



Department of Military Affairs



- Disaster and Emergency Services
- Montana Youth Challenge Academy
- Montana Veterans Affairs Division
- STARBASE
- Montana Air National Guard
- Montana Army National Guard

Montana Veteran Affairs Division (MVAD)

Summary of Division

Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) has been established to promote the general welfare of Montana Veterans and their families by establishing a statewide network of service for military veterans and their families. We provide services and assistance for all Montana veterans and surviving spouses and dependents in coordination with associated federal and state agencies, veteran’s service organizations, private organizations, and individuals.

Veteran Services Program	Veteran Cemeteries Program	Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 Offices throughout Montana • 1 VSO Bureau Chief • 21 Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) • 6 Administrative Assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Cemeteries Established • 1 Cemetery awaiting establishment in Columbia Falls • 1 Bureau Chief • 3 Cemetery Managers • 6 Groundskeepers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Fort Harrison MTNG Headquarters facility • 1 Administrator • 1 Budget Analyst Supervisor • 1 Accountant • 1 Administrative Assistant

Veteran Services Program

The Montana Veteran Services Program aids veterans **at no expense** and offers expertise in applying for federal VA benefits, compensation, healthcare, and more. Our 22 VSOs are the only state VSOs to provide services to approximately 80,000+ veterans, plus their spouses and dependents. Our VSOs are nationally accredited to provide these services and tremendously impact federal dollars coming to veterans in Montana.

MVAD calculated the return on investment (ROI) for the state of Montana due to our increasing services. The average cost for 1 VSO is \$95,700 per fiscal year, including pay and all benefits. In FY23, each VSO brought in an average of \$3,454,015 federal VA funds to veterans and family members in Montana. This increased to **\$4,155,078 in FY24**, with the Administrative Assistants in place to optimize the VSOs time spent with veterans. This shows the addition of 6 Administrative Assistants in FY 2024 resulted in an **increase** of \$701,063 per VSO of federal VA dollars to veterans and family members in Montana.

VSO ROI from FY2023 to FY2024

FY 2023 New Claim Compensation	ROI (Compensation/22 PBs)	FY 2024 New Claim Compensation	ROI (Compensation/22 PBs)
\$75,988,331	\$3,454,015 per VSO	\$91,411,719	\$4,155,078 per VSO



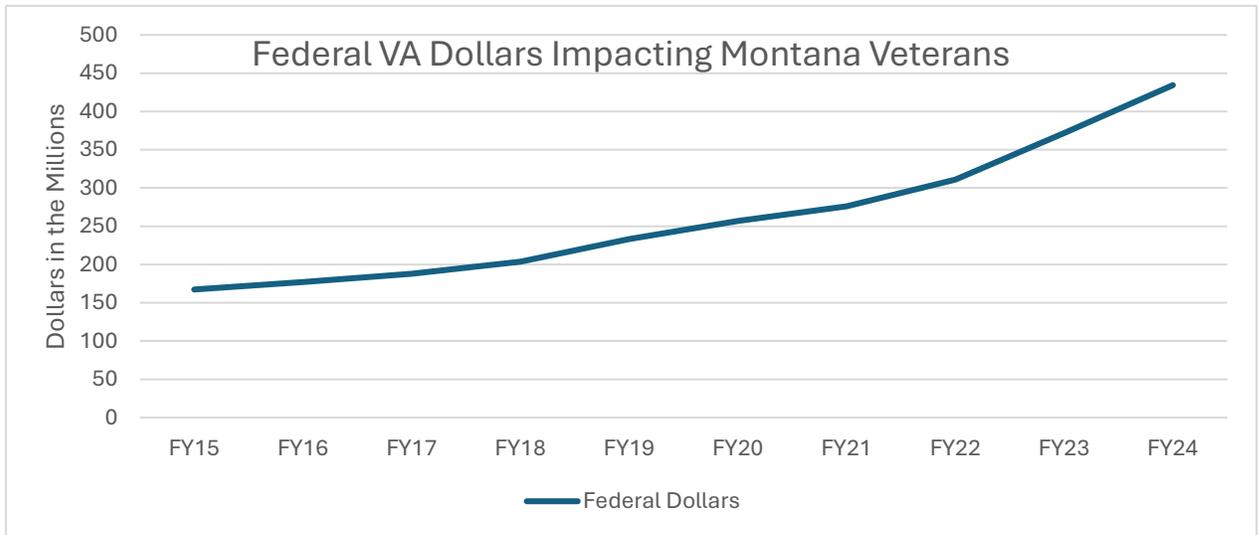
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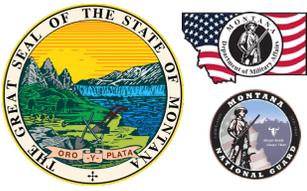


