



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the State Auditor
Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better

Official Audit Report – Issued September 27, 2022

Department of Veterans' Services

For the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021





Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the State Auditor
Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better

September 27, 2022

Ms. Cheryl Lussier Poppe, Secretary
Department of Veterans' Services
600 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111

Dear Secretary Poppe:

I am pleased to provide this performance audit of the Department of Veterans' Services. This report details the audit objectives, scope, methodology, findings, and recommendations for the audit period, July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021. My audit staff discussed the contents of this report with management of the agency, whose comments are reflected in this report.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Department of Veterans' Services for the cooperation and assistance provided to my staff during the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SMB", written over a light blue circular watermark.

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

cc: Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DVS	Department of Veterans' Services
OSA	Office of the State Auditor
VA	United States Department of Veterans Affairs
VSO	veterans' services officer
WVN	Women Veterans' Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Section 12 of Chapter 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of the State Auditor has conducted a performance audit of certain activities of the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) for the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021.

In this performance audit, we determined whether DVS had a process in place to ensure that its Women Veterans' Network (WVN) effectively achieved its purpose of identifying women veterans and informing them about their potential eligibility for benefits they may have earned through their service. In addition, we determined whether DVS had established an advisory committee on women veterans in compliance with Section 2 of Chapter 115 of the General Laws.

Below is a summary of our findings and recommendations, with links to each page listed.

Finding 1 Page 8	DVS did not ensure that its WVN achieved its intended purpose.
Recommendation Page 10	DVS should establish policies and procedures, including a monitoring component, for WVN's operations to ensure that all required activities are conducted and properly documented.
Finding 2 Page 15	DVS did not have enough members appointed to its advisory committee on women veterans.
Recommendation Page 15	DVS should work with the Governor's Office to ensure that the advisory committee has the required 11 members.

OVERVIEW OF AUDITED ENTITY

The Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) is an agency within the state's Executive Office of Health and Human Services that is authorized under Section 2 of Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws to assist and advise veterans' services officers (VSOs) regarding benefits and services for which veterans may be eligible. According to its website,

The mission of the Department of Veterans' Services is to advocate on behalf of all the Commonwealth's veterans and provide them with quality support services and to direct an emergency financial assistance program for those veterans and their dependents who are in need.

In addition, DVS represents state agencies and individual veterans before the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in securing compensation and available benefits.

DVS also administers a need-based benefit program, pursuant to Chapter 115 of the General Laws, through VSOs assigned to each municipality in the Commonwealth. Each city or town pays eligible veterans, or their eligible dependents, their monthly benefits¹ directly, by check, at the beginning of each month and then requests reimbursement from the Commonwealth for 75% of the benefit amount paid. DVS pays the municipalities quarterly for eligible benefits, a year in arrears. DVS reimbursed local municipalities for Chapter 115 benefits of \$40,149,878 in fiscal year 2020 and \$39,442,237 in fiscal year 2021.

VSOs are appointed by the mayors or boards of selectmen in cities and towns to accept applications from veterans and their dependents, determine their eligibility for benefits, and file requests for federal benefits. In partnership with VSOs, DVS helps veterans and their families navigate available federal, state, and local programs, benefits, and other resources.

During our audit period, DVS had approximately 60 employees, including managers and support personnel. Its headquarters are at 600 Washington Street in Boston.

1. These need-based benefits, paid monthly to veterans or their eligible dependents, help recipients with their monthly living expenses for food, shelter, fuel, and medical assistance.

Women Veterans' Network

According to the VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, there were approximately 25,000 women veterans living in Massachusetts as of September 30, 2020. The Women Veterans' Network (WVN), a program within DVS, was established in 1997. According to WVN's website,

[WVN's] purpose is to find women who served in the military, some of whom may not be aware that they are veterans and eligible for benefits they have earned through their service. . . .

We provide information on federal, state and local benefits [to women veterans]. Our mission also includes expanding awareness of the needs of women veterans and identifies available resources to meet those needs.

WVN uses a database of information about women veterans in Massachusetts who have joined the network to create a mailing list for its biannual newsletter, which contains information on benefits, programs, resources, and events for women veterans. WVN also emails updates about events and programs between issues of the newsletter. Each year, WVN hosts a Women Veterans Appreciation Day ceremony, where it gives a woman veteran the Deborah Sampson Award.² In addition, WVN hosts a conference with keynote speakers, workshops, networking opportunities, and a panel on topics that are relevant to women veterans.

