



New York State Division of Veterans' Services Announces Shared Services Partnership with the American Legion Department of New York

The New York State Division of Veterans' Services (NYS DVS) today announced a new strategic partnership with the American Legion Department of New York (American Legion) to share resources in three critical areas: training, tools, and technology. Under this new partnership, NYS DVS and the American Legion will share access to standardized training for Veterans Service Officers and technology that allows for virtual, paperless processing of veterans' benefits claims and appeals. This partnership will provide unprecedented access to high-quality veterans' benefits representation for New York's veterans and their families in their claims and appeals for federal, state, and local veterans' benefits. It will also help ensure that these vital services remain accessible throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joel Evans, Executive Deputy Director of the New York State Division of Veterans' Services, said, "The Division of Veterans' Services is honored to have this new collaboration with the American Legion Department of New York, which has for decades been a strong and vocal advocate on behalf of New York's veteran families. Through joining our shared years of knowledge and expertise, we live up to the promise we made to care for those who served upon their return home. It is an important step to ensuring all veterans and their families access the benefits they earned in service to our state and nation. We look forward to this new chapter of partnership together."

Amid COVID-19, collaboration is more critical than ever in providing veterans, service members, and their families with the best possible service. Given the wide variety of services offered by both NYS DVS and the American Legion, strengthening the bonds

between these two longstanding advocacy organizations will enhance the quality of veterans' services throughout the state.

Under the agreement announced by NYS DVS and the American Legion, all NYS DVS trainings will become open to American Legion accredited Veterans Service Officers (VSOs). This training package includes the NYS DVS Semi-Annual Trainings, which will count toward the continuing education requirements to maintain their American Legion accreditation – an important step this year, given that NYS DVS has created an entirely virtual training module after all in-person trainings were canceled due to COVID-19.

Additionally, the agreement removes old barriers preventing Veterans Service Officers from being dual accredited by both the American Legion and NYS DVS. The agreement will allow American Legion VSOs to become certified by NYS DVS, which will provide them with access to NYS DVS' web-enabled case management software to file VA claims and appeals. They will also be granted access to DPRIS, a Department of Defense electronic database where VSOs can quickly obtain discharge paperwork for veterans discharged from the mid-1990s to the present day. These additional digital resources will advance the important work already being done by NYS DVS and the American Legion throughout New York while meeting the increasingly virtual world's demands.

Patrick Rourk, American Legion Department of New York Veterans Services Committee Chairman said, "The American Legion and the New York State Division of Veterans' Services have created a formal relationship of collaboration, working together on behalf of the common goal of serving the needs of all veterans, service members, and their families in every way possible. As the Division and The Legion already promote one another's services, activities, and programs including, but not limited to, presentation of information about upcoming events and programs on one another's social media platforms, in one another's newsletters, and through other means of

communication to ensure the widest possible dissemination of this information, it made great sense that we bind together to enhance these services for all who have served.”

Created 75 years ago, NYS DVS began its mission to serve New York's veterans and service members at the end of World War 2. On this 19th anniversary of 9/11, NYS DVS continues to serve those veterans from World War 2 to service members and veterans of the post-9/11 era. Through this advocacy, NYS DVS has assisted post-9/11 veterans in New York with accessing billions of dollars in federal compensation and educational benefits. It is just one part of New York's promise to care for those who served our country upon their return home.

On this day of reflection and remembrance for those lost on September 11, 2001, and those who made the ultimate sacrifice in their service to protect our nation, the partnership between NYS DVS and the American Legion is a recommitment to the shared mission of advocacy on behalf of veterans, service members, and their families. New York will never forget; it will continue to provide the highest quality service to all those who returned home and those Gold Star families for whom New York owes the greatest debt.

About the Division of Veterans' Services

The New York State Division of Veterans' Services is New York's advocacy agency for all veterans, service members, and their families. For 75 years, the Division has connected generations of veterans, military members, and their families and dependents to multiple economic, medical, and social benefits and services earned as a result of their military service.

In the calendar year 2019 alone, the Division's accredited Veterans Benefits Advisors, all veterans themselves, brought in more than \$700 million in tax-free monetary benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for New York State's veterans and their family members. Additionally, the Division remains a leading entity for direct

advocacy on behalf of veterans, service members, and their families in obtaining the full range of state and local veterans' benefits. At all times, the Division strives to provide high-quality support, advice, and advocacy for all individuals who rendered military service to our Nation and State. For more information, visit veterans.ny.gov.

About the American Legion Department of New York

The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans organization, is devoted to mutual helpfulness, and is committed to mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members and veterans. It was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans' organization devoted to mutual helpfulness.