000
<i>Drop-Ins</i>	3,900	3,750	4,000	5,701	5,000
<i>Telephone Inquires</i>	7,200	6,188	7,500	10,758	7,500
<i>Benefits/Claims</i>					
<i>Benefits Claims Filed/Re-opened</i>	1,800	1,773	2,000	2,039	2,200
<i>Benefits Claims Granted</i>	1,200	1,187	1,300	1,217	1,400
<i>Claims for VA Medical Care</i>	250	389	275	456	500
<i>Medi-Cal Cost Avoidance Claims</i>	600	480	600	458	500
<i>Verification of Veterans Benefits to Other Agencies</i>	215	237	225	239	250
<i>Other Assistance Provided</i>					
<i>Auditable Forms Filed</i>	2,000	1,923	2,200	2,205	2,400
<i>Educational Fee Waivers</i>	275	306	300	362	400
<i>Veterans Court Participants</i>	20	28	40	38	40
<i>Veterans Driver's License</i>	N/A	584	750	391	500
<i>New Benefits Paid to Veterans and Dependents</i>	\$6,272,163	\$5,286,611	\$5,500,000	\$3,610,000	\$4,000,000