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Monthly average workload for Administrative Assistants:

- 3,033 Phone Calls
- 113 Text Messages,
- 535 Emails,
- 682 Communications within VetraSpec (VSO Software)
- 356 Documents Filed
- 265 Referrals
- 8 Events
- 457 Appointments Scheduled
- 354 Walk-Ins handled
- 26 Pieces of Outgoing Mail





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Veteran Cemetery Program

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery (MSVC) program is currently statutorily funded. It receives revenue through a portion of license plate transfers, plot allowance reimbursements, family payments for plots, and donations.

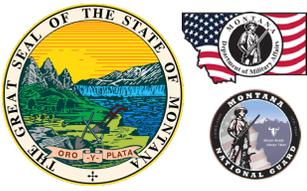
- License plate transfers – 0.81% of the motor vehicle revenue is deposited in the state general fund for MVAD each fiscal year. 24.55% of that is then allocated to the MSVC program. The other 75.45% is deposited in the veterans’ services fund strictly for VSO use. *Reference MCA 15-1-122
- Plot allowances – Plot allowances are a set amount the federal VA will pay MVAD for veteran’s use of our plots. The federal VA will only pay for veterans' burials, not spouses and dependents. Because of this, MVAD charges family members for spouses and dependents to be buried. This amount can be no more than the VA plot allowance, so MVAD only raises plot prices as the VA raises theirs.
 - MVAD has been under scrutiny because we are the only state to charge spouse/dependent fees the same amount as the VA allowances. Most states charge \$0-\$300 for spouse/dependent fees because they receive funding through state general fund.
- Donations – The MSVC program has seen a decline in donations. We mostly get \$20-\$50 donations every month, and it is not enough to sustain the program.

Cemetery Historical Revenue

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
LP Transfers	221,124.94	199,099.04	297,801.07	249,237.52	240,219.93
Plots & Donations	356,271.39	351,693.98	439,019.00	319,258.00	389,432.00
Total	577,396.33	550,793.02	736,820.07	568,495.52	629,651.93

Cemetery Historical Expenditures

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Personnel	323,365.17	446,540.07	463,166.53	587,252.25	660,951.98
Operations	118,422.95	170,195.70	156,045.98	166,900.55	214,127.07
Equipment	6,195.00		180,017.96		150,818.00
Total	447,983.12	616,735.77	619,212.51	754,152.80	1,025,897.05

