



**2012 LEGISLATIVE REPORT**  
**MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DIVISION**

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### Legislative Charge

Minnesota Statute 197.585, Subd. 4

*Beginning January 15, 2007, and each year thereafter, the steering committee established in subdivision 2 shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over Veterans affairs policy and finance and higher education policy and finance regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the program established in this section.*

### Estimated Cost of Preparing this Report (as required by Minn. Stat. 3.197)

Staff time:	\$291.00
Copies:	\$9.00
TOTAL:	\$300.00

## **SUMMARY**

The following progress report, submitted to the Minnesota Legislature and prepared by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, provides a status update on the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2011. The report reflects the program's continued due largely to increasing complexity of federal benefits as well as continued deployments of Minnesota based military units.

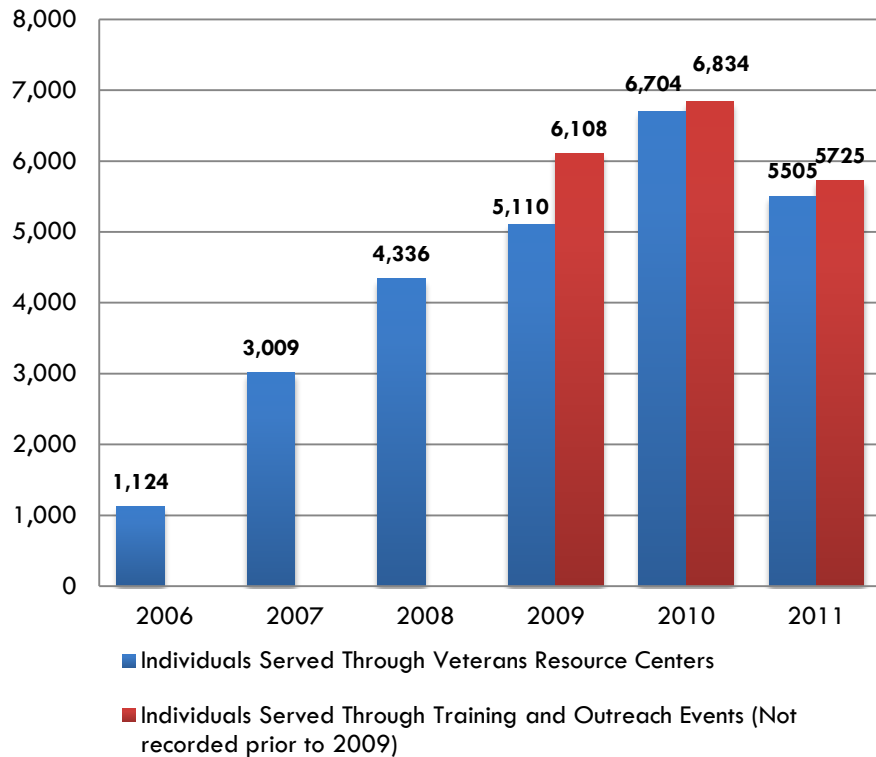
## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

The 2006 Minnesota Legislature allocated funding to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for the creation of the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program (commonly referred to as the "Higher Education Veterans Program"). The program is uniquely designed to serve the needs of Minnesota's students and prospective students who are impacted by military service, including Veterans, military members, and their dependents.

One statewide supervisor, an assistant, and eleven regional coordinators serve colleges and students throughout Minnesota. Based out of a "host campus", coordinators work with colleges and universities throughout their defined region, providing one-on-one, comprehensive education assistance to Veterans, military members, and their dependents. Coordinators also work closely with campus administration officials to create and manage Veterans Resource Centers as well as addressing the campus-level needs of student Veterans.

A novel concept when launched in July 2006, the Higher Education Veterans Program remains the only program of its kind in the country and has helped thousands of returning Minnesota Veterans transition to college. The complex nature of Veteran and military education benefits demand the services of subject matter experts who can assist Minnesota's Veteran community throughout the state. The Higher Education Veterans Program has proven to be effective, flexible, and efficient, enabling countless Veterans, military members, and their dependents access to federal and state benefits as well as other resources available to them.

## HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DATA



The program saw a slight decrease in first time visitors in 2011. The decrease can be attributed to three factors: the statewide shutdown in July, a major deployment of the Minnesota Guard and personnel changes. The program has new leadership and will be at full strength in February 2012. It is important to note that each individual is only counted once, even though a student may return for help multiple times.

### 2011 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2011, the impact and importance of the Higher Education Veterans Program (Program) was especially evident as the Post 9-11 GI Bill Enhancements Act went into effect at different times during the year. The continued confusion and difficulty accessing federal benefits led thousands of Minnesotans to seek assistance through the Program. As rules change and budgets decrease for certain benefit programs, benefits became increasingly interconnected requiring Veterans to make choices between complex sets of benefit packages. At times, these decisions are irrevocable and mistakes can cost Veterans tens of thousands of dollars. As such, not only those who are entitled to the benefits, but also colleges and universities they attend, and other Veteran service providers rely heavily upon coordinators. The following information highlights the demand as well as some of the most notable achievements in 2011.

1. The Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) is a federal education benefit which began in 2009. The Post 9-11 GI Bill Enhancements Act of 2010 was signed by President Obama in late 2010. Most of the provisions within the law took effect at various times in 2011. Chapter 33 offers a more generous education financing option for many; it also adds a new layer of complexity to benefits. Many students find it to be very difficult to understand and access. The Higher Education Veterans Program was able to assist thousands of Veterans determine their eligibility for the Post 9/11 GI Bill, transfer their benefit to family

members, navigate the new provisions, and enroll in the VA education program best suited to their needs.

2. Coordinators assisted campuses in maintaining and expanding three campus Veterans Resource Centers. The total number of Tier One campuses is 6, Tier Two Campuses is 24 and Tier 3 Campuses is 25. Bringing the total number of spaces in operation to fifty-five.
3. Coordinators served 5,505 *new* individuals in 2011, and thousands of other individuals who returned for continued assistance. Overall, the program had a total of 62,303 contacts in 2011, an 8% increase over 2010. The modest increase can be attributed to three factors: a major Minnesota National Guard Deployment, the state shutdown during July, and four coordinator resignations along with a change in overall leadership of the Program. As of February 6, 2012, the Program will be at full strength.
4. Coordinators continued to provide advice, information, and support of campus efforts aimed at creating Veterans-friendly institutions. Included are issues such as streamlined and flexible policies and procedures for students facing deployments and creating seamless transition for returning Veterans.
5. The director and coordinators provided a tremendous amount of training and outreach at campuses, community events, Veteran organizations/service providers, and most notably, reintegration events coordinated by the Minnesota National Guard.

## **2011 VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER USAGE**

### **VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER GUIDELINES**

#### **Mission:**

Veterans Resource Centers provide students with an on-campus point of contact for comprehensive information about benefits and resources available to current and past military members and their families, as well as opportunities for peer support.

#### **Types of Veterans Resource Centers:**

Since the resources available and needs of each campus differ vastly, there is not a single standard for a Veterans Resource Center. However, two key goals should always be attempted: centralized information and opportunities for veterans to connect with their peers.

The following are *minimal* guidelines based on the number of VA certified students present on campus. Actual efforts are at the discretion of the individual campuses:

**Tier 1** – Minimal number (1-15) certified VA students. The following services should be developed:

- Maintain a bulletin board that the Regional Coordinator and campus staff can frequently update with timely and relevant information.
- Maintain regular contact between Certifying Official and Regional Coordinator.
- Notify veterans of coordinator's role and availability for assistance.

- Assure the Regional Coordinator has met with key campus staff (admissions, financial aid, counselors, and certifying official)
- Provide meeting space for one-on-one meetings and group events as needed.

**Tier 2** – Intermediate number (15-100) certified VA students. In addition to Tier 1 services, the following should be developed:

- Develop a Veterans Resource Center or office with consistent hours and staffed by all or some of the following: Regional Coordinator, student workers, campus staff, or other service providers (CVSOs, DEED Veteran Employment Reps, VA Outreach Services/Centers, Family Assistance Coordinators, etc.).
- The Veterans Resource Center should be a dedicated space, but if necessary it can be a shared space.
- If the space is shared, campuses should provide adequate room for peer networking and support. Campuses should develop additional meeting space options for veteran peer support, veteran’s club meetings and other informal veteran meetings, in a consistent location and meeting time designated.
- Provide support for a Veterans Club.

