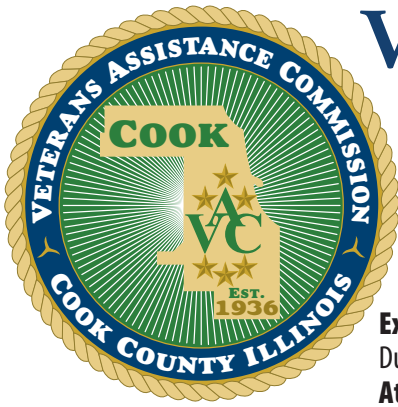




VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

Meeting Minutes

23 June 2026 @ 1900 hrs

Robert E. Coulter Jr. American Legion Post 1941
900 South La Grange Road, La Grange, IL 60525

Executive Board Members: Frank Gutierrez (*President*), Jesus "Chuy" Segura (*1st Vice President*), Dutch DeGroot (*2nd Vice President*), Robert Arciola (*Treasurer*),
At Large Board Members: Greg Jacobs, Randall Tyner, Evamarie Duff.
Non voting Appointees: John Kerrigan (*Secretary*), George Gandara (*Chaplain*), Pete Hirt (*Judge Advocate*), Eric "Kermit" Morales (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

I. Call to Order — President Gutierrez

- a. Call to order at 1905hrs. and thanked Robert E. Coulter Jr. American Legion Post 1941 for hosting the meeting.
- b. Quorum was established by 2nd Vice President Dutch DeGroot.
- c. Recognition of Guests - President Gutierrez
President Gutierrez recognized several special guests in attendance, including Cook County Commissioner Maggie Trevor, 9th District; Vanessa Walters, Interim Director of the Cook County Department of Veterans Affairs; and Nathan Hall, a Veteran and University of Chicago graduate student participating in the Projects for Peace program.

II. Opening Reflection — Chaplain George Gandara

- a. With Chaplain George Gandara arriving later, 1st Vice President Jesus "Chuy" Segura filled in for the Chaplain and delivered the opening prayer on behalf of the Commission and the Veterans it serves.
- b. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. No separate posting of colors was reflected

III. Consent Agenda — President Gutierrez.

- a. The minutes of the 24 March 2026 Membership Meeting The minutes had been distributed in advance. No corrections, additions, or changes were offered. The minutes stood approved as presented.

IV. Public Comment.

- a. President Gutierrez opened public comment for items not on the agenda and reminded speakers to summarize their remarks and limit comments to three minutes to allow sufficient time for Commission business. No public comment was offered at that time.

V. Governance Report — Treasurer Robert Arciola

a. Financial Report

Treasurer Robert Arciola reported financial activity since the March meeting:

- Beginning balance: \$5,118.07
- Deposits received: \$112.00
- Current balance: \$5,230.70

VI. VACCC Office Reports — Superintendent Elizabeth Soto

a. Service Officer Report

The Veteran Service Officer team presented preliminary second-quarter activity covering March through May 2026.

The VSO report included:

- 390 powers of attorney submitted.
- 288 new disability claims filed.
- 410 intents to file submitted.
- 234 appeals filed.
- 7 appeals filed with the Board of Veterans' Appeals.
- 1,329 total claim actions.

Preliminary retroactive recoveries were reported as:

- March: \$179,256.60
- April: \$194,367.60
- May: \$262,444.08

Q2 subtotal: \$636,068.28

-The VSO team reported that approximately \$3.05 million in benefits had been brought into Cook County for Veterans and beneficiaries during the quarter, with additional decisions continuing to arrive.

-The report also noted the resignation of VSO Manager Justina Berry on 13 May and expressed appreciation for her service to Cook County Veterans and their beneficiaries.

-VSO Manager Derek reported attending the NACVSO convention in Reno and discussed the value of hearing directly from VA leadership regarding national goals and progress in serving Veterans.

-The second VSO was reported to have submitted a PIV package to the Veterans Benefits Administration, obtained Office of General Counsel accreditation No. 61243, completed VSO basic benefits training, and attended the NACVSO convention.

-The office remained limited to one active VBA system access point pending completion of the additional PIV access process.

b. Office Update / Monthly Outreach Report

Superintendent Elizabeth Soto presented the FY2026 second-quarter office report covering March through May 2026.

She reported that VACCC provided \$360,760.41 in direct financial assistance to 995 Veterans, including 198 adults who were new to the program during the quarter.

Assistance included:

- More than \$66,000 in rent assistance.
- More than \$22,000 in mortgage assistance.
- More than \$75,000 in burial assistance.
- More than \$41,000 in hygiene assistance.
- More than \$70,000 in food assistance.
- More than \$77,000 in utility assistance, including electricity, gas, water, telephone, and internet services.

The office also reported approximately 1,800 phone calls and 115 outreach events during the quarter.

Superintendent Soto clarified the difference between financial reporting categories. The line identified as Special/Co-op Veteran Disbursements represents funds delivered directly to Veterans for housing, utilities, food, and other immediate needs. A separate accounting adjustment line reflects vendor discounts received on items such as Shell gas cards and Walmart gift cards, which may fluctuate based on order size and timing.

Independent Third-Party Audit

Superintendent Soto also presented the results of the independent third-party financial audit conducted by RSM at a cost of approximately \$45,000.

The presentation reported that:

- VACCC's financial statements were prepared in accordance with applicable governmental accounting standards.
- VACCC management complied with applicable budgeting laws and regulations.
- No known or suspected fraud involving management, employees with financial responsibilities, or others capable of materially affecting the financial statements was identified.
- No instances of legal or regulatory noncompliance were identified.
- No significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control over financial reporting were identified.

President Gutierrez received the complete audit report on 27 May 2026.

President Gutierrez thanked the office and membership for their work and emphasized that VACCC continued to expand its footprint, increase programming and services, bring millions of dollars in federal benefits into Cook County, operate in compliance, and make its reports and meeting records publicly available through the VACCC website.

-Rolling Meadows Office Expansion

The office announced plans to open a new VACCC location inside the Third Municipal District Courthouse in Rolling Meadows.

The new location is intended to improve access for Veterans throughout the north and northwest portions of Cook County and reduce travel burdens.

Expected service coverage includes:

- Barrington Township
- Elk Grove Township
- Hanover Township
- Palatine Township
- Schaumburg Township
- Portions of Maine Township
- Portions of Northfield Township
- Portions of Leyden Township
- Portions of Wheeling Township
- Additional surrounding areas

Facilities management was preparing the site, and a grand opening announcement would be made once the location was ready.

Vehicle Fleet Expansion

The office reported that VACCC would be adding the following vehicles to its fleet:

- One Ford Bronco Sport.
- Two Ford Maverick hybrids.
- One 15-passenger Ford Transit.

The vehicles will support outreach events, transportation of equipment, Veteran programming, operational efficiency, and reduced mileage reimbursement expenses.

Outreach and Operations

The outreach and operations team reported that the office was averaging approximately 40 events per month and conducted 116 operational events during the quarter.

Nearly 1,500 direct and general Veteran interactions were reported.

Since implementation of the VACCC intake system, 948 unique Veterans had used the QR code and online form process, requesting approximately 3,800 services.

Staff reported continued development of a unified Power App designed to consolidate multiple spreadsheets, forms, scheduling functions, and tracking systems into a single auditable platform.

The Power App will support:

- Centralized data reporting.
- VSO scheduling.
- Emergency financial services scheduling.
- Outreach event tracking.
- Improved operational efficiency and accountability.

A recent software update caused a bug that prevented a planned live demonstration. Staff expected the issue to be resolved shortly, followed by employee training.

Updating the VACCC website and integrating the new intake system were identified as priorities for the following quarter.

Discussion of Presentation Materials

Several delegates requested improved access to the presentation materials used during membership meetings.

Suggestions included:

- Emailing slide decks to delegates in advance of meetings.
- Allowing members to print their own copies.
- Providing a limited number of printed copies at meetings, possibly one per table.
- Improving color contrast and readability for both projected presentations and black-and-white printing.

Other members noted the need to balance accessibility with printing costs.

The office acknowledged the concerns and agreed to consider options for improving access to meeting materials.

Hygiene Assistance Clarification

In response to a delegate's question, Superintendent Soto explained that hygiene assistance is provided through a \$100 Walgreens gift card.

The program allows Veterans to select hygiene products based on their individual needs rather than receiving standardized packages that may not be appropriate for every Veteran.

Eligible Veterans and dependents may receive the benefit once every six months, as needed.

Staffing and Hiring

During discussion of the office reports, 2nd Vice President DeGroot emphasized the urgent need to hire additional VSOs and staff.

He noted that positions had been funded since January but had not yet been filled because of delays in the County hiring process.

Leadership stated that the lack of sufficient VSO staffing could result in millions of dollars in federal benefits being left unclaimed by Cook County Veterans.

President Gutierrez explained that job descriptions and pay scales were also being reviewed to ensure VACCC could remain competitive and offer a living wage to individuals responsible for serving Veterans.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the VACCC office reports.

The motion carried unanimously.

VII. Bylaws — Randall Tyner

No bylaws report was presented.

VIII. Budget — 1st Vice President Jesus “Chuy” Segura

a. 1st Vice President Segura reