

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

**Membership Meeting Minutes
17 December 2024 -1900hr
Lyons Township
6404 Joliet Road Countryside, IL 60525**

(Executive Board Members): Frank Gutierrez (*President*), William Browne (*1st Vice President*), Dutch DeGroot (*2nd Vice President*), Robert Arciola (*Treasurer*).

At Large Board Members: Greg Jacobs, Wayne Kern, John Steciw. Non voting **Appointees** Jim Parker (*Secretary*), Kevin Ake (*Chaplain*), Gina A. LoGalbo (*Judge Advocate*), Lorenzo Fiorentino (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

I. Welcome – President Gutierrez.

- a. Call to order at 1901hrs.
- b. Roll Call/Quorum – 2nd VP DeGroot announced a quorum is attending per the sign in sheet. A copy of the Sign In Sheet is attached to and a part of these Minutes.
- c. President Gutierrez introduced the following guests: Department of Illinois Jewish Wars Veterans Commander & VAC DuPage County President Bruce Mayor, VAC DuPage County Office Manager Brittany Michor and later IDVA Director Terry Prince.

I. Opening Reflection – Chaplain Kevin Ale

- a. Prayer/Reflection.
- b. Posting of the Colors/Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Consent Agenda – President Gutierrez.

- a. Approval of Minutes of September 24, 2024 Membership Meeting. The Minutes were not read but were distributed to all members in advance of this meeting. Corrections in two spelling of name errors was mentioned by VFW Post 9284 delegate Art Ellingsen the error was recognized and corrected. The motion to Approve the Minutes was made by Art Ellingsen and seconded by Greg Jacobs. Then was passed by unanimous voice vote.

IV. Public Comment.

- a. AMVETS Post 66 delegate Jim Schultz commented on how the Lake County VAC handles their escrow account.

V. VACCC Office Reports – Superintendent Soto read the Mission Statement of the VACCC reported the following for the fourth quarter:

- a-e. Superintendent Soto gave a very detailed report on the VACCC The entire report is posted on our web site as well as attached here.

A motion to approve the Office Report was made by Mark Kwiatkowski and seconded by VP Bill Browne. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

VI. Governance Report – Treasurer Aricola

- a. He reported that the Membership Corp. Treasurer Arciola stated NFP report has been filed. The motion to Accept the report was made by Pete Hirt and seconded by Greg Jacobs. Then was passed by unanimous voice vote.
- b. Ratification of Certain Executive Board Actions. Tabled to next meeting.

VII. Bylaws – John Steciw

- a. No report John Steciw asked if any suggestions for bylaws changes to contact him. A question about how often bylaws are changed was brought up by Jesus Segura, 2nd VP DeGroot responded that he believes they are reviewed annually.

VIII. Budget – 1st VP Browne

- a.** No report at this time.

IX. Services Provided Board Member Kern

- a.** No report at this time.

X. Unfinished Business -- President Gutierrez

- a.** State Charter last meeting Larry Nazimek brought up that he was doing a FOIA to the Illinois IG on how many organizations have applied for a state charter. This meeting Mr. Nazimek came back with a reply. A total of two organizations had applied state wide for a charter. Neither were approved.

XI. New Business .– President Gutierrez.

- a.** Increase monetary amount distributed to veterans seeking benefits and increase income threshold to qualify. President Gutierrez began with the new year coming that a veteran having a 100% VA disability rating would no longer qualify for VACCC assistance. Original motion made by 2nd VP DeGroot and seconded by Greg Jacobs. Afterwards a protracted discussion was initiated. One of the items was that the increase in assistance and the financial threshold needed to be two different motions. The original motion was amended to be for the threshold issue Motion made by President Gutierrez and seconded by Pete Hirt. After much discussion it was decided to make the threshold for now to be 1% more than the monetary value of 100% disability award adjusted for dependents. This to insure that with the coming COLA adjustment for 2025 that veterans whose total earnings less then 1% of the 100% SC amount would be denied, this includes the amount. That the board would explore changing this at the next meeting. Amended motion was made that the Superintendent will annually adjust the income threshold to reflect 101% service-connected disability, ensuring they and their families continue to have access to services. This motion was passed by unanimous voice vote
- b.** Pursue the acquisition of certain assets of the Cook County Department of Veterans Affairs by the VACCC. VP Browne gave a description of how we the VACCC were doing the task presently of the CCVA. Motion made by Jim Schultz and seconded by Pat Flannigan. Discussion followed and it was decided that we would propose to the county taking over the responsibilities of the CCVA if the county would give us the positions and funds to do so and that we would continue after discussing with our counsel. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote..
- c.** Relocate from the current office of the VACCC to a new Cook County locate more suitable to its needs. Motion made by 2nd VP DeGroot seconded by Tony Thomas discussion continued and it was decided to form a committee to explore all possibilities those volunteering for the committee DeGroot, Tyner, Gutierrez, Browne, & Ellingsen. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote. Amended motion was made to create a committee to explore moving to a location that better facilitates access VACCC services. This motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.
- d.** Retain third party consultant to digitize the records of the VACCC. Motion made by 2nd VP DeGroot, seconded by Keith Renner. During the VACCC report it was stressed by Superintendent Soto the urgent need for digitizing all our records either by the county itself or to outsource the task. It was decided that the Superintendent could use her judgment on his decision but it seemed a consciences was to outsource. Amended motion was made to allow the superintendent to proceed as she sees fit with the digitization of VACCC records and to report on progress at future quarterly meetings. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.
- e.** Discussion on liability protections for potential errors made by VACCC employees. Motion made by Pat Flannigan seconded by Keith Renner. After discussion it was decided that Superintendent Soto would explore options the county had for errors and admissions and also other VAC's so we can insure that we have coverage. Elizabeth Soto will report training matrix of VACCC staff to membership during Superintendent reports at future meetings. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

f. Revisit increase monetary amount distributed to veterans seeking benefits. Motion made by 2nd VP DeGroot seconded by Bill Starr. Discussion followed and an amended motion was made that we look at other VAC's and make our benefits nothing less and giving Superintendent Soto the permission to do so and adjust benefits to account for not changing the amounts in years. The amended motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

XII. Comments from Special Distinguished Guests:

- a.** Illinois Jewish Wars Veterans Commander & VAC DuPage County President Bruce Mayor said he was coming to show the support from DuPage county and was warmly received.
- b.** Director Prince next spoke and reiterated the support the IDVA had for the VACCC and gave us updates of what the IDVA was accomplishing in Illinois.

XIII. Good of the order.

- a.** Treasurer Arciola ave a detailed update on the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 2023.
- b.** Art Ellingsen talked about the benefits of a veterans organization that owned a building to make sure they filled out a PTAX-763 that would help to reduce their taxes.

XIV. Membership

- a.** 2nd VP DeGroot talked about membership enrollment 1 January and urged organizations to urge others not currently members to do so especially in undeserved areas. He also reminded them that we must have active members to always ensure quorum.
- b.** Future Meeting Sites Update - 2nd VP DeGroot 25 March Hines VA Building 9 5000 5th Ave, Hines, IL 60141 A resource fair shall proceed the March meeting

XV. Adjournment.

President Gutierrez closed with a thank you to the Board , Members and guests for their contributions to a very productive meeting. Motion made by Mark Kwiatkowski seconded by Greg Jacobs, The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 2053 hrs.

Submitted by Dutch DeGroot for Jim Parker, Secretary



VACCC MEMBERSHIP SIGN IN SHEET

17 DECEMBER 2024 MEETING

Organization	X	Delegate	X	Alternate Delegate
American Legion 36	X	Patrick Flannigan	X	Gregory Jacobs
American Legion 104	X	Michael F Tuman	X	Dennis Chavez
American Legion 183		Peter Papuc		Timothy Bodkin
American Legion 208	X	Greg Padovani	X	Walter Parus
American Legion 216	X	Kevin Ake		
American Legion 335		Lorenzo Fiorentino	X	Jesus Chuy Segura
American Legion 525	X	William "Bill" Starr	X	Laura Matuszak
American Legion 615		Ken McClory		John Kaminecki
American Legion 758	X	Beau D. Butts		William M. Szura
American Legion 806		Dale Tippet	X	Pete Hirt
American Legion 943	X	John Steciw		Adam Bihun
American Legion 973		Eden Puente		
American Legion 974	X	Anthony Siciliano	X	Thomas Zito
American Legion 1941		Mike Maher		Carlos Medina
American Legion 1983	X	Mark Kwiatkowski	X	Antony (Tony) Thomas
AMVETS 66	X	James Schultz		James (Jim) Parker
AMVETS 268	X	Eddie Brown Jr.	X	Richard Nielson
JWV 710	R	Dr. Jerry Field		Howard Goldstein
MCL 553	X	Randall L. Tyner	X	Gina Ann LoGalbo
MOAA Chicago	R	Roman Golash		Warren D. Cuplin
Navy League Chicago 69		Leslie Rodriguez	X	Paul J. Bezazian
PVA Vaughan Chapter	X	Robert Arciola		Robert Statam
VFW 311	X	Bill Browne		Aretha Spurlock
VFW 981	X	Stewart Abblink		Timothy Delaney
VFW 1337	X	Wayne K. Kern	X	John "Dutch" DeGroot
VFW 2202	X	John Healy	X	Joe Wien
VFW 2868		EvaMarie Duff		Eric Moralas
VFW 3579		Ramon Prieto	X	Keith Renner
VFW 5979	X	Richard Wojewnik		David Ruiz
VFW 7186	X	Thomas J. "Jim" Hughes		Jason Kruger
VFW 8322	X	Frank Gutierrez		
VFW 9284	X	Arthur J. Ellingsen		Wallace Campbell
VFW 10778		Chuck Bosko		
VVA 242	X	Kevin Calkins		John B. Andres Jr.
28 of 34 Organizations		24 Delegates		14 Alternate Delegates



MISSION

FINANCIAL
REPORTS

FY25 BUDGET

OFFICE

BENEFITS
INCREASE

NEW LOCATIONS

DIGITIZATION
INITIATIVE

NEW SERVICES

*"...for the just, necessary, and needed
assistance and services of military
Veterans, who served in the Armed Forces
of the United States..."*

Veterans and Service Members (330 ILCS 45/) Military Veterans Assistance Act





PUBLIC DEFENDER
MULTIPLE DEFENDANT DIV.
VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION

VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION OF
COOK COUNTY

OPEN

SOCIAL DISTANCING
DO YOUR BIT AND HELP US ALL
STAY HEALTHY

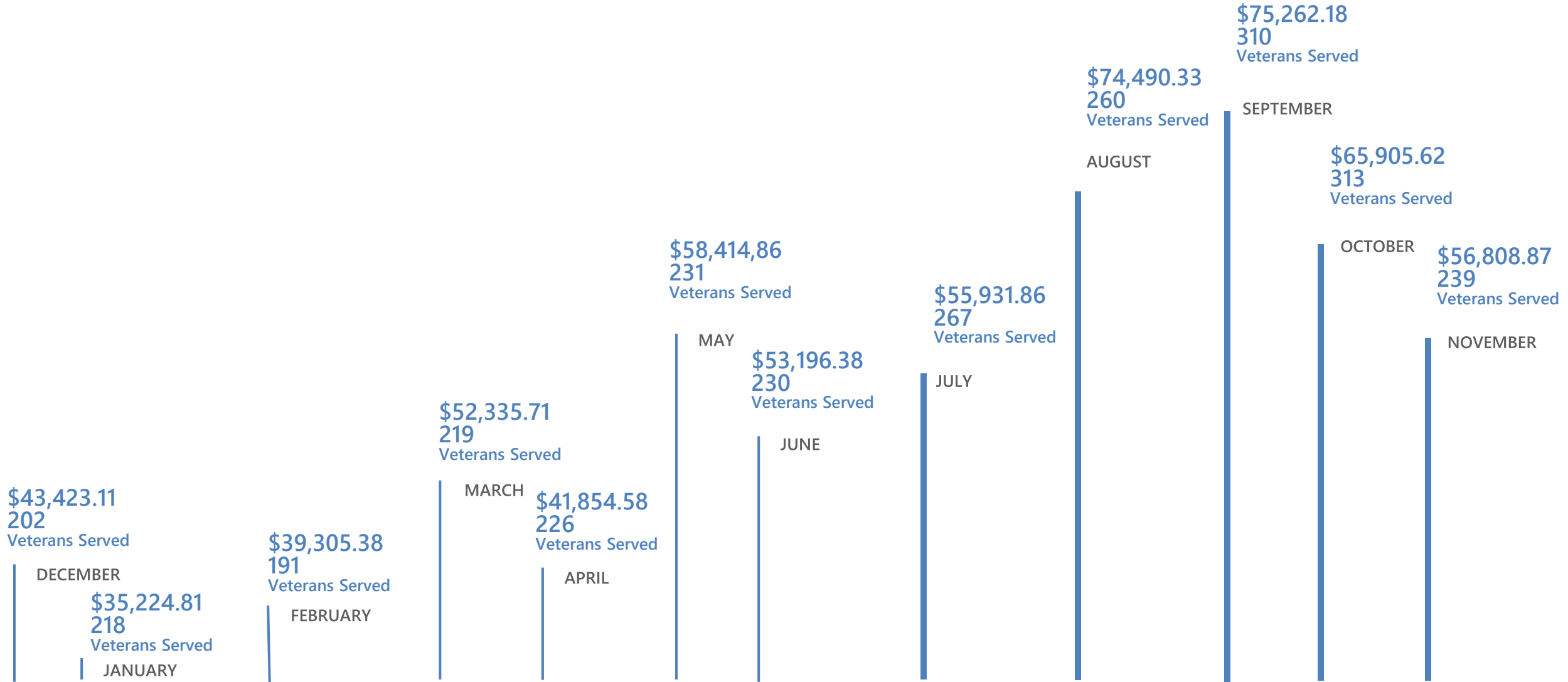


FY24 Financials

FY24 4th Quarter Report

CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	SEPTEMBER 2024	OCTOBER 2024	NOVEMBER 2024	4th QTR FY 2024 ACTUAL	VS	4th QTR FY 2024 BUDGET
520260 - Postage	\$ 340.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 340.00		\$ 181.89
520490 - External Graphics and Reproduction Services	\$ -	\$ 552.95	\$ -	\$ 552.95		\$ 485.01
521313 - Special or Coop Programs (Veteran Disbursements - Corp.)	\$ 75,262.18	\$ 65,905.62	\$ 56,808.87	\$ 197,976.67		\$ 232,534.03
521313 - Special or Coop Programs (11286 - American Rescue Plan Act)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 99,671.01
521313 - MANDATORY BANK FEES - AMALGAMATED BANK	\$ 50.73	\$ 45.57	\$ 43.01	\$ 139.31		\$ 200.00
SUBTOTAL: CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 75,652.91	\$ 66,504.14	\$ 56,851.88	\$ 199,008.93		\$ 333,071.94

FY24 SNAPSHOT



FY24

\$253,469.69: SPECIAL or CO-OP PROGRAMS

\$398,684.00: ARPA

\$652,153.69: TOTAL DIRECT DISBURSEMENTS

2,886 :TOTAL VETERANS SERVED



FY 25 FINAL BUDGET

FY25 Budget Snapshot

LINE ITEM	VACCC REQUESTED BUDGET	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE/DECREASE	COOK COUNTY APPROVED BUDGET
Employee Wages	\$ 1,200,030.00	Total 14 Staff Members	↓	\$ 1,089,051.63
Employee Benefits	\$ 24,711.00	Staff Fringe Benefits	↑	\$ 41,683.62
Personnel Serviceses/ Professional Tech Membership Fees	\$ 13,500.00	Employee Training/ IACVAC & NACVSO Fees	↑	\$ 14,500.00
Employee Travel & Transportation Expenses	\$ 20,000.00	Employee Travel & Transportation Expenses	↓	\$ 19,400.00
Communications Services	\$ 4,063.00	Communications Services	↓	\$ 4,062.82
Postage	\$ 2,000.00	USPS Postage (Stamps)	↓	\$ 1,940.00
External Graphics and Reproduction Services	\$ 12,600.00	Marketing Materials	↓	\$ 12,222.00
Professional Services	\$ 560,400.00	Shuttle/Transportation Service	=	\$ 560,400.00
Legal Services	\$ 25,000.00	Legal Counsel	=	\$ 25,000.00
Special or Co-op Programs	\$ 959,728.00	Direct Disbursements to Veterans	↓	\$ 930,936.16
Office Supplies	\$ 19,320.00	Office Supplies	=	\$ 19,320.00
Maintenance and Subscription Services	\$ 1,500.00	Office Subscription Services	↓	\$ 674.01
	<u>\$ 2,842,852.00</u>			<u>\$ 2,719,190.24</u>

C011



VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION OF
COOK COUNTY

OPEN

SOCIAL DISTANCING



ATTENTION!!

WALL OFFICE WINDOW
CLOSED AT 2:30 PM DAILY

Please Plan Accordingly
And Arrive Earlier Than
Usual For This Day
Thank You!!



FY24-25 OFFICE



FY24 The Office



EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Vanessa Meadows

Spouse of an Army Veteran



DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Peter Bencak

Army National Guard Veteran

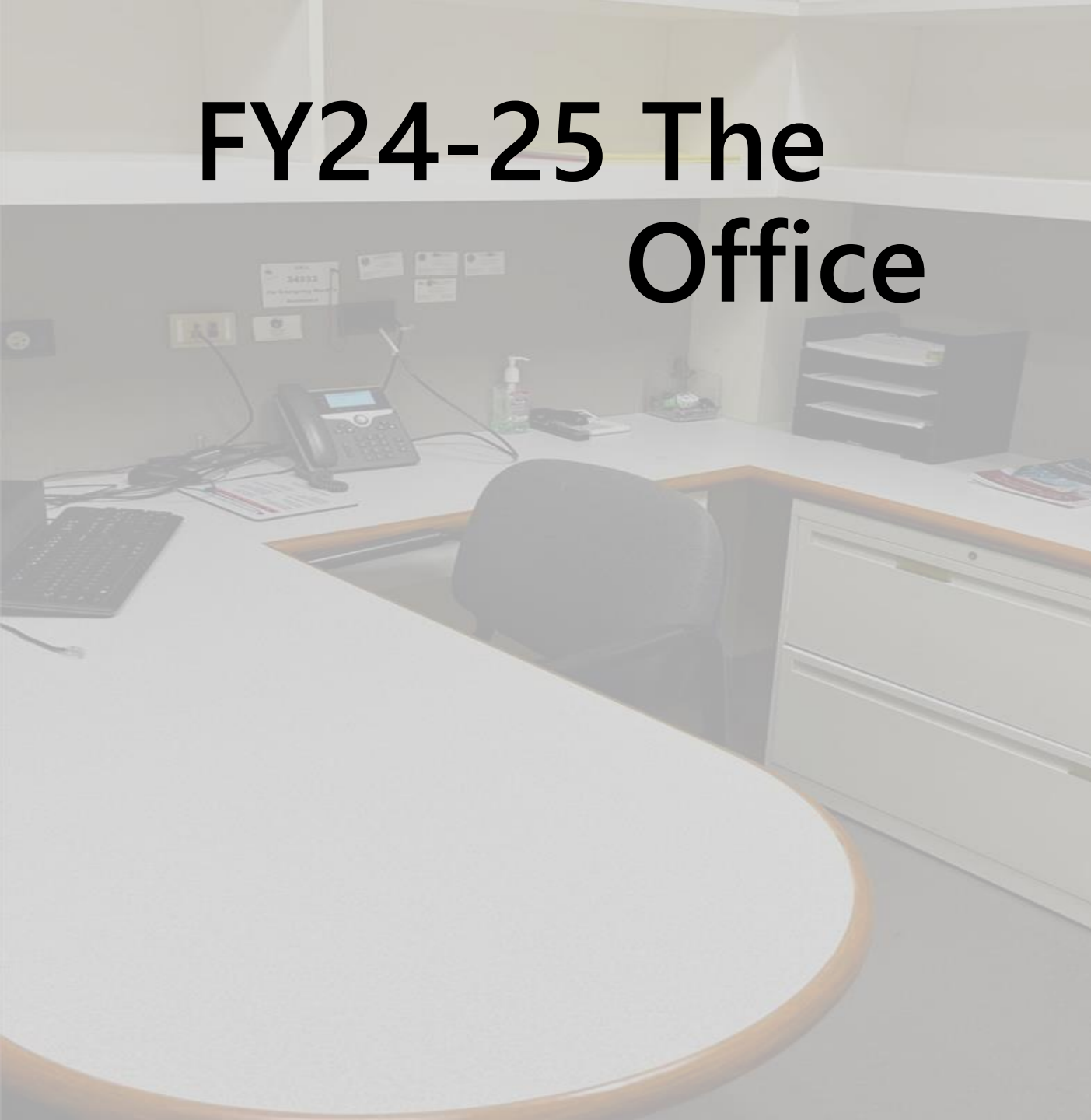


SUPERINTENDENT

Elizabeth D. Soto

Army National Guard Veteran

FY24-25 The Office



Administrative Assistant IV

Vanessa Meadows

Spouse of an Army Veteran

Veterans Service Caseworker

Peter Bencak

Army National Guard Veteran

Superintendent

Elizabeth D. Soto

Army National Guard Veteran



Veteran Service Officer

Victor Somoza

Army Veteran



Manager, Finance and Business Operations

Rajeev Samuel

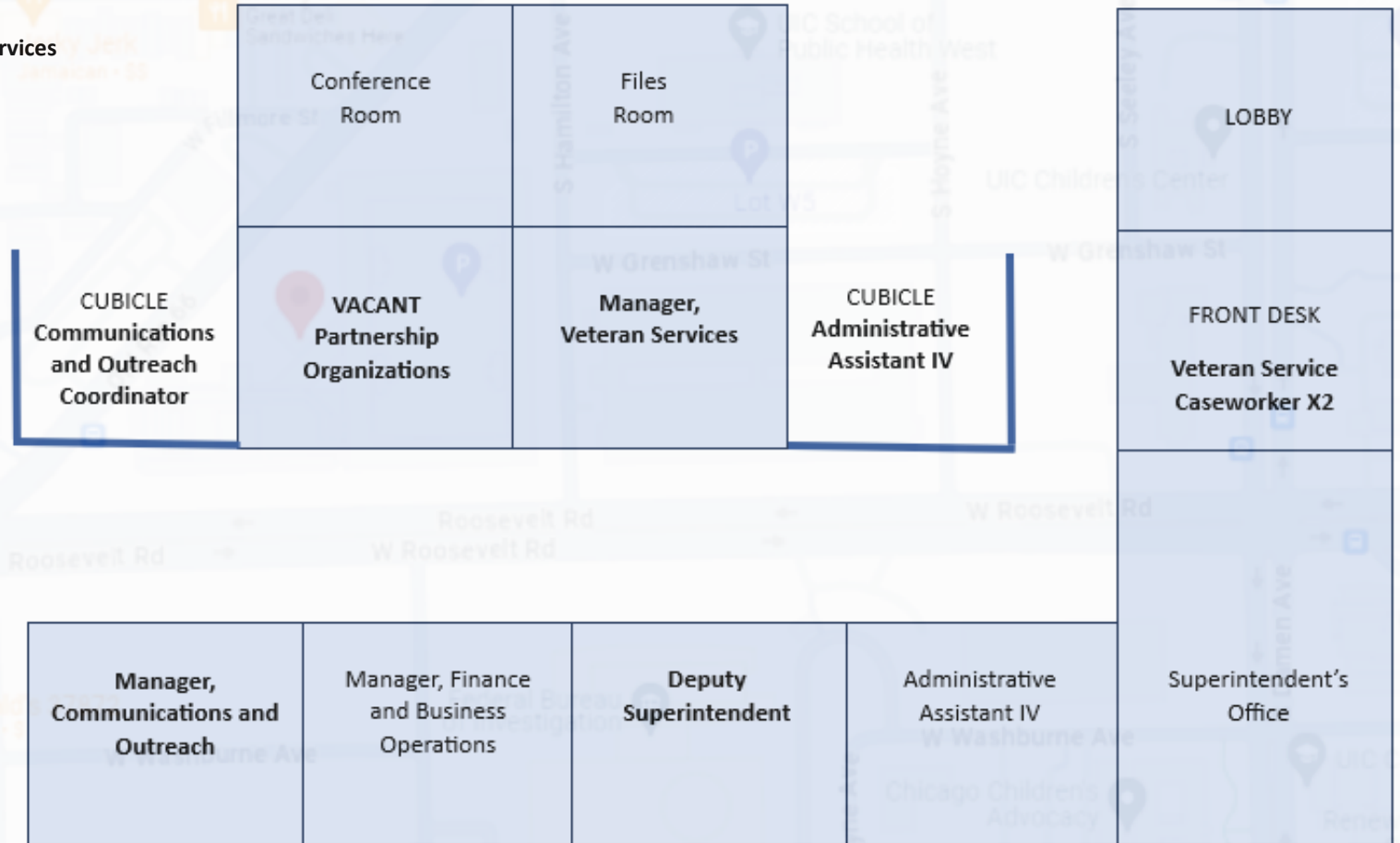
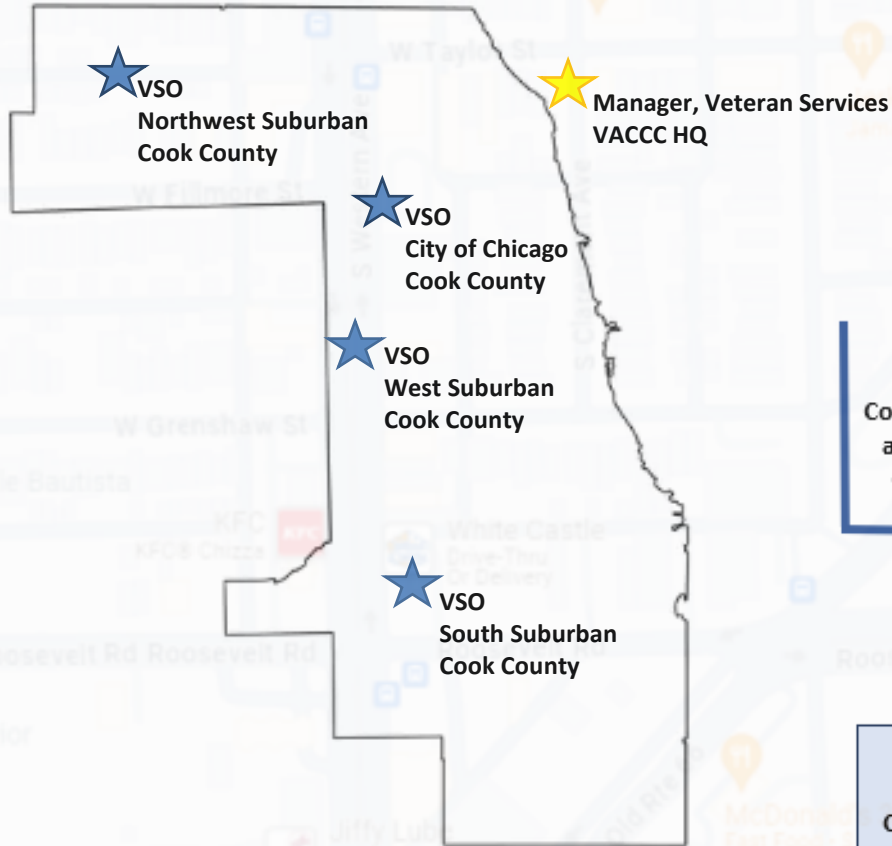


Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Conner Intress

Army National Guard Veteran

FY24 PROJECTED OFFICE SPACE LAYOUT










LEGEND

- ★ Represents Dedicated VSO
- ★ Manager, Veteran Services



FY25 BENEFITS INCREASE

FY25 Financial Assistance

	FY24		FY25
 RENTAL / MORTGAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,400.00 (Every 12 Months) 	Increase:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2,000.00 (Every 12 Months)
 UTILITY BILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$550.00 (Every 12 Months) 	-----	-----
 WORK ATTIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100.00 (Every 24 Months) 	-----	-----
 FOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100.00 (Every 6 Months) 	Increase:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$200.00 (Every 6 Months)
 HYGIENE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100.00 (Every 12 Months) 	Increase:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$100.00 (Every 6 Months)
 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTA/PACE Single Day & &-Day Passes (Once weekly) 		
 FUNERAL / BURIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,500.00 	Increase:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2,000.00

FY25 Benefits

1

Phone Bill Assistance



2

Internet Bill Assistance



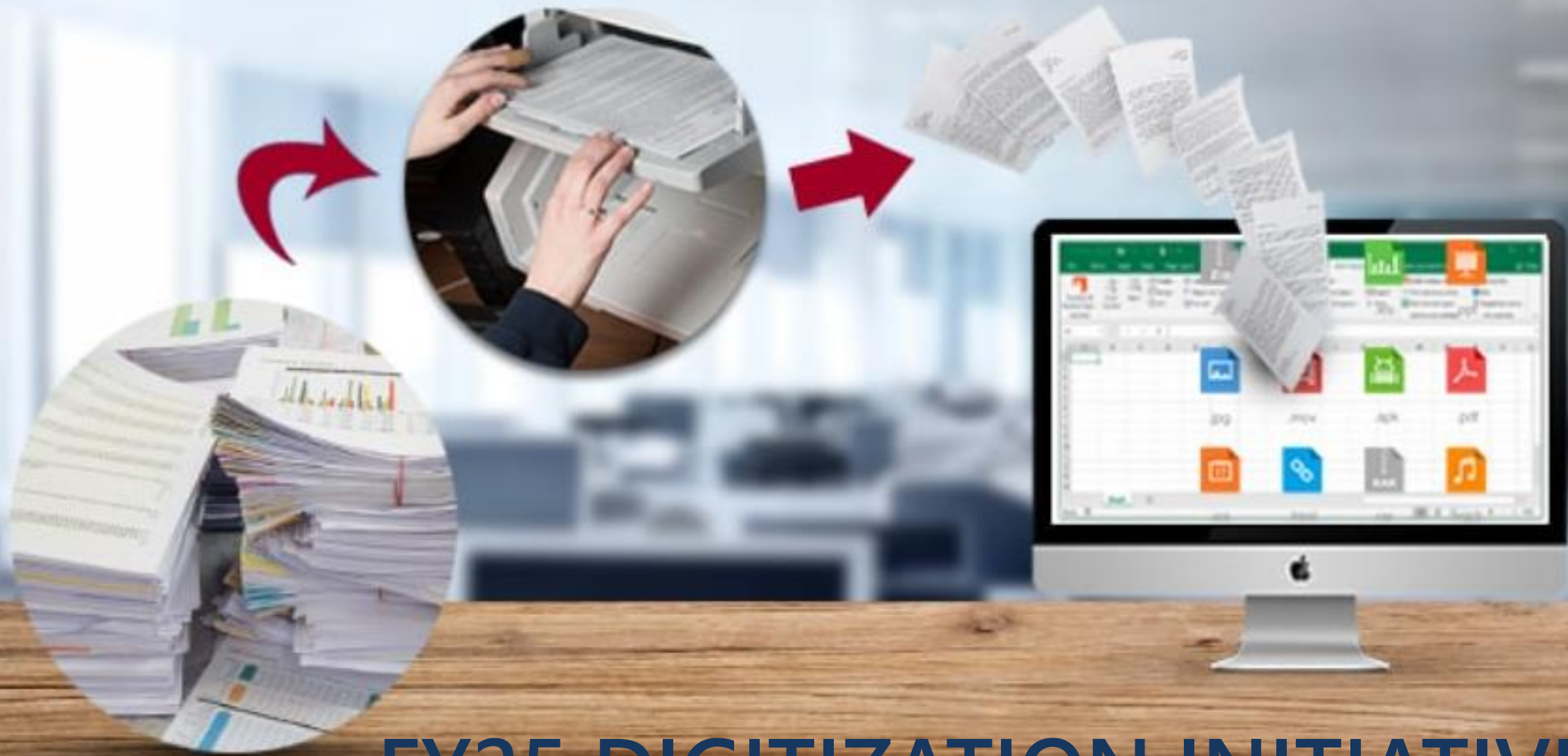
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Gas Card Assistance





FY25 NEW LOCATIONS



FY25 DIGITIZATION INITIATIVE



PUBLIC DEFENDER
MULTIPLE DEFENDANT DIV.
VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION

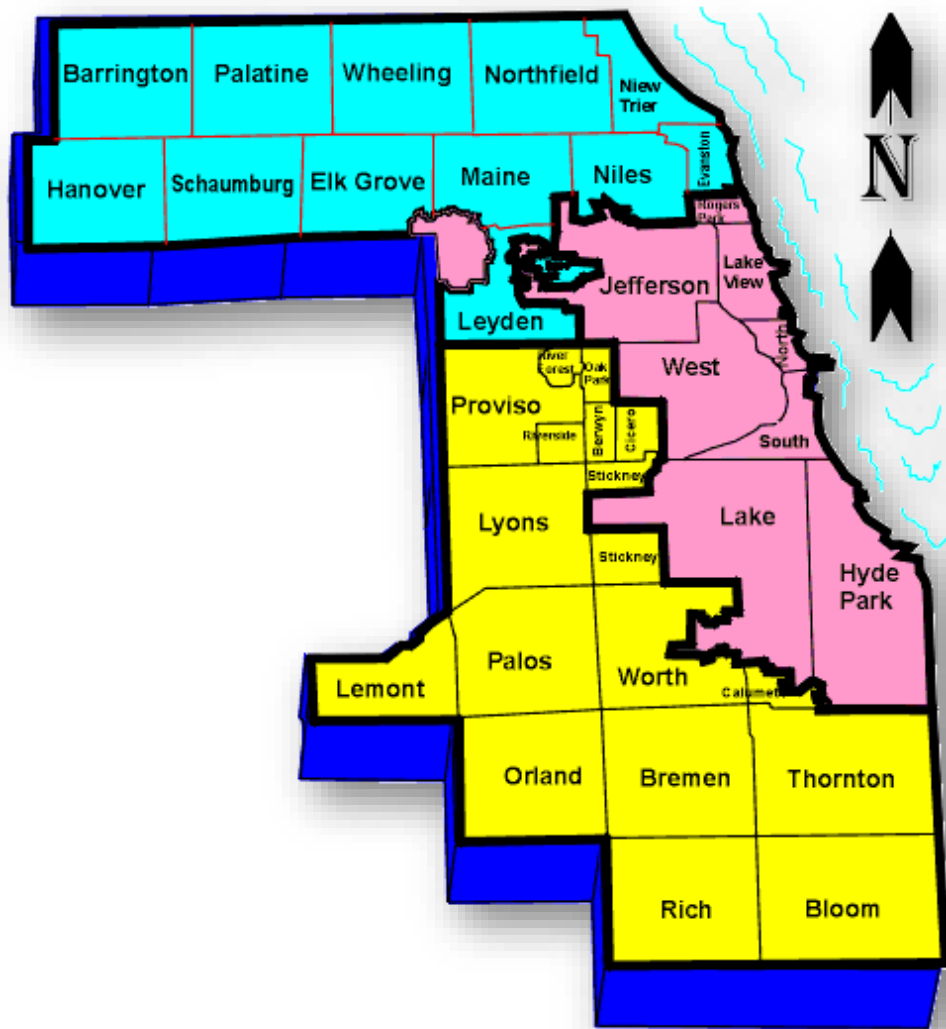
VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION OF
COOK COUNTY

OPEN

SOCIAL DISTANCING
DO YOUR BIT AND HELP US ALL
STAY HEALTHY



FY25 NEW SERVICES



Veteran Service Officer Program

FY25 Veteran Service Officer Program



Division 1 - North/Northwest Suburbs



Division 2 - City of Chicago



Division 3 - South/Southwest Suburbs

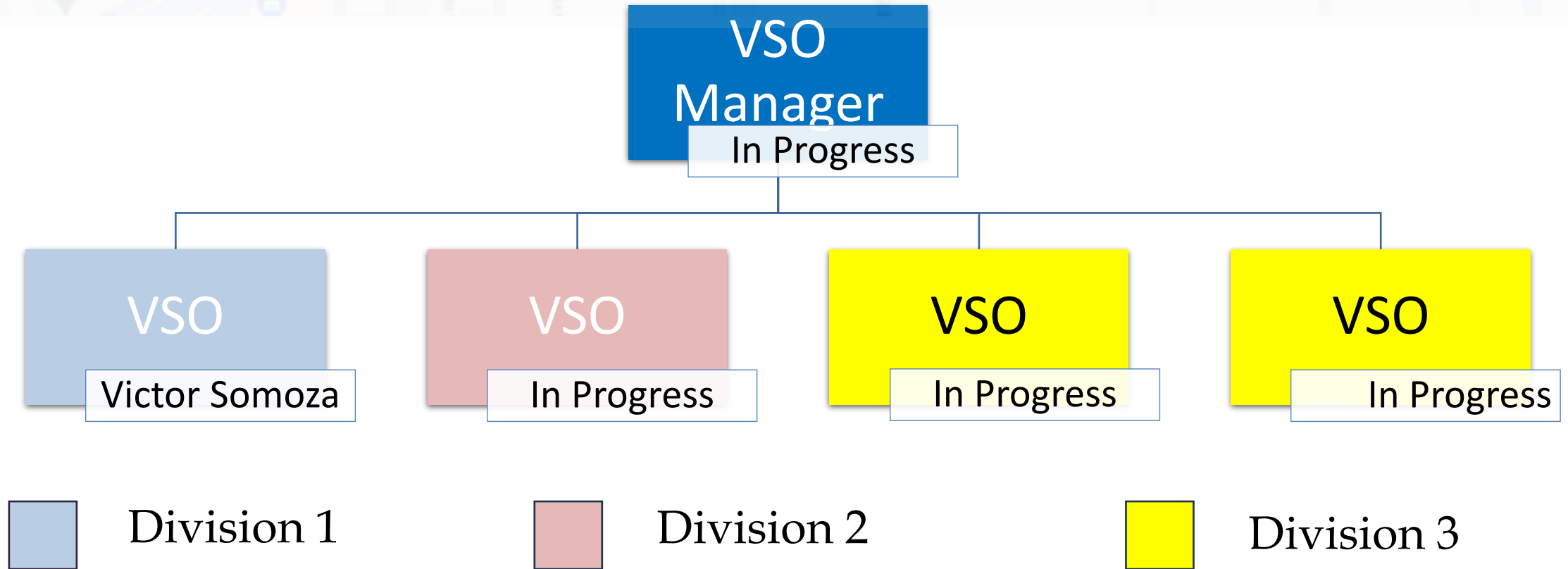
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2

3

FY25 Projected Veteran Service Officer Program





A-List
Transportation
Assistance
Program

COOK
VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

SHUTTLE SERVICES

VACCC ASSISTANCE

- Rental and Mortgage Assistance ✓
- Transportation Services ✓
- Hygiene Assistance ✓
- Records Request ✓
- Food Assistance ✓
- Burial Costs ✓
- Utilities ✓

SHUTTLE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

Contact Us

Phone Number
312.433.6010

Website
<https://vaccookcounty.org>

Transportation Schedule

- **9:00 a.m.:** Initial pick-up at the HINES VA, transporting Veterans directly to the VACCC office.
- **10:00 a.m.:** Return trip from the VACCC office to the HINES VA.
- **11:00 a.m.:** Second pick-up at the HINES VA, ensuring continued access for Veterans throughout the morning.
- **12:00 p.m.:** Midday return trip from the VACCC office to the HINES VA.
- **1:00 p.m.:** Final pick-up at HINES VA, providing one last opportunity for Veterans to reach the VACCC office.
- **2:00 p.m.:** Final return trip of the day from the VACCC office to HINES VA.

2nd Quarter New Routes:

- **Route 2: Orland Park Vet Center**
- **Route 3: Evanston Vet Center**
- **Route 4: Chicago Heights Vet Center**

Local community

Local government

Local Veterans

Working together to serve
those who served us



ADDRESS

1100 S. Hamilton Ave.
Suite, C-O11
(Lower Level of the JTDC Building)
Chicago, IL. 60612

CONTACT

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Website: vaccookcounty.org