**Tier 3** – Significant number (100+) certified VA students. In addition to Tier 1 & 2 services, the following should be developed:

- The Veterans Resource center should be a dedicated space, not shared. In addition to a gathering space, the campus should also provide office space for Regional Coordinator.
- Provide support for a Veterans Club.

### **Higher Education Veterans Program - Veterans Resource Centers**

<b>6</b>	Tier 1: Previously established space (as of December 31, 2010)
<b>24</b>	Tier 2: Previously established shared resource centers/office (as of December 31, 2010)
<b>25</b>	Tier 3: Previously established Resource Centers (as of December 31, 2010)
<b>0</b>	Tier 1: Newly established space (January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011)
<b>0</b>	Tier 2: Newly established space (January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011)
<b>0</b>	Tier 3: Newly established space (January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011)
<b>3</b>	Existing Resource Centers increasing space or programming

### **Utilization of Veterans Resource Centers/Offices**

<b>5,505</b>	Total first time visitors
<b>62,303</b>	Total annual contacts
<b>8%</b>	Increase over 2010

### **Military Status of Visitors**

<b>64%</b>	Veteran (180 or more days of active duty)
<b>18%</b>	Current Military Member
<b>7%</b>	Family/Dependent of Military Member/Veteran

<b>1%</b>	Former Military Member (less than 180 days of active duty)
<b>10%</b>	Did not declare or no military status

### **Top Purposes for Visits**

Veterans education funding/assistance from coordinator
Peer support/connecting with other Veterans

### **Referrals to Other Service Providers**

Serving as a comprehensive information hub for Veterans, military members, and their dependents on campus, coordinators have developed well-defined referral networks to link Veterans on campus with the appropriate campus staff or service providers in the community. The numbers below reflect these referrals to other service providers.

<b>2,156</b>	Internal campus resource
<b>498</b>	External community resource (CVSO, DEED, and other state agencies)
<b>1,248</b>	County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)
<b>927</b>	Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED Vet Reps)
<b>140</b>	Other

### **2011 PRESENTATION AND OUTREACH DATA**

Throughout the year, the staff of the Higher Education Veterans Program is heavily relied upon to provide training on their area of expertise: Veteran/military education benefits and creating Veterans-friendly campuses. Training is conducted in a variety of formats and locations – from drill floor presentations at armories throughout the state and post-deployment education briefings upon the very return of National Guard and Reserve units, to faculty and staff in-service days on campuses and professional higher education associations on a national scale. The figures below highlight the variety and scale of the program’s outreach and training efforts.

<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>Number of Individuals Trained</b>	<b>Type of Training</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>3,429</b>	Reintegration activities
<b>14</b>	<b>685</b>	College and university
<b>9</b>	<b>425</b>	Service providers and Veterans service organizations
<b>12</b>	<b>1186</b>	Community events
<b>56</b>	<b>5,725</b>	Total

## **2011 MyMilitaryEducation Online Support Center Usage Data**

MyMilitaryEducation ([www.mymilitaryeducation.org](http://www.mymilitaryeducation.org)), an online support center, continues to be an important part of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Highlighting the program's efforts to collaborate with other agencies and service providers, MyMilitaryEducation is a collaborative effort by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Online. By providing an added dimension to the program's services and an important outreach component, the online support center is a gateway to the services of the Higher Education Veterans Program and is contacted by Veterans, military members, and dependents stationed around the globe. More details are provided in attachment #1.

### **Types of Online Support Center Contacts**

<b>48,550</b>	Self service
<b>1,336</b>	Advisor/counselor help
<b>74,990</b>	Total contacts in 2011

### **Top Purposes for Online Support Center Contacts**

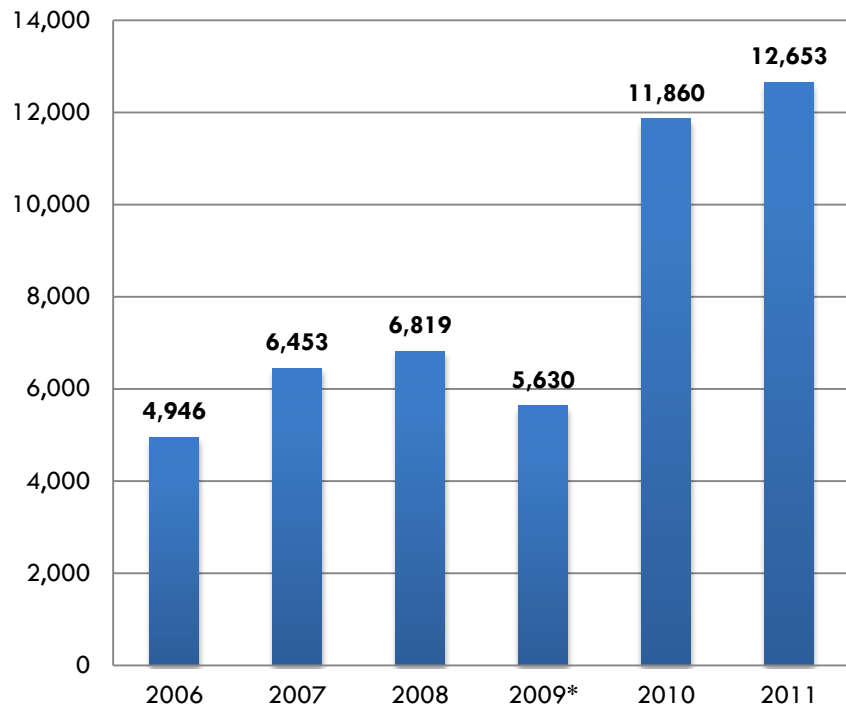
Military education benefits/finances
Career information and resources
Getting ready for college
Information about the Higher Education Veterans Program

## **STUDENT VETERANS IN MINNESOTA**

New education benefits, the economic recession, and sustained deployments have dramatically increased the number of Veterans and military members attending college in recent years. In addition, new federal benefits have increased the number of dependents eligible for aid. The following graph shows the number of students using USVA educational benefits. While there are a number of reasons why a Veteran may not have access to USVA educational benefits, this is currently the only comprehensive source of data for student Veteran enrollment in Minnesota.