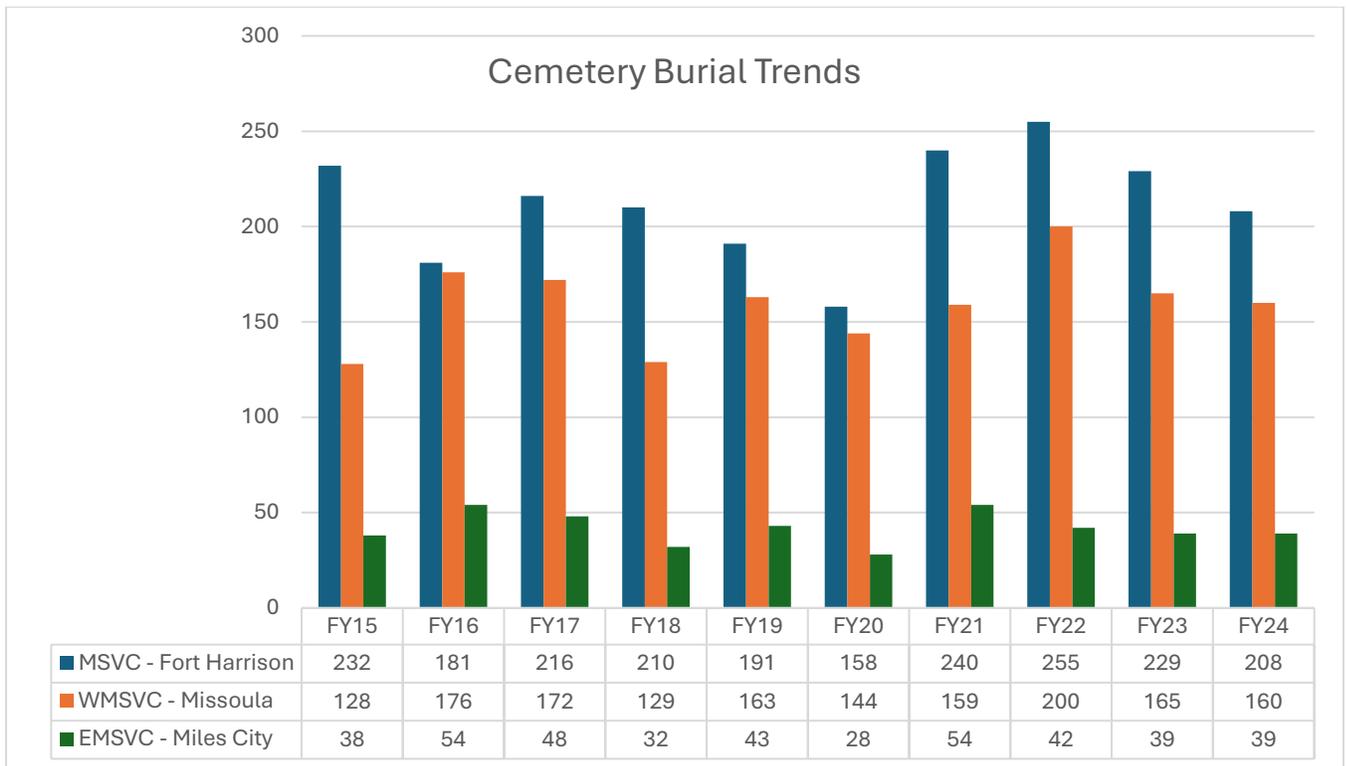


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As you can see, we receive more revenue from plots and donations. This means a significant portion of MSVC program funding is due to the number of burials conducted in that fiscal year. These numbers are entirely out of our control, and each year is different for how many burials are conducted. We have not had a consistent increase in burials each year, which makes budgeting for the program nearly impossible. Even if burials decrease during a fiscal year, our staff stay busy with the maintenance and general operations of a cemetery. The expenses are increasing due to the increasing sizes of the cemeteries, inflation, and aging equipment. Personnel services also increase due to statutory adjustments, but the revenue does not increase consistently. This has put the cemetery program in a dire situation of needing reliable, continuous funding to afford necessities such as payroll, fuel, tools, equipment parts, etc.





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MVAD Establishment

MVAD was established in 1919 and was originally named the “Montana Welfare Veterans Commission.” This name then changed to the Montana Board of Veteran Affairs, which oversees the Montana Veteran Affairs Division. MVAD is administratively attached to the Department of Military Affairs. MCA Title 10, Chapter 2, part 1 provides the statute that governs the Montana Veteran Affairs Division.

MVAD Goals and Objectives

Objective 1: Improve communication and leadership skills

- Metric: Monthly meetings, open communication
- Status: Published an employee experience survey and MVAD has improved employee satisfaction and communication between leadership.

Objective 2: Provide for each staff member to participate in at least 1 training opportunity each year, regularly assess progress against goals.

- Metric: Hold annual training with federal VA employees presenting, and monthly internal trainings via Teams or Zoom.
- Status: Established schedule for annual training and conducting monthly trainings for all employees on needed subjects.

Objective 3: Foster a culture of continuous improvement within MVAD

- Metric: Employee engagement feedback
- Status: Regular surveys can assess how engaged employees feel regarding improvement initiatives.

Objective 4: Explore how emerging technologies can be leveraged to improve mission outcomes

- Metric: Analysing large datasets in real time can improve situational awareness
- Status: Contracted with two new software systems. Qualtrics (Data Collection and Analytics) to improve data collection and customer service experience for veterans. OpusXenta (Cemetery Management) to reduce duplication of work in the cemetery program. This software provides safe data keeping for cemetery files with sensitive information.



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MVAD 2027 Biennium Changes Packages

- 3 Statewide Present Law Adjustments (SWPL)
- 1 Present Law (PL)
- 1 New Proposal (NP)

The Governor’s Office has provided a new proposal to maintain the level of services that have been in place for the last two years, but if not approved, our level of service would be greatly reduced.

- **Veterans Cemetery Program** - Suppose the cemetery program does not receive enough funding through the general fund.
 - Reduce staffing levels by 5 Groundskeepers
 - Reduce operational expenses (fuel, tools, equipment repairs, sod, irrigation fixes, etc.)
 - Close in-ground burials in Miles City (due to 2-person safety rule)
 - No replacing broken or aged-out equipment

These reductions will put each cemetery at risk of not passing the federal inspection, which can prevent future funding for expansion grants. If funding for expansions is not received, we will close each cemetery to burials after all plots are used. The decision packages include funding to provide the minimum for the cemetery program's operations.

