

STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT 2026 AGENCY REPORT



New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services
407 Galisteo St., Room 134
Santa Fe New Mexico 87501

July 31, 2026

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the State-Tribal Collaboration Act (NMSA 11-18-3, 2009), the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) demonstrated a consistent and proactive commitment to collaboration with Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes (NPT) throughout fiscal year 2026. The Department engaged in over 30 Tribal-focused events, outreach initiatives, and partnership meetings across the state and region to amplify support for Native American veterans and their families.

Notable accomplishments included hosting monthly **Native American Veterans Collaboration Meeting**, facilitating **quarterly outreach through the Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Resource Fairs**, and forming strategic partnerships with Tribal entities, colleges, nonprofits, and federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. NMDVS also collaborated with the Native American Training Institute (NATI) to deliver the **NATI Veterans Symposium** supporting several Pueblos.

Department representatives attended ceremonial events, educational summits, mental health wellness fairs, legislative sessions, suicide prevention workshops, and planning meetings for major regional collaborations. These efforts not only strengthened working relationships with Tribal governments but also advanced culturally responsive programming and streamlined access to veteran services throughout Tribal communities.

These activities reflect NMDVS's ongoing dedication to Tribal engagement, veteran empowerment, and integrated service delivery.

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services enacted or participated in:

Tribal Engagements & Collaboration

- Provided outreach and support at the Pueblo of Laguna Veterans Benefits Fair
- Assisted with Veteran headstone coordination and replacement with the Pueblo of Laguna
- Participated in the Pueblo of Laguna, "Run for the Wall" event, supporting veteran engagement and awareness
- Provided NMDVS Mobile Outreach Vehicle services as the first outreach location at the Pueblo of Jemez on the day of ribbon-cutting day, with Pueblo leadership and NMDVS leadership commemorating the event
- Conducted quarterly outreaches with Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Associations
- Participated in Navajo Nation Code Talker Day at Window Rock Fair grounds
- Provided outreach support to the Shiprock Navajo Vietnam Veterans Recognition event
- Attended the Navajo Nation Women Warriors Recognition Day at Twin Arrows Casino and Resort
- Assisted with the coordination for headstone replacements at Navajo Nation cemeteries
- Participated in a Meet & Greet with the Women Veterans Program to strengthen outreach and awareness with Navajo Nation Women Veterans
- Volunteered with the Freedoms Parade in Farmington Honor Guard Service outreach
- Host Monthly Native American Veterans Collaborative Meetings
- Quarterly attendance at Isleta Veterans Association outreach
- Assist in Collaboration for Taos Pueblo Veterans memorial to New Mexico Department Finance and Administration / New Mexico Indian Affairs Department
- NMDVS Mobile Unit conducted outreach for Navajo Rural areas: Crownpoint, Coyote, Shiprock, Baca/Prewitt, and Thoreau chapters

Healthcare & Behavioral Wellness

- Assisted and attended Gallup and Farmington Stand Down 2026
- Participated in Kewa Meeting – Suicide Prevention
- Attended Suicide Mortality Review Workgroups / Governor Challenges / Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) field visit
- Attended Molina Native American Advisory Board meetings
- Contributed ideas for NMDVS 988 Suicide Prevention Campaign

- Attended in the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow – The Last Dance with VA Healthcare Collaboration

Veterans Conferences, Retreats & Recognition

- Hosted the NMDVS Conference and incorporated Pueblo of Zuni VSO attendance to strengthen statewide coordination
- Conducted and Attended at the Mescalero / VA Veterans Outreach to strengthen engagement and support services
- Hosted the NMDVS Conference with Pueblo of Santo Domingo Tribal Leadership in attendance, supporting intergovernmental collaboration on veteran issues
- Invited to attend the Pueblo of Santo Domingo's Veterans Outreach Center kickoff meeting to help establish foundational support and engagement structures
 - 26 veterans attended: 3 San Felipe in attendance
- Collaborated with Native American Training Institute to host NATI Veterans Symposium at Isleta Resort and Casino
- Hosted the NMDVS Conference and engaged with executive leaders and stakeholders from Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and Eastern Navajo Veterans Agency Veteran Service Officer representatives
- The Cabinet Secretary, Healthcare Director, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, and Tribal Liaison participated in and delivered a presentation on the services provided by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services to the Local Collaborative (LC) 18. This regional volunteer committee and behavioral health planning network serves the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos.
- Participated in Navajo Nation Ojo Encino Chapter Veterans Organization Veterans Day
- Participated in Navajo Nation Eastern Navajo Veterans Agency Appreciation / Recognition Navajo Nation becoming a Purple Nation
- Attended Navajo Nation Thoreau Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting event
- Supported the Women Veterans Meet & Greet in Gallup, NM
- Women Veterans and Tribal Liaison participated in the Navajo Nation Women Warrior Recognition Day at Twin Arrows Casino and Resort
- Attended event "Farmington becomes a Purple Heart City"

Education, Exhibitions & Public Events

- Coordinated and hosted NMDVS / National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) Training
 - Two Pueblo of Zuni trainees volunteered to pursue NACVSO educational advancement
- Coordinated and hosted NMDVS / NACVSO Training
 - Two Pueblo of Tesuque trainees volunteered to pursue NACVSO educational advancement
- Coordinated and hosted NMDVS / NACVSO Training
 - One Pueblo of Santa Clara member volunteered to pursue NACVSO educational advancement
- Coordinated and hosted NMDVS / NACVSO Training
 - Two Pueblo of Laguna trainees volunteered to pursue NACVSO educational advancement
- Coordinated and hosted NMDVS / NACVSO Training
 - One Pueblo of Isleta trainee volunteered to pursue NACVSO educational advancement
- Invited to attend Entrepreneur Bootcamp for Native American Veterans
- Historic Fairview Cemetery seeks to Honor Indigenous Children, connected New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (NMIAD) and Karen Street assist in collaboration with NMIAD
- Participated in 2026 State Fair “Military Veterans Day”
- Participated in Aging & Longterm Conference Services Department Annual New Mexico Conference on Aging
- Participated in the planning of the Center for Women Veterans (CWV) Southwest Mini Summit – Navajo Nation All women Veterans will conduct Honor Services
- NMDVS Partner with Veterans Talking to Veterans (VTTV)
- Collaborated with the Pueblo of Laguna, attending meeting with Pajuate Veterans Group for Veterans Memorial / Group 501c3
- Attended Veterans Caregiver Event, hosted by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation at Torreon, NM
- NMDVS attended and supported the Navajo Behavioral Operation Wellness, Gallup, NM
- NMDVS supported Warrior Day at the Jicarilla Apache Nation, in Dulce, NM
- NMDVS Mobile Unit conducted outreach on Navajo Nation Reservation: Thoreau, Gallup, Shiprock, Crownpoint, Coyote Canyon, and Baca/Prewitt Chapters

- DVS attends and supports The District 14 Stand Down at Navajo Nation Coyote Canyon Chapter

Legislative & Leadership Outreach

- Cabinet Secretary organized a meeting with the Pueblo of Nambe Governor and Tribal Leaders to strengthen government to government relations and discuss veteran focused priorities
- Indian Affairs Committee (IAC) Slide Presentation at the Tohajilee with Deputy Secretary
- NMDVS Hosted United States Marine Corps Cake Cutting Ceremony at the Rotunda
- Attended Military / Veterans Day at Legislature
- Attended American Indian Day at the Legislature
- Attended Senior Day at Legislature
- Attended NMIAD Tribal Government to Government and Annual Tribal Summit
- Attended Governor's Veterans Advisory Council / Community Call in Gallup NM

II. AGENCY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND

NMDVS Tribal Liaison Mission:

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services' dedication to collaborating with the State's Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes to build healthier communities by connecting all veterans and their families to the highest quality care, services, and eligible benefits through advocacy and collaboration.

NMDVS Tribal Liaison Vision:

New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services' collaborative relationship with each Nation, Pueblo, and Tribe will ensure all Indigenous Veterans and their families in this state are educated about, and they have an opportunity to, attain all earned benefits through collaborative and synchronized efforts of all community service organizations.

Agency Overview

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services is the state government agency statutorily established in 2003 to serve the needs of New Mexico's Veterans and their families. As a cabinet-level agency, NMDVS ensures that veteran-related concerns receive the highest level of state attention and advocacy.

The Department delivers services through eight core program areas, each structured around shared statutory goals and measurable outcomes. These program areas include:

- Cabinet Secretary
- Tribal Liaison
- Field Services Division
- Benefits Division: State Benefits, Cemetery, and Memorial Programs
- Women Veteran Program (WVP)
- State Approving Agency (SAA)
- Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)
- Healthcare Coordination Division
- Administrative Services Division

Together, these programs represent NMDVS's comprehensive and strategic commitment to enhancing the quality of life for Veterans across New Mexico.

NMDVS Mission Statement

Build healthier communities by connecting all Veterans and their families to the highest quality care, services, and eligible benefits through advocacy and collaboration.

NMDVS Vision Statement

All Veterans and their families are educated about and have an opportunity to attain all earned benefits through collaborative and synchronized efforts of all community service organizations.

Core Services and Programs

Veteran Tribal Liaison: Serves as the NMDVS key point of contact, fostering relationships and building new connections across New Mexico's Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes (NPT). We are committed to empowering Native American Veterans through improving access to resources and strengthening advocacy efforts.

State Benefits: Manages state Veterans' benefits, memorials, and state cemeteries. Benefits include:

- New Mexico state park/museum passes
- Veteran property tax exemptions
- Veteran property tax waivers
- Veteran License plates
- Education scholarships
- Discounted hunting and fishing licenses

Operates State Veterans Cemeteries:

- Gallup State Veterans Cemetery
- Fort Stanton State Veterans Cemetery & Fort Stanton Historical Merchant Marine Cemetery
- Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery
- Taos State Veterans Cemetery

Additionally, State Benefits operates the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Angel Fire including a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. We administer the National Guard and Reserve Burial Equity Act, allowing state Veterans' cemeteries to provide an honored final resting place for qualified National Guard members, Reservists and their qualified dependents. We oversee the Forgotten Heroes Burial Program for unclaimed or indigent Veterans, and the State Veterans' Funeral Honors Program which trains and supports 26 Veteran Service Organizations Funeral Honors Teams statewide.

Field Services: Provides direct support to Veterans and their eligible dependents through comprehensive benefits counseling and claims assistance. Accredited Field Service Officers prepare and submit claims directly to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in accordance with Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations. With 18 offices located throughout the state, the division ensures accurate, timely, and ethical representation of Veterans' claims while promoting equitable access to earned benefits across all New Mexico communities.

Healthcare Coordination: Educates Veterans about available health benefits and connects them to community resources. We oversee transportation programs funded by both VA and the state, ensuring Veterans have access to medical appointments. The program also manages homeless assistance services, suicide prevention initiatives, and social work support to advocate for Veterans' well-being and overall care.

Women Veterans' Program (WVP): Provides dedicated support and advocacy to ensure women Veterans and their families receive high-quality services. The WVP conducts outreach to educate women Veterans about available federal, and state benefits and actively champions equitable access to all programs and services for Veterans.

State Approving Agency (SAA): Reviews, evaluates, and approves eligible programs at educational institutions and training establishments in New Mexico for those individuals wishing to enroll and utilize their GI Bill® education benefits. In addition, to help ensure institutions remain in compliance, the SAA conducts supervisory, technical assistance, and risk-based surveys.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC): Supports Veterans, reserve component members, their eligible spouses, and widows/widowers with business planning, funding, marketing, and other essential resources to start or grow a business. VBOC offers Boots to Business and Reboot programs, equipping transitioning service members and Veterans with foundational knowledge to explore business ownership. VBOC also provides mentorship, training, and networking opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial success.

Administrative Services: Provides essential support services for NMDVS. Ensures effective and efficient financial administration, contract and procurement processes, official recordkeeping, policy implementation, resource management, Human Resources, IT support, compliance and risk management, and facilities management.

III. AGENCY EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT POLICY (11-18-4.c (1)(3))

In coordination with tribal authorities, the Department often assists tribal veterans with veterans' court issues.

Department staff members who regularly work with Pueblos, Tribes and Nations attend the Cultural Competency training by the State Personnel Office (SPO). All staff members participate in the training.

IV. CURRENT AND PLANNED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES (11-18-4.c (5))

- a. Provide a description of current and planned programs and services provided to or directly affecting Native communities and the funding for each program.

The Department is committed to expanded collaboration between Department personnel and Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos. NMDVS routinely collaborates with Native Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos in mutually beneficial projects for implementation of our respective veterans' programs. The Department's programs in which Native Americans participate and/or might have interests are shown below:

Programs and Services Potentially Affecting American Indians or Alaska Natives		
Programs	Description of Services	Funding
Cabinet Secretary's Office	In partnership with New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (NMIAD), develop guidance and best practices with the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribal Offices of the Veterans Affairs that foster collaboration and advocacy.	General Fund
Healthcare Coordination	Educates Veterans about available health benefits and connects them to community resources. We oversee transportation programs funded by both U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the State of New Mexico, ensuring Veterans have access to medical appointments. The program also manages homeless assistance services, suicide prevention initiatives, and social work support to advocate for Veterans' well-being and overall care.	General Fund
	The Highly Rural Transportation Program plays a critical role in ensuring Native Veterans residing in underserved rural areas have reliable access to transportation for medical appointments, bridging the gap between distance and essential care.	VA Grant Funds

State Veterans Benefits and Veterans State Cemeteries & Memorial	Administer statewide benefits for eligible veterans and their dependents. Ensure compliance with the National Cemetery Administration.	VA Funds General Funds
Field Services	Continue collaboration with Tribal Representatives and Service Officers to extend funded training opportunities	General Fund
Women Veterans' Coordinator	Provide guidance, technical assistance, and recommendations to the governmental agencies, legislators, veteran organizations, community organizations, and the public on women veteran issues.	General Fund
Tribal Liaison	The Tribal Liaison is committed to working with and responding to all joint Native American Veterans' related issues and concerns for the States Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes. Serves as a State Agency's point of contact with ongoing communication.	General Fund
Veteran Business Outreach Center	Supports Veterans, reserve component members, their eligible spouses, and widows/widowers with business planning, funding, marketing, and other essential resources to start or grow a business.	VA Funds General Funds
State Approving Agency	Reviews, evaluates, and approves eligible programs at educational institutions and training establishments in New Mexico for those individuals wishing to enroll and utilize their GI Bill® education benefits. In addition, to help ensure institutions remain in compliance, the SAA conducts supervisory, technical assistance, and risk-based surveys. GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at https://benefits.va.gov/gibill.	VA Funds General Funds

- b. Main agency accomplishments and challenges regarding work with Nations, Pueblos and Tribes including significant state-tribal issues, recommendations and/or priorities addressed in FY26.

The Department continues to work with the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes using a variety of outreach opportunities and will continue to develop ways to improve communications and coordinate benefits for Tribal Veterans. Examples include:

FY 2026 Top 3 Accomplishments related to Pueblos, Nations, & Tribes:

1. Strengthening relationships through ongoing engagement. In FY 2026, the Department deepened its commitment to Tribal engagement through a series of strategic partnerships and initiatives aimed at fostering stronger relationships with Native communities statewide. A cornerstone of this effort was the establishment of the Monthly Tribal Liaison Meeting, providing a consistent platform for dialogue, collaboration, and shared problem-solving with each Pueblo, Nation, and Tribal representatives. The Department also partnered with the Native American Training Institute (NATI) to co-host the inaugural NATI Veterans Symposium, a convening that elevated veteran-related issues within Tribal contexts. Additional collaborative efforts included joining the Veterans Affairs Healthcare Department at the two-day Gathering of Nations Pow Wow – The Last Dance, amplifying outreach to all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal Veterans.

2. Collaboration and cooperation: Employee knowledge and effectiveness: Ongoing collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Association of State Directors Veterans Affairs, (NASDVA) and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) Benefits Training to support Native American Veterans with Accreditation. Additionally, NMDVS Field Director is working closely with the VA Transition and Economic Development Program (T-REP) and Office of General Counsel (OGC) on these matters. Conducted Quarterly (in-person) Governor’s Veterans Advisory Council meetings, in numerous locations throughout NM. The council explores the needs of veterans, reviewing existing policies, and consulting with the state’s veteran

community to make sure that every veteran and their family receive the earned benefits from their military service. The Department proudly hosted an annual Veterans' conference that facilitated direct engagement, education, and advocacy on issues unique to the Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal Veterans, encouraging deeper understanding and collaborative problem-solving among service providers, The Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal Veterans and tribal leadership.

3. Mobile Outreach Vehicle employment. To expand access to services in underserved communities, the Department acquired and launched a Mobile Outreach Vehicle staffed by two National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO)-certified Veteran Service Officers. This initiative enhances outreach capabilities and delivers essential support directly to Pueblos, Nations, Tribal rural areas throughout the state. The Pueblo of Jemez was the initial outreach event location for the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, followed by the Navajo Reservation Chapter Houses and then additional Pueblo locations.

FY 2027 Top 3 Goals/Objectives related to Pueblos, Nations, & Tribes:

1. Expanded NACVSO-Certified Tribal Veteran Service Officer Training to enhance services for each Pueblo, Nation, and Tribal Veterans and their families, the Department will support the expansion of specialized training for Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSOs). In collaboration with NACVSO national trainers, the Department will coordinate and facilitate the delivery of certification training to 7 Tribal VSOs representing various Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes across New Mexico. As a dedicated support agency, the Department's role centers on logistical coordination, advocacy, technical assistance, and sustained partnership to ensure the long-term success of Tribal VSOs in delivering culturally informed, community-based veteran services.

2. Conduct a comprehensive survey initiative to gather data on the unique needs of Tribal Veterans and strengthen outreach and service planning. This information will provide a better understanding of Veteran populations across Native communities statewide and support outreach and service coordination.

3. Strengthening Pueblo, Nation, and Tribal engagement through targeted relationship-building. As part of our ongoing commitment to Tribal collaboration, the Department will continue our presence at Tribal events and gatherings, with a particular emphasis on engaging Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes that have historically not been actively seeking support from the Department's Tribal Liaison. This effort aims to foster new and meaningful connections, increase trust, and ensure that all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal entities have direct access to Departmental resources and representation. By attending more events and initiating more proactive outreach, the Department will work to reemphasize the importance of and Tribal engagement, helping to inform policies and improve service delivery statewide. Expanding Mobile Outreach Vehicle employment in underserved communities, the Mobile Outreach Vehicle staffed by two National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO)-certified Veteran Service Officers will enhance outreach capabilities and deliver essential support directly to Pueblos, Nations, Tribal rural areas throughout the state.

V. TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION (11-18-4.C (2))

A. State Tribal Collaboration Act Training and Certification. All Department, field, and supervisory employees earned the STCA cultural awareness training and certification from SPO.

B. Employee Notification about the STCA. Department managers, project leaders, and field employees are well-versed in the STCA policy that the Department adheres to. Additionally, all Department employees have access to the Tribal Liaison for consultations regarding the Act.

VI. KEY NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION (11-18-4.C (2))

CONTACT INFORMATION

Position / Program	Key Names
Cabinet Secretary	Jamison A. Hererra Bataan Memorial Building 407 Galisteo St. Santa Fe, NM 87501-2374 (505) 546-8609 - Mobile jamison.hererra@dvs.nm.gov
Deputy Secretary	Eric W. James Bataan Memorial Building 407 Galisteo St. Santa Fe, NM 87501-2374 (505) 537-1309 - Mobile Eric.james@dvs.nm.gov
Tribal Liaison	Beverly A. Charley 4601 College Blvd. Rm 1715B Farmington, NM 87402 (575) 241-3322 – Mobile beverly.charley@state.nm.gov vetdvs.tribaliaison@state.nm.gov

Benefits Division Director/ Cemetery and Memorial Programs Director	Edward Mendez Lew Wallace Building 495 Old Santa Fe Trail Santa Fe, NM 87505 (505) 827-6307 – Office (505) 382-3760 – Mobile edward.mendez@dvs.nm.gov
Field Services Division Director	Robin Wilson 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 219-5564 – Mobile robin.wilson@dvs.nm.gov
State Approving Agency Director	Katherine L. (Kathy) Snyder 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 280-1047 - Mobile katherine.snydr@dvs.nm.gov
Veterans Business Outreach Center Director	Johnny Martinez 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 469-8501- Mobile johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov
Acting ASD Director/Chief Financial Officer	Danelle Lucero 407 Galisteo St. Santa Fe, NM 87501 (505) 827-6313 – Office danelle.lucero2@state.nm.gov
Healthcare Coordination Division Director	Devona Hollingsworth 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg. 2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 383-2408 – Office Devona.Hollingsworth@dvs.nm.gov
Women Veterans Program	Amberly Viner 4801 Indian School Road, NE Bldg.2 Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 372-9106 – Office Amberly.viner@dvs.nm.gov

VII. RELEVANT STATUTES AND MANDATES

Appendix A

Relevant Agency Regulations, State or Federal Statutes:

- Chapter 17 NMSA 1978
- State-Tribal Consultation Act - (STCA) 11-18-3 NMSA 2009; and
- Governmental Dispute Prevention and Resolution Act (12-8A-1 NMSA) as amended 2007

Appendix B

Glossary or Definitions of Special Agency Terms and Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
NMDVS	New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services
STCA	State Tribal Collaborative Act
NMSA	New Mexico Statute Administrative Code
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NPT	Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes
VAHCS	Veterans' Affairs Healthcare System
SPO	State Personnel Office

VII. AGREEMENTS

A list of any current or pending agreements with tribal nations are at the site location.