



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## Fact Sheet

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

### VA Summer of Service Wrap-Up 2015 September 2015

#### Background

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a sacred commitment to care for those “who have borne the battle” and their families. This year, VA has made progress on the many challenges we face in delivering care and benefits to Veterans and their families:

- Nationally, VA completed more than 61.5 million appointments between July 1, 2014 and July 31, 2015. This represents an increase of 2.36 million more appointments than were completed during the same time period in 2013/2014.
- VA created over 2.7 million authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector between August 16, 2014 and August 15, 2015. This represents a 21 percent increase in authorizations, when compared to the period ranging from August 2013 to August 2014.
- VA completed 97 percent of appointments in July 2015 within 30 days of the clinically indicated or Veteran’s preferred date; 92 percent within 14 days; 87 percent within 7 days; and 22 percent are actually completed on the same day.
- Between June 1, 2014, and August 15, 2015, the Electronic Wait List went from 56,000 appointments to 40,067, a 28 percent reduction.
- The backlog of disability claims (claims pending more than 125 days) is 93,674 as of September 7th – an 85-percent reduction from its peak of 611,000 claims in March 2013 and the lowest ever in our history since we started measuring the backlog in 2007.
- VA, together with federal, state, and local partners, reduced the estimated number of homeless Veterans by 33 percent, as noted in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2014 Point-in-Time (PIT) Estimate of Homelessness.
- VA is continuing work to reorganize the department for success, guided by ideas and initiatives from Veterans, employees, and all of our stakeholders. This reorganization is a part of the MyVA initiative and is designed to provide Veterans with a seamless, integrated, and responsive customer service experience.

## VA Summer of Service Key Facts

- We've recognized that there is more work to do to serve Veterans. And we need your help- VA can't do it alone.
- In May, VA publicly renewed our commitment to America's Veterans, and asked for everyone's help in honoring that commitment—a **Summer of Service**.
- Community by community, state by state, VA and the country came together to serve Veterans during this year's VA Summer of Service, and it had an overwhelming impact on Veterans and their families.

**Through VA's outstanding volunteer program, the Department engaged approximately 300,000 volunteers around the country, far exceeding our goal of 100,000 volunteer connections. Through the work of Veterans Service Organizations and other community/civic groups, supplemental services and programs were made available for America's Veterans.**

- Here are a few of the activities that our volunteers have been a part of:
  - Providing Veteran transportation.
  - Providing volunteer caregiver respite services.
  - Putting together recreational outings.
  - Supporting adaptive sports programs.
  - Helping to facilitate community gardens.
  - Senior companions to elderly Veterans.

**We don't want to stop now- you can continue to help Veterans in the community by visiting <http://www.volunteer.va.gov/> to find out what your local VA medical facility or National Cemetery needs from volunteers.**

- VA knows the importance of strong relationships with private sector companies and non-profit organizations across the country—they help support Veterans and VA's programs every day. Our partners help provide support for community gatherings such as Welcome Home events, and Homeless Veteran Stand Downs.
  - **In May, VA committed to growing our partnerships with new MOUs and expanding current agreements to reach more than 15,000 Veterans and family members. We are excited to report that VA's new, reenergized, and expanded partnerships, through Summer of Service, reached 40,683 Veterans and their family members.**

- VA has nearly 350,000 employees, and despite a hiring effort that brought more than 11,000 (net) new employees onboard over the past year, the Department still needs more
  - Health care providers.
  - Claims specialists.
  - Medical Support Assistants.
  - Cemetery Directors.
- VA got the word out this summer: VA is a great place to work, with one of the best missions, serving the best clients - Veterans. For more information, those interested can visit <http://mycareeratva.va.gov/> or <http://www.usajobs.gov>.
- **Through recruitment efforts and expedited hiring processes, VA was able to hire 4,514 new specialized staff to serve homeless and newly housed Veterans to serve homeless and newly housed Veterans.**
- **As part of VA's Summer of Service, the Department committed to holding VA Open Houses in VA facilities across the country to spur increased local engagement and welcome members of the community interested in supporting the needs of Veterans. Over the course of the summer, VA held more than 130 open houses across the system.**

**VA takes its commitment to care for the Nation's Veterans and their families very seriously, and we want to thank you for being part of our Summer of Service 2015. Please stay connected and:**

- **Look for VA at community events and engage our employees and partners.**
- **Call your local facility to find out what you can do to help.**
- **Check out VA on [Vantage Point](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and join us in caring for America's Veterans.**

###