- **Veterans Services Program** – Suppose the Veterans Services Program does not receive the funding requested through the NP.
 - Reduce staffing levels by 6 Administrative Assistants and 1 Accountant
 - Reduce operational expenses
 - Cut the outreach program and return motorpool leased vehicles
 - Risk losing long-term highly experienced employees due to the increased workload on VSOs
 - Reduction of caseload due to increased workload on VSOs
 - Reduction of caseload means reduction of federal VA tax-free dollars coming to Montana veterans and family members, which in turn will affect the Montana economy



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House Bill 2 Adjustments				
67010-31 VETERANS' AFFAIRS PROGRAM				
SWPL 1 Personal Services				
The budget includes funding to annualize various personal services costs including FY 2025 statewide pay plan, benefit rate adjustments, longevity adjustments related to incumbents in each position at the time of the snapshot, and vacancy savings.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	(101,474.00)	(67,649.00)	-	(169,123.00)
FY 2027	(95,419.00)	(63,613.00)	-	(159,032.00)
Biennium Total	(196,893.00)	(131,262.00)	-	(328,155.00)
SWPL 2 Fixed Costs				
The request includes the funding required in the budget to pay fixed costs assessed by other agencies within state government for the services they provide. Examples of fixed costs include liability and property insurance, legislative audit, warrant writer, payroll processing, and others. The rates charged for these services are approved in a separate portion of the budget.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	14,427.00	4,809.00	-	19,236.00
FY 2027	13,222.00	4,408.00	-	17,630.00
Biennium Total	27,649.00	9,217.00	-	36,866.00
SWPL 3 Inflation/Deflation				
This change package includes a reduction of \$2,306 in FY 2026 and \$1,559 in FY 2027 to reflect budgetary changes generated from the application of deflation to state motor pool accounts.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	(1,730.00)	(576.00)	-	(2,306.00)
FY 2027	(1,170.00)	(389.00)	-	(1,559.00)
Biennium Total	(2,900.00)	(965.00)	-	(3,865.00)
PL 3103 Veteran Affairs State Special Revenue				
This change package requests adjustments in state special revenue authority in several state special revenue accounts in the division to match estimated revenue levels.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	-	367,500.00	-	367,500.00
FY 2027	-	317,500.00	-	317,500.00
Biennium Total	-	685,000.00	-	685,000.00
NP 3101 Veteran Affairs Division Program Operations				
This change package requests general fund appropriation for the Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) of \$1,711,074 in FY 2026 and \$1,756,115 in FY 2027 for personal services and operating costs for the State Veterans Cemetery Program and the Veteran Services Offices Program. This request addresses the need for additional resources for the Veterans Affairs Division that was approved contingent upon legislation during the 2023 session and was funded by OBPP during the 2025 Biennium. This request also converts 11.00 FTE from modified to permanent FTE.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	1,711,074.00	-	-	1,711,074.00
FY 2027	1,756,115.00	-	-	1,756,115.00
Biennium Total	3,467,189.00	-	-	3,467,189.00



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Additional Documents and Information

Links:

- HJ 23 Study of Veteran Service Officer Programs –
 - <https://archive.legmt.gov/committees/interim/past-interim-committees/2019-2020/2019sava/veterans-affairs/>

Documents Attached:

- Long-Term Care Needs Study Executive Summary
- MVAD FY24 Statistics Sheet
- MVAD Org Chart



Executive Summary

The Montana State Legislature passed House Bill 264 (HB 264) during the 2023 legislative session. HB 264 directs the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to conduct a decennial Veterans' Long-Term Care Needs Study to evaluate and address the unique needs of Montana's veterans.

At a high-level, HB 264 requires the following:

- Determining key demographics and long-term needs of the Montana veteran population;
- Conducting a survey of the Montana veteran population;
- Evaluating existing veterans' home services; and
- Analyzing the need for additional state veterans' cemeteries.

DPHHS collected data to inform this study using focus groups, interviews, and surveys. The Veteran Survey was the primary data collection tool. By the end of the survey period, 3,579 Montana veterans responded to the survey with a return rate of approximately 4%. Veterans had the option of completing the survey online or through a print version. To encourage veterans across Montana to take the survey, including those in rural areas of the state, DPHHS used a combination of print and digital marketing and community engagement.

Veteran Demographics

As of September 2023, 85,247 veterans call Montana home. This represents 8% of the state's total population. According to United States Census data, 89% of Montana veterans identify as male and 47% are 65 years or older. Although Montana's overall population is growing, the veteran population has declined from 108,476 in 2000. In 2020, Montana's veteran population was predominantly concentrated in seven counties (Cascade, Flathead, Gallatin, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Ravalli, and Yellowstone), which together housed 65% of the state's veterans.

Current Services and Resources

Montana has three intermediate and skilled nursing facilities for honorably discharged veterans who have served in the armed forces: the Montana Veterans' Home in Columbia Falls, the Southwestern Montana Veterans' Home in Butte, and the Eastern Montana Veterans' Home in Glendive. The Montana VA Health Care System maintains a VA presence in every major city in the state through a network of community-based clinics, a community living center, and an acute care medical center. Other veterans' services include, but are not limited to, home and community-based services, mental health counseling, physical therapy, and infectious disease treatment.

Assessment Observations

The survey data and assessment found the following key observations:

- **Veterans are using a variety of long-term care services and supports.** A significant percentage of veterans (66.36%) are currently using long-term care services, indicating the available services are reaching a substantial portion of the population.
- **Available services and resources are not widely known to veterans.** Only 25.09% of survey respondents were familiar with the services provided by Area Agencies on Aging



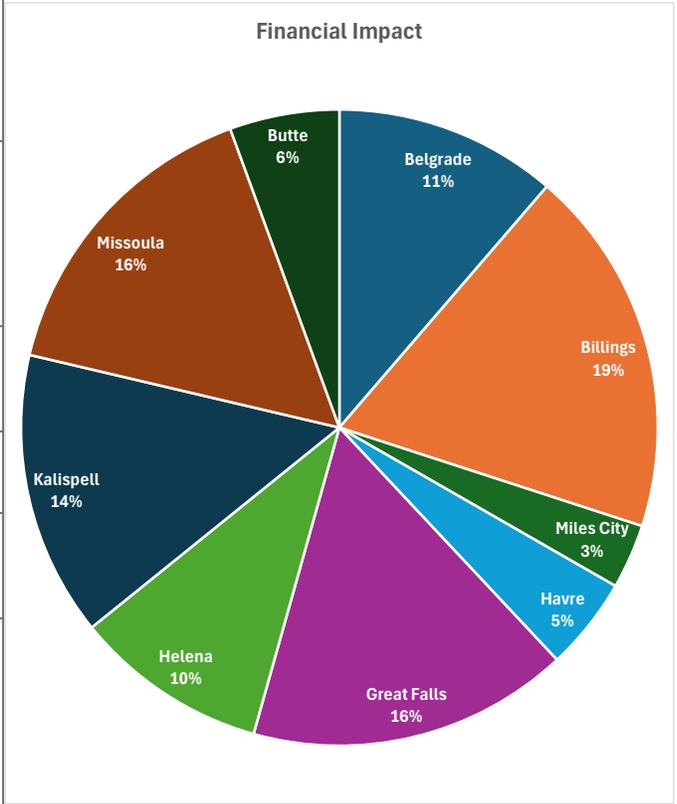
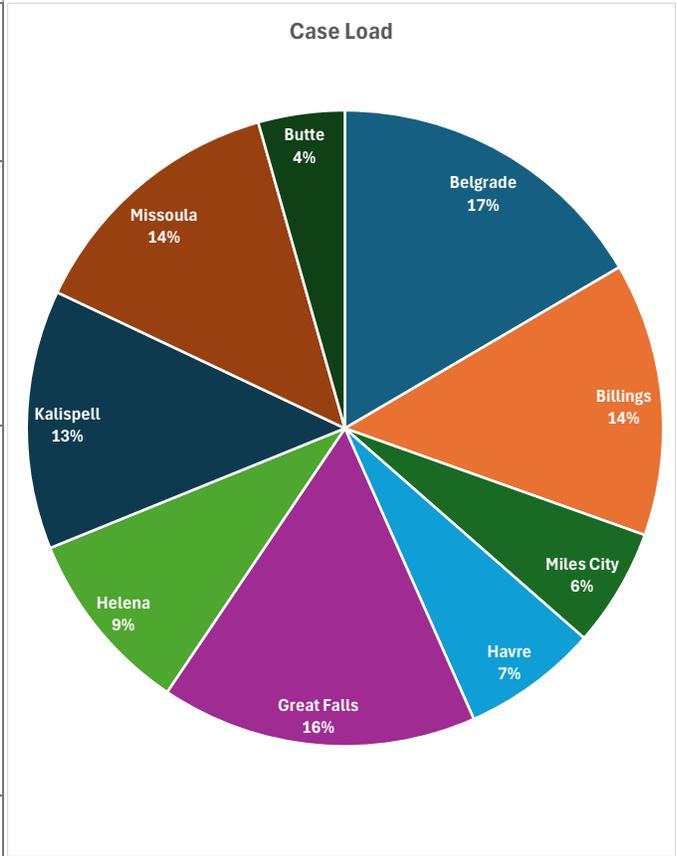
and even fewer aware of other key resources like Alzheimer's and dementia organizations (6.54%).

- **In-home services provide needed support for veterans to complement services provided in facilities.** Survey data indicates veterans highly value these services, yet opportunities for improvement exist, especially in rural regions.
- **Alzheimer's and dementia services are an area of opportunity to improve veterans' care.** Significant gaps remain that affect the overall effectiveness of these services, with 82% of counties lacking access to neurologists and only nine geriatricians statewide.
- **Nursing facility capacity varies by region in Montana.** The demand for nursing facility beds is largely being met across the state. However, availability in certain rural areas is more limited.
- **Veterans in Montana have a significant demand for long-term care services, which will need to be addressed as veterans age.** Survey data indicate that 19.31% of respondents anticipate needing long-term care services in the near future, with many expecting to require such services within the next 1 to 10 years.
- **Appropriate care settings for veterans vary based on region and preference.** A notable finding from the survey is the strong preference among veterans for state veterans' facilities and VA health care facilities for long-term care, with 33.94% and 36.08% of respondents, respectively, indicating they would most likely turn to these options if unable to care for themselves at home.
- **The need for Alzheimer's/dementia facilities is apparent and will grow as veterans age.** The survey indicates 16.07% of respondents currently need care for Alzheimer's or other dementias, and this need is likely to increase as the population ages.
- **Future service growth for veterans in Montana should include in-home care.** The survey reveals a strong preference among veterans for aging in place, with 71.23% of respondents identifying it as an important factor in their long-term care decisions.
- **Montana has three state cemeteries, two national cemeteries, and one tribal cemetery.** Montana veterans responding to the survey indicated various preferences for how they wish to be laid to rest. Many thought they would be buried in a VA national or state veterans' cemetery, understanding the criteria for being buried in these cemeteries.

The complete decennial assessment provides further detail on veterans' services in Montana.

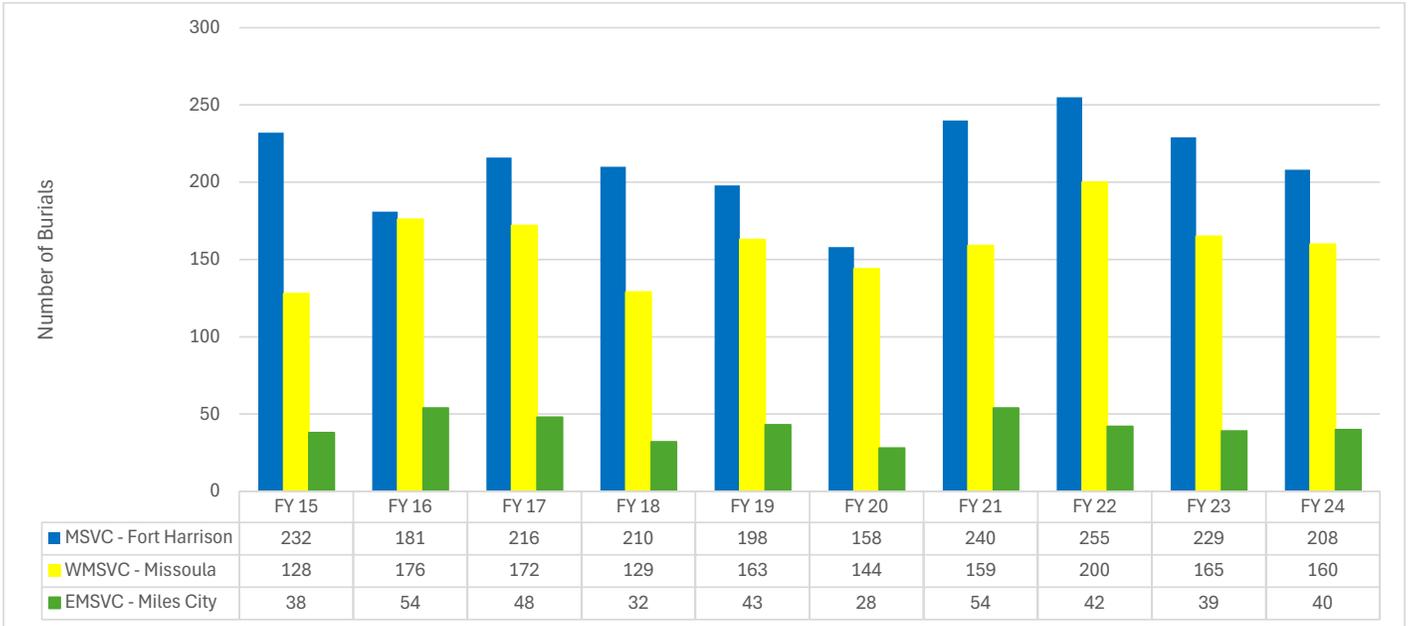
Montana Veterans Services Program - FY 2024

Region	City	County	Case Load	Financial Impact	
Region 1	Belgrade	E Madison	976	\$ 2,444,548.00	\$ 49,110,676
		Gallatin		\$ 36,418,047.00	
		Meagher		\$ 1,458,390.00	
		Park		\$ 6,675,441.00	
		Sweet Grass		\$ 1,480,002.00	
		Wheatland		\$ 634,248.00	
	Billings	Big Horn	820	\$ 1,950,283.00	\$ 81,243,831
		Carbon		\$ 4,725,323.00	
		Garfield		\$ 36,500.00	
		Golden Valley		\$ 389,921.00	
		Mussellshell		\$ 2,369,242.00	
		Petroleum		\$ 169,665.00	
		Rosebud		\$ 803,804.00	
		Stillwater		\$ 4,531,572.00	
		Treasure		\$ 167,520.00	
		Yellowstone		\$ 66,100,001.00	
	Miles City	Carter	355	\$ 206,999.00	\$ 14,286,695
		Custer		\$ 5,132,738.00	
		Daniels		\$ 286,836.00	
		Dawson		\$ 2,238,315.00	
		Fallon		\$ 478,789.00	
		Garfield		\$ 97,992.00	
		McCone		\$ 639,523.00	
		Powder River		\$ 261,903.00	
		Prairie		\$ 333,034.00	
		Richland		\$ 1,174,246.00	
		Roosevelt		\$ 1,381,689.00	
		Rosebud		\$ 1,310,658.00	
Sheridan	\$ 608,874.00				
Wibaux	\$ 135,099.00				
Region 2	Havre	Blaine	407	\$ 2,604,358.00	\$ 20,527,631
		Chouteau		\$ 221,889.00	
		Glacier		\$ 4,403,417.00	
		Hill		\$ 6,381,277.00	
		Liberty		\$ 527,474.00	
		Phillips		\$ 1,760,655.00	
		Pondera		\$ 199,629.00	
		Toole		\$ 1,779,497.00	
	Valley	\$ 2,649,435.00			
	Great Falls	Cascade	948	\$ 59,673,646.00	\$ 70,901,976
		Chouteau		\$ 1,579,860.00	
		Fergus		\$ 4,036,780.00	
		Judith Basin		\$ 1,016,025.00	
		Lewis & Clark		\$ 303,013.00	
		Pondera		\$ 1,788,240.00	
	Teton	\$ 2,504,412.00			
	Helena	Broadwater	556	\$ 2,849,872.00	\$ 42,761,988
Lewis & Clark		\$ 33,914,147.00			
N Jefferson		\$ 5,380,406.00			
Powell		\$ 617,563.00			
Region 3	Kalispell	Flathead	777	\$ 42,354,989.00	\$ 62,925,652
		Lake		\$ 8,545,100.00	
		Lincoln		\$ 12,025,563.00	
	Missoula	Mineral	801	\$ 3,234,078.00	\$ 68,431,432
		Missoula		\$ 42,383,096.00	
		Ravalli		\$ 16,000,184.00	
		Sanders		\$ 6,814,074.00	
	Butte	Beaverhead	259	\$ 3,062,843.00	\$ 24,208,571
		Deer Lodge		\$ 2,796,829.00	
		Granite		\$ 979,065.00	
N Madison		\$ 1,013,502.00			
Powell		\$ 2,325,171.00			
S Jefferson		\$ 1,613,205.00			
Silverbow		\$ 12,407,810.00			
State Agencies	\$ 10,146.00				
			5,899	\$ 434,398,452.00	



Montana State Veterans Cemetery Program - FY 2024

Cemetery	Number of Burials	Estimated Revenue from Burials
Montana State Veterans Cemetery (MSVC)	208	\$ 191,988.00
Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery (WMSVC)	160	\$ 133,912.00
Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery (EMSVC)	40	\$ 35,970.00
TOTAL	408	\$ 361,870.00



Montana Veteran Affairs Division Staffing - FY 2024

Office Location	Administrator	Budget Analyst	Accountant	Admin Support	Bureau Chief	Regional VSO	VSO	Cemetery Manager	Grounds-keeper	TOTALS
Headquarters (Helena)	1	1	1	1						4
Montana State Veterans Cemetery Program										
MSVC								1	2	3
WMSVC					1			1	2	4
EMSVC								1	1	2
Montana Veterans Service Program										
Belgrade				1	1		3			5
Billings				1		1	2			4
Butte				1			1			2
Great Falls				1			3			4
Havre						1	1			2
Helena							2			2
Kalispell				1		1	2			4
Miles City							1			1
Missoula				1			3			4
TOTALS	1	1	1	7	2	3	18	3	5	41



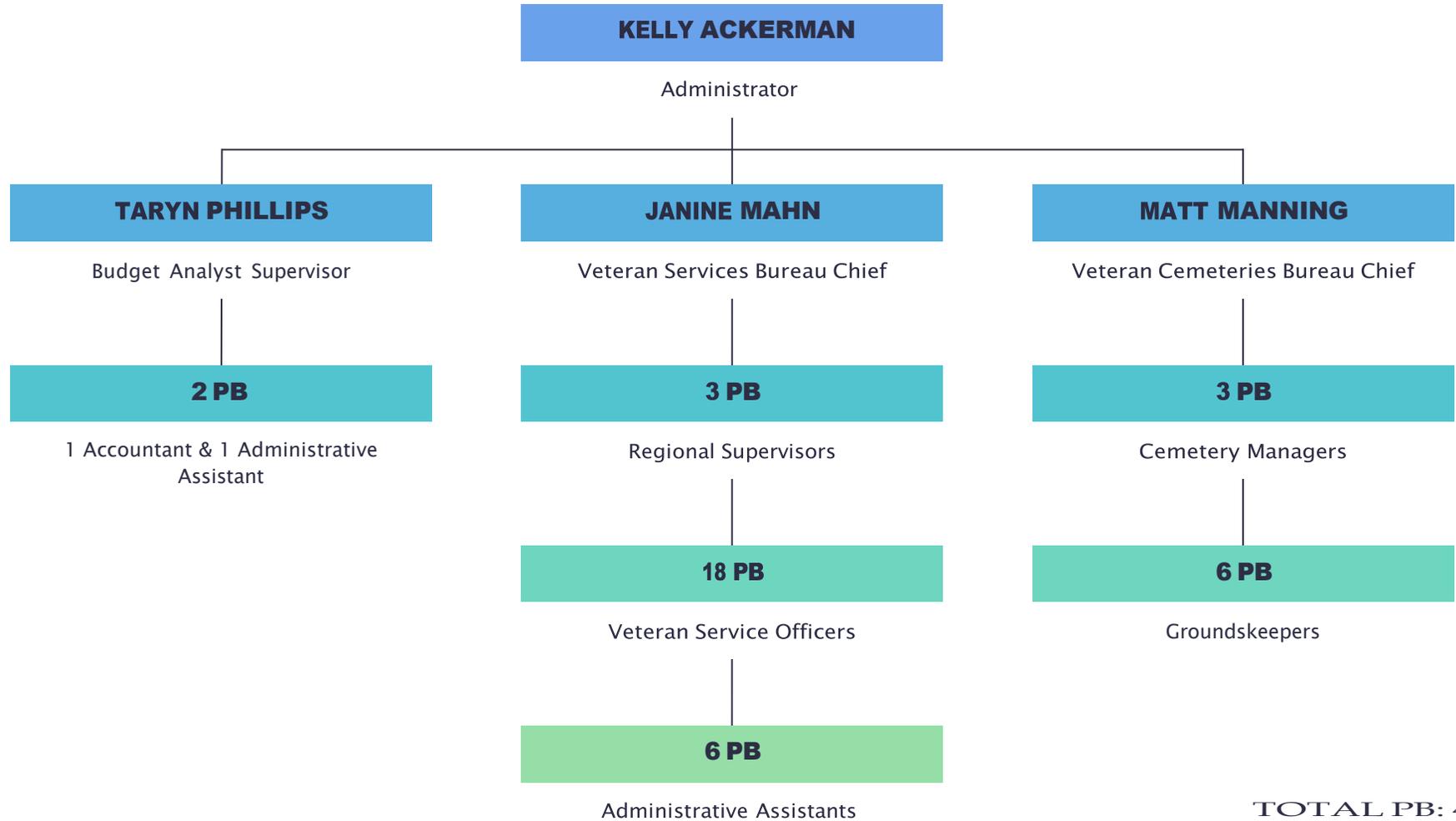
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TOTAL PB: 42