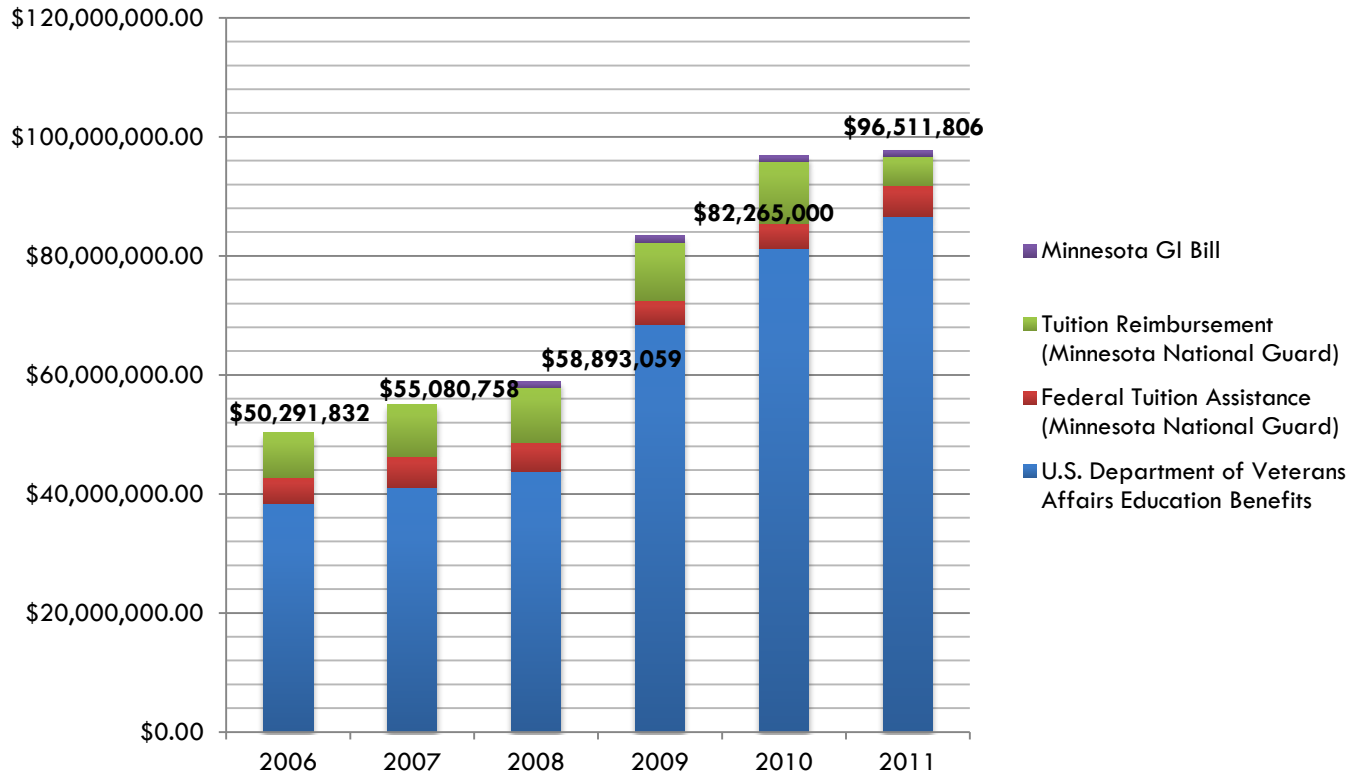
## MINNESOTA STUDENTS USING VA EDUCATION BENEFITS



\*The 2009 data from the USVA does not include individuals using Chapter 33 (also known as the Post 9/11 GI Bill), which began in August 2009. The actual number of Veterans attending college in 2009 is therefore much larger than reported.

Increasing numbers of Veterans attending college in Minnesota has led to an equally dramatic increase in education benefit dollars spent in Minnesota. A combination of state and federal funds make higher education possible for thousands of Minnesota Veterans, military members, and dependents each year. These benefits also make an important contribution to Minnesota's economy. The amount of federal education benefits spent in Minnesota has nearly doubled, up \$42.7 million, during the existence of the Higher Education Veterans Program. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The following graph illustrates the expenditures of Veterans' education benefits in Minnesota.

## COMBINED EXPENDITURES FROM STATE AND FEDERAL VETERANS EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA<sup>1</sup>



While education benefits are available to most Veterans and military members, as well as some dependents, assistance is often needed to untangle the various eligibility requirements and enrollment processes unique to each package of benefits that these students are entitled to. Coordinators with the Higher Education Veterans Program provide this much-needed assistance as well as serve as an initial point of contact for Veterans interested in higher education. The program is therefore in a unique position to encourage and facilitate the use of these benefits.

<sup>1</sup> The Minnesota GI Bill began in the 2007-2008 academic year. Data reported is from Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

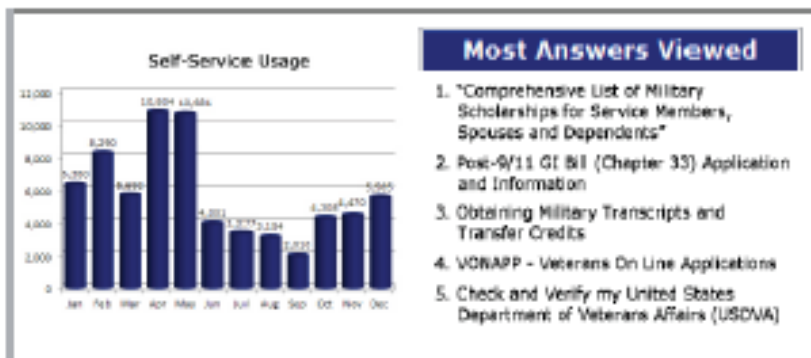
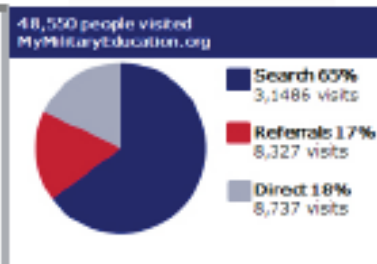
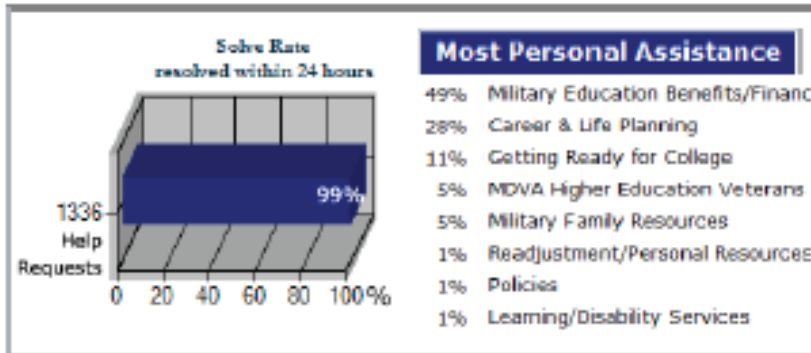
Federal Tuition Assistance is a program available to most reserve components in addition to the Army National Guard. The numbers reported are for the Minnesota Army National Guard, the only data available. Both Federal Tuition Assistance and State Tuition Reimbursement data reported from Minnesota National Guard Education Office.

USVA education data is not available for 2011. The amount listed is an estimate based on the number of individuals using VA education Benefits in 2011 at an average rate of \$6,853/student (the average rate per person for 2007 to 2009). U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits data accessed from [http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical\\_data.asp](http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical_data.asp).

# ATTACHMENT 1: ONLINE SUPPORT

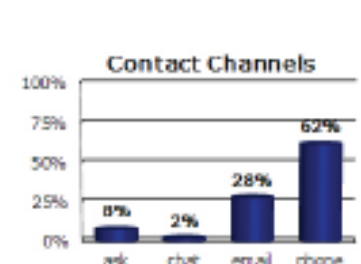


## Summary of Service: January 1, 2011 - December 31, 2011



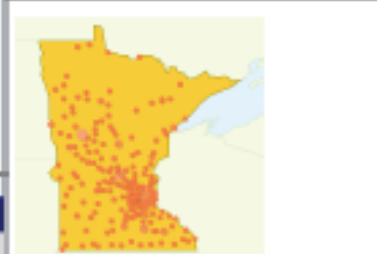
### Top Inbound Links

Link	2011	2010
incret.cuzhelp.com	1,635	904
students.gov	1,146	945
getreadyforcollege.org	329	309
gpallipolan.org	497	430
google.com	328	134
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,327</b>	<b>10,620</b>



### Top Website Pages

Page	2011	2010
Comprehensive List of Military Scholarships...	6,690	2,800
PH Linknet Online Support	5,933	0
Support Home Page	5,781	7,304
Find Answers	3,440	3,886
Obtaining Military Transcripts...	3,475	1,579
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,999</b>	<b>50,640</b>



### Visits / Contacts

Website	2011	2010
MyMilitaryEducation.org	41,301	27,810



Phone: 888 Link Vet (1346.3333) | Internal Email: v3333.336.0296 | TTY: 1.800.827.1329  
 Telephone Assistance: 7 AM to 9 PM, CST Monday - Friday | 10 AM to 6 PM, CST Saturday | 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, CST Sunday | Closed Holidays  
 The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer.

## **ATTACHMENT 2: REGIONAL OFFICES AND VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS**

### **State Higher Education Veterans Program Office:**

Host Campus: Minnesota State University Moorhead  
1104 7<sup>th</sup> Ave S  
Moorhead, MN 56560

#### **Dave Bellefeuille, State Supervisor**

[belldave@mnstate.edu](mailto:belldave@mnstate.edu)  
218-477-2080 Office

#### **Jennifer Huntzman, Administrative Assistant**

Minnesota State University Moorhead  
[jenn.huntzman@mnstate.edu](mailto:jenn.huntzman@mnstate.edu)  
218-477-2080 Office

### **Northwest Region:**

#### **Anthony Schnellbach, Regional Coordinator**

[tony.schnellbach@northlandcollege.edu](mailto:tony.schnellbach@northlandcollege.edu)  
218-683-8550  
Host Campus: Northland Community and Technical College  
1101 Hwy One East  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701

#### **Northwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota - Crookston
- Bemidji State University, Bemidji
- Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Fergus Falls
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena
- Northland Community and Technical College, Thief River Falls
- Northland Community and Technical College, East Grand Forks
- Northwest Technical College, Bemidji

### **Northeast Region:**

#### **Jodi Kiminski, Regional Coordinator**

[j.kiminski@lsc.edu](mailto:j.kiminski@lsc.edu)  
218-733-7604 Office  
Host Campus: Lake Superior College  
2101 Trinity Road  
Duluth, MN 55811

**Wesley Judkins, Regional Coordinator**

[wesleyjudkins@hibbing.edu](mailto:wesleyjudkins@hibbing.edu)

218-262-6739

Host Campus: Hibbing Community College

1515 E. 25<sup>th</sup> Street

Hibbing, MN 55746

**Northeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota, Duluth
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet
- Hibbing Community College, Hibbing
- Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids
- Lake Superior College, Duluth
- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, Eveleth
- Rainy River Community College, International Falls
- Vermillion Community College, Ely
- College of St. Scholastica, Duluth and other locations

**Central Region:**

**Laura Boden, Regional Coordinator**

[mnva@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:mnva@stcloudstate.edu)

320-308-2185 Office

Host Campus: St. Cloud State University

720 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South

St. Cloud, MN 56301

**Erin Brown, Regional Coordinator**

[mnva@alextech.edu](mailto:mnva@alextech.edu)

320-762-4467 Office

Host Campus: Alexandria Technical and Community College

1601 Jefferson St

Alexandria, MN 56308

**Central Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota – Morris
- St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud
- Alexandria Technical and Community College, Alexandria
- Central Lakes College, Brainerd
- Central Lakes College, Staples
- Ridgewater College, Willmar
- Ridgewater College, Hutchinson
- St. Cloud Technical and Community College, St. Cloud

**Metro Region:**

**Katherine Bachman, Regional Coordinator**

[Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu](mailto:Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu)

651-423-8274 Office

Host Campus: Dakota County Technical College

1300 145<sup>th</sup> Street East

Rosemount, MN 55068

**Duane Bauer II, Regional Coordinator**

[bauer333@umn.edu](mailto:bauer333@umn.edu)

612-625-7620 Office

Host Campus: University of Minnesota

One Stop Student Services, Veteran Services

320 Science Teaching and Student Services Bldg.

222 Pleasant Str. SE

Minneapolis, MN 55455-0422

**Charles Egerstrom, Regional Coordinator**

[charles.egerstrom@anokaramsey.edu](mailto:charles.egerstrom@anokaramsey.edu)

763-433-1415 Office

Host Campus: Anoka Ramsey Community College

11200 Mississippi Blvd NW

Coon Rapids, MN 55433

**Metro Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota, Veterans Transition Center, Minneapolis
- University of Minnesota, One Stop Service Center, Minneapolis
- St Paul College, St Paul
- Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis
- Dunwoody College of Technology, Minneapolis
- Anoka Technical College, Anoka
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Cambridge
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids
- Century Community College, White Bear Lake
- Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount
- Inver Hills Community College, Inver Hills
- Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park
- Hennepin Technical College, Eden Prairie
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- Normandale Community College, Bloomington
- North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park
- Pine Technical College, Pine City
- University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis
- University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
- Concordia University, St Paul

**Southwest Region:**

**Justin Guggisberg, Regional Coordinator**

[justin.guggisberg@smsu.edu](mailto:justin.guggisberg@smsu.edu)

507-537-7213 Office

Host Campus: SW Minnesota State University, Marshall

1501 State Street-Room SS132

Marshall, MN 56258

**Southwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Canby
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Granite Falls
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Jackson
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Worthington

**Southeast Region:**

**David Schrader, Regional Coordinator**

[david.schrader@mnsu.edu](mailto:david.schrader@mnsu.edu)

507-389-5726 Office

Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Mankato

168 Centennial Student Union

Mankato, MN 56001

**Tony Tengwall, Regional Coordinator**

[tony.tengwall@roch.edu](mailto:tony.tengwall@roch.edu)

507-529-6142 Office

Host Campus: Rochester Community and Technical College

851 30<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE - Box 47

Rochester, MN 55904

**Southeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Winona State University, Winona
- South Central College, North Mankato
- South Central College, Faribault
- Southeast Technical College, Red Wing
- Southeast Technical College, Winona
- Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester
- Riverland Community College, Austin