WVN is administered by a director, who reports directly to the DVS chief of staff. According to the job description, some of the WVN director's duties and responsibilities are as follows:

Oversee and maintain a database of over 14,500 women veterans in the Commonwealth. . . .

Conduct aggressive research via informational fairs and workshops, public events and other mediums to expand membership in the Women Veterans' network.

Collaborate within DVS with other agencies at state, federal and non-profit provider levels that serve women veterans to identify resources, improvements to programs and services to women veterans, particularly in terms of healthcare, counseling, employment, education and housing. . . .

Respond to direct inquiries from women veterans to provide information, referrals and establish linkages with supportive services. . . .

Provide informational updates via email, website, and social network sites on services, programs, and events between newsletters. . . .

2. According to the WVN website, "The Deborah Sampson Award proudly recognizes a female Veteran who has gone above and beyond to serve her fellow Women Veterans throughout the year."

Prepare reports as required and requested by the Department of Veterans' Services, Executive Office of Health [and] Human Services, and the Legislature.

Maintain speaker's bureau of Massachusetts Women Veterans to enhance awareness of women veterans' contributions to the Commonwealth and to the Nation.

Maintain library of historical resources on women veterans.

Continue education and awareness of current and emerging issues that impact women veterans. . . .

Meet with [women veterans] in the community to assist with services and benefits.

Maintain WVN Twitter and Facebook sites and outreach programs through social media.

Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

Section 2 of Chapter 115 of the General Laws requires DVS to "appoint an advisory committee on women veterans to investigate, foster and promote the interests of women veterans." The committee is required to have at least 11 members, including the following:

- the Secretary of DVS or their designee
- an advisor on women's issues, appointed by the Governor
- the chair of the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination or their designee
- three members of veterans' organizations, appointed by the Governor
- a VSO, appointed by the Governor
- four women veterans, appointed by the commissioner of DVS, at least two of whom participate in the VA Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program.³

The advisory committee hosts an annual luncheon to recognize women veterans.

3. This program was established in 1977 by the Disabled American Veterans, a nonprofit organization that provides benefits to disabled veterans and their families. The program later became part of VA. The benefits are offered through the VA network of Vet Centers.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance with Section 12 of Chapter 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of the State Auditor has conducted a performance audit of certain activities of the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) for the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Below is a list of our audit objectives, indicating each question we intended our audit to answer, the conclusion we reached regarding each objective, and where each objective is discussed in the audit findings.

Objective	Conclusion
1. Did DVS have a process in place to ensure that its Women Veterans' Network (WVN) achieved its intended purpose of identifying women veterans and informing them about their potential eligibility for benefits?	No; see Finding <u>1</u>
2. Did DVS have an advisory committee on women veterans in accordance with Section 2 of Chapter 115 of the General Laws?	No; see Finding <u>2</u>

To achieve our audit objectives, we gained an understanding of DVS's internal control environment related to the objectives by reviewing applicable policies and procedures, as well as conducting inquiries with DVS staff members and management. To obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to address the objectives, we performed the procedures described below.

To determine whether DVS had a process in place to ensure that WVN achieved its intended purpose, we performed the following procedures.

- We interviewed the WVN director and the DVS chief of staff to discuss the process of WVN's outreach to women veterans. We also asked these officials whether DVS management had developed any performance measures to evaluate WVN's effectiveness and, if WVN did not achieve desired results, whether DVS management identified what needed to be done to improve WVN's performance.

- We requested from DVS a list (current as of the time of our fieldwork⁴) of WVN members. DVS gave us a list as of February 2022 that consisted of 1,545 records. Approximately 90% of the records were email addresses only. From this list, we identified 878 records that either contained a name (152 items), or did not contain a name but had information in the email address that allowed for the extraction of a name (726 items). We selected and tested a judgmental, nonstatistical sample of 60 members from these 878 records. We emailed a questionnaire to each of the 60 members and evaluated all 14 responses that we received to assess each member's knowledge of WVN, their interaction with WVN, their awareness of the types of assistance WVN provides, and their perspective on WVN's overall effectiveness.
- Because there were no documented policies and procedures related to WVN, we used the job description for the WVN director position to identify activities that WVN is expected to complete. From this job description, we compiled a list of 16 outreach-related duties and requested documentation to substantiate that the director had performed them during our audit period.

To determine whether DVS had an advisory committee on women veterans in accordance with Section 2 of Chapter 115 of the General Laws, we performed the following procedures.

- We interviewed DVS's chief of staff, general counsel, and other key staff members responsible for monitoring and guiding the advisory committee's activities to discuss the committee's operating procedures and how the committee is managed.
- We interviewed the Secretary of DVS to obtain knowledge and insight on committee history, committee appointments, and the support and guidance provided to the committee by DVS management during the audit period.
- We requested a list of committee members from the audit period, as well as any details related to nominations, appointments, and membership terms. We reviewed a list of active advisory committee members as of June 30, 2021. DVS could not provide details related to committee members' nominations, appointments, or membership terms.
- We interviewed two people who were members of the committee as of the end of the audit period to determine each of these members' level of involvement with the committee, how the committee operates, how often it meets, and what its overall activities are.

Where nonstatistical sampling was used, we could not project the results of our testing to the overall populations.

Data Reliability Assessment

The list of WVN members that DVS provided consisted of 1,545 email addresses. This list was the only source of information that DVS could provide regarding WVN members. We interviewed the WVN

4. Because DVS does not maintain historical versions of WVN's membership list, DVS could not provide a list of WVN members as of the end of our audit period. Instead, DVS provided a then-current list of WVN members.

director, who is responsible for maintaining the list, and tested the list for duplicate records. In addition, we scanned the list for records that did not contain names and did not have information in the email address that allowed us to extract a name. We excluded all records without associated names. Because the list was missing key identifying information, such as members' names, addresses, and telephone numbers, we could not determine whether some of the records were duplicates. Therefore, we could not determine the exact number of WVN members. However, because we only used this list to create the recipient list for our questionnaire, we determined that the data obtained for our audit period were sufficiently reliable.

DETAILED AUDIT FINDINGS WITH AUDITEE'S RESPONSE

1. The Department of Veterans' Services did not ensure that its Women Veterans' Network achieved its intended purpose.

The Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) did not ensure that its Women Veterans' Network (WVN) achieved its intended purpose of identifying women veterans and informing them about their potential eligibility for benefits. We identified 16 tasks that DVS had designated for the WVN director to perform to achieve its objectives. Key tasks included conducting outreach, collecting and maintaining complete and current information on women veterans in Massachusetts, and storing this information in a database. DVS uses the information in the database to communicate information to women veterans about topics like veteran benefits, programs, events, and support services available through other state agencies and/or the federal government. However, during our audit period, DVS could only provide limited documentation—in some cases, no documentation—to substantiate the extent to which the WVN director performed these 16 tasks. As a result, there is a higher-than-acceptable risk that WVN did not complete many of DVS's tasks, including outreach to women veterans.

For example, the WVN director stated that she had met with representatives from several other state agencies, including the Office of the State Treasurer and Receiver General, Department of Transitional Assistance, and Department of Mental Health, to discuss women veterans' issues. However, she could not provide us with any documentation of these meetings. She also stated that during our audit period she had responded to inquiries from women veterans and provided them with general information and referrals to support services. However, there was no documentation to substantiate this assertion. Finally, the director stated that during our audit period she had met with DVS's director of legislative and media relations to assess the effectiveness of DVS's outreach efforts completed via the WVN website. However, we found that DVS did not collect any information that it could use to perform such an assessment.

If WVN does not complete DVS's tasks, including outreach to women veterans, women veterans may not be aware of all of the resources available to them through DVS. For example, during our audit, DVS gave us a list of 1,545 records of women veterans it had identified as the total population of women veterans in WVN's database. However, this number represents only about 6% of the approximately 25,000 women veterans living in Massachusetts as of September 30, 2020 according to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

Authoritative Guidance

The WVN director's job description lists 16 tasks that they should perform to support women veterans in Massachusetts:

Oversee and maintain a database of over 14,500 women veterans in the Commonwealth.

Organize and lead regular meetings of the Women Veterans' Network Steering Committee [a committee of community leaders and women veterans that supports and guides WVN's mission].

Conduct aggressive research via informational fairs and workshops, public events and other mediums to expand membership in the Women Veterans' network.

Collaborate within DVS with other agencies at state, federal and non-profit provider levels that serve women veterans to identify resources, improvements to programs and services to women veterans, particularly in terms of healthcare, counseling, employment, education and housing.

Plan and coordinate the annual Woman Veterans' Appreciation Day at the State House each November.

Coordinate nominations for the Deborah Sampson award (Outstanding Woman Veteran of the Year).

Respond to direct inquiries from women veterans to provide information, referrals and establish linkages with supportive services.

Publish both state wide print and online versions of the woman veterans' newsletter.

Provide informational updates via email, website, and social network sites on services, programs, and events between newsletters. . . .

Prepare reports as required and requested by the Department of Veterans' Services, Executive Office of Health [and] Human Services, and the Legislature.

Maintain speaker's bureau of Massachusetts Women Veterans to enhance awareness of women veterans' contributions to the Commonwealth and to the Nation.

Maintain library of historical resources on women veterans.

Continue education and awareness of current and emerging issues that impact woman veterans. . . .

Meet with woman [veterans] in the community to assist with services and benefits.

Receives and answers questions and inquiries from women veterans currently deployed overseas via social networks requesting benefit information and care packages. . . .

Meets with DVS Director of Legislation and Media Relations to ensure outreach efforts via website are effective and productive.

Reasons for Issue

DVS has not established policies and procedures, including a monitoring component, for WVN's operations to ensure that all required activities are conducted and properly documented.

Recommendation

DVS should establish policies and procedures, including a monitoring component, for WVN's operations to ensure that all required activities are conducted and properly documented.

Auditee's Response

1. *DVS has established policies and procedures for the Women Veterans' Network (WVN) Steering Committee.*
 - a. *The WVN Steering Committee is comprised of women veterans from the [United States Veterans Administration, or VA], the military, the [Vet] Centers, and Veterans Services Organizations from around the Commonwealth.*
 - b. *When joining the Steering Committee, members sign an agreement to complete the volunteer roles they are assuming. This includes: Each member of the steering committee is required to attend monthly meetings, and to participate in the WVN's two signature annual events: the Women Veterans' Conference, and the Deborah Sampson Award recognition.*
 - c. *The WVN Steering Committee meets monthly. During the audit period, most Steering Committee meetings were held virtually due to distance and [2019 coronavirus] precautions. As of the Fall of 2021, the Steering Committee has resumed in person meetings, and meetings have taken place at the following locations: Winthrop Town Hall, VA Bedford, VA Boston, Clear Path for Veterans New England, DVS Offices at 600 Washington Street.*
2. *DVS is in process of establishing standard policies and procedures for the outreach and engagement work done by Women Veterans' Network employees. This includes:*
 - a. *Standard operating procedures regarding planning the Women Veterans' Conference.*
 - b. *Procedures regarding the nominations and awards process for the Deborah Sampson Award.*
 - c. *Procedures regarding providing support to individual women veterans.*
 - d. *Procedures planning outreach activities in the community.*

-
3. *DVS is nearing the final stages of re-platforming all its benefits processing systems and databases to a newer system called OnBase. The Women Veterans' Database is one of these sets of data that is currently in the process of migration with additional functionality built out. This process is aimed for completion Fall 2022.*
 - a. *DVS' [information technology] partners have identified service data for nearly 20,000 women Veterans in the Commonwealth that is being re-verified for currency and validity before being migrated to OnBase.*
 - b. *DVS also periodically receives discharge information for veterans returning to the Commonwealth. This data is reviewed and analyzed for currency and validity through Operations and Data Analysis teams, and Women Veterans receive a direct mailing brochure on DVS programs including the Women Veterans Network. Each individual municipality also receives information on veterans returning to their municipality and reach out to them individually.*
 - c. *DVS has worked with its database administrator to build functionality for the newest iteration of the database structure for the Women Veterans' Network. . . . This additional functionality will include:*
 - i. *Allowing referrals from [veterans' services officers, or VSOs, and the Statewide Advocacy for Veteran Empowerment Program, or SAVE] to the Women Veterans' Network for follow up*
 - ii. *Logging and tracking outreach activities*
 - iii. *Logging and tracking support provided to individual women veterans*
 - iv. *Tracking subject matter interests of individual women veterans for outreach and activities*
 - v. *Integration with e-newsletter distribution*
 4. *During the audit period, DVS participated in outreach and engagement activities to recognize, honor, and outreach to women veterans:*
 - a. *Events:*
 - i. *WVN hosted events:*
 1. *November 8, 2019: WVN hosted 2019 Women Veterans' Appreciation Day and presented the Deborah Sampson Award.*
 2. *October 3, 2020: Virtual Women Veterans' Conference, special topics on employment and mental health, benefits*

3. *2020: Two (2) employment workshops cohosted by WVN and the [Executive Office of Health and Human Services] Diversity Office to raise awareness of hiring Veterans.*
 4. *June 22, 2020: Managing Stress and Trauma During the Pandemic: A Forum for Women Veterans, in partnership with Brookfield Institute*
 5. *March 23, 2021: Virtual Forum: Parenting After Your Service*
 6. *February 24, 2021: Virtual Forum: Heart Health for Women Veterans*
 7. *June 11, 2021: Women [Veterans'] Appreciation Day & Deborah Sampson recognition event in Sharon*
- ii. *Community-hosted outreach events attended*
1. *July 19, 2019: WVN attended Run to Home Base*
 2. *September 21, 2019: WVN Attended Veterans/Military Expo at VA Brockton*
 3. *September 29, 2019: WVN attended Vettes to Vets Day*
 4. *February 16, 2020: Outreach at Massachusetts All Nurses Medical Post 296 to celebrate Black History month.*
 5. *The [WVN] Director participated in the following Stand Downs [annual veteran service events] during the period:*
 - a. *Worcester Stand Down on August 20, 2020*
 - b. *Worcester Stand Down on June 18, 2021*
- b. *The WVN provides informational updates, connections to programs, and updates on events and services through digital communication channels including its website, social media, and via e-newsletter.*
- i. *Sent 14 e-newsletters during the audit period*
 1. *Overall, 20,189 emails were sent to e-newsletter subscribers, resulting in 3,800 email opens and 431 clicks on links and resources for women veterans*
 - ii. *In April, 2021, the WVN went live with its new website, www.womenveteransnetworkmass.org, which has information, connections to the network, and information on events for women veterans. Between April and June 2021, the site received 1250 visits.*

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- iii. Social media metrics*
- 1. Facebook: During the audit period of July 1, 2019–June 30, 2021, the WVN had 3,898 followers and made 62 posts.*
 - 2. Twitter: During the audit period, WVN tweeted 225 times, earning 30,400 impressions, an average of 40 impressions per day, 30 link clicks, 40 retweets, 66 likes, and 6 replies.*
- c. The Network Director has provided direct assistance to women veterans in need. While below are two examples, the re-platformed database will capture units of direct assistance such as this. As an example:*
- i. In November of 2020 the Network Director assisted the mother of a service member who died on active duty. We learned that she was an Air Force Veteran and the Network Director connected her to her VSO and other services.*
 - ii. The Network Director has collaborated with the Women's Lunch Place and New England Center to assist a homeless woman veteran with housing.*
- d. The WVN also collaborates with SAVE (Statewide Advocacy for Veteran Empowerment) Team to crosswalk on issues.*
- i. The SAVE team takes referrals for veterans experiencing difficulties accessing support and services. DVS has added one (1) full time employee who supports SAVE and the WVN (hired in May 2022), which expands the reach of the Network, and the supports DVS can provide for women veterans in the Commonwealth.*
- e. The WVN maintains a compendium of women veteran speakers and resources around the Commonwealth.*
- i. The WVN locates women veteran speakers for engagements across the Commonwealth. While the Speaker's Bureau may not be in the same format, the Network has been able to locate speakers when others request a woman veteran speaker through its wide array of women veterans across the Commonwealth. We can respond based on women's service era, branch, or geographic location. Additionally, with the significant additional female VSOs this provides more capacity and opportunity for women veteran speakers. Going forward, we will expand this bureau through social media recruitment.*
 - ii. For example, the WVN has also begun a listing of Women's Memorials around the Commonwealth. The intent is to provide a historic trail so that women veterans may visit these memorials when they are out in the Commonwealth. Once this is complete, this will be shared online as a resource for Women Veterans to raise the awareness of women veterans' service and sacrifice.*
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Auditor's Reply

Contrary to what DVS asserts in its response, it has not established policies and procedures for WVN's operations and steering committee. DVS may request that steering committee members sign an agreement that outlines the requirements of each volunteer role and that they participate in meetings and attend certain other events. However, these written agreements do not constitute policies and procedures that would establish how each member's compliance with the terms and conditions of their agreement would be evaluated, monitored, and documented. As noted above, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) identified 16 tasks that DVS had designated for the WVN director to perform to achieve WVN's program objectives; none of these were recorded in formal policies and procedures.

In its response, DVS delineates specific activities that WVN may have conducted during our audit period. However, as noted above, when we requested it during the audit, DVS could not provide adequate documentation to support the completion of most of these activities. For example, in its response, DVS indicates that the WVN steering committee met monthly and that these meetings were virtual during the audit period because of 2019 coronavirus pandemic precautions. However, when we requested supporting documentation for these meetings during the audit, the WVN director told us that she did not maintain agendas or meeting minutes and that there was no formal structure to these meetings.

We acknowledge that WVN uses its website, social media, and its newsletter to provide information on benefits, programs, resources, and events to women veterans. However, as noted above, as of the time of our fieldwork, there were only 1,545 records of women veterans in WVN's database. This number represented only about 6% of the approximately 25,000 women veterans living in Massachusetts as of September 30, 2020. In OSA's opinion, DVS needs to improve its outreach efforts to women veterans. We believe that developing written policies and procedures that establish how WVN outreach activities should be conducted, monitored, documented, and evaluated should improve the effectiveness of these efforts.

According to its response, DVS will establish policies and procedures for WVN's outreach and engagement activities. In addition, DVS will implement improvements to WVN's database, which will allow DVS to document and track WVN outreach activities and support provided to women veterans. We believe that these measures are prudent, but we again urge DVS to establish policies and procedures, including a monitoring component, for all WVN operations to ensure that all required activities are conducted and properly documented.

2. DVS did not have enough members appointed to its advisory committee on women veterans.

DVS did not have an 11-member advisory committee on women veterans during the audit period. DVS gave us a list of active advisory committee members as of June 30, 2021; there were only five commissioners on the list, and one of them had not been a member of the committee since 2010.

As a result of this issue, DVS does not benefit from the unique knowledge, skills, and expertise of a full committee. Moreover, because the composition and structure of the committee are intended to enhance the effectiveness of DVS's work with women veterans, that effectiveness may be at risk without a full committee.

Authoritative Guidance

Section 2 of Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires DVS to "appoint an advisory committee on women veterans to investigate, foster and promote the interests of women veterans."

The committee is required to have at least 11 members:

- the Secretary of DVS or their designee
- an advisor on women's issues, appointed by the Governor
- the chair of the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination or their designee
- three members of veterans' organizations, appointed by the Governor
- a VSO, appointed by the Governor
- four women veterans (at least two of whom participate in the VA Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program), appointed by the commissioner of DVS.

Reasons for Issue

DVS officials did not explain why the committee did not have the required 11 members.

Recommendation

DVS should work with the Governor's Office to ensure that the advisory committee has the required 11 members.

Auditee's Response

DVS has continued to work on identifying and appointing members to the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans through the audit period. DVS has worked with the Governor's Office and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to identify appropriate candidates for these important positions. As of June 4, 2022, the following appointments to the Committee have been made:

1	Secretary of DVS or Designee	Secretary of DVS	Susan McDonough
2	Appointed by the Governor	Governor (has been appointed)	Stephanie Landry
3	Chairman of the [Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination, or MCAD] or Designee	Commissioner of MCAD (has been appointed)	Deirdre Ann Hosler, Esq.
4	Member of Veteran Organization	Governor (has been appointed)	Deb Freed
5	Member of Veteran Organization	Governor (awaiting appointment letter)	Caitlynn Almy
6	Member of Veteran Organization	Governor (awaiting appointment letter)	Catherine Corkery
7	Veterans Agent	Governor (has been appointed)	Karen Tyler
8	Women veteran (Participant in Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program of the [United States Department of Veterans Affairs, or VA])	Secretary of DVS (awaiting being sworn in)	Tiffany Lever
9	Women veteran (Participant in Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program of the [VA])	Secretary of DVS (awaiting being sworn in)	Paula Smith
10	Women veterans	Secretary of DVS (has been appointed)	Dr. Shakti Sabharwal
11	Women Veterans	Secretary of DVS (awaiting being sworn in)	June Newman
Non-statutory members		Secretary of DVS (awaiting being sworn in)	Carolyn Mason Wholley
		Secretary of DVS (awaiting being sworn in)	Liseth Velez

Auditor's Reply

Based on its response, DVS is taking measures to address our concerns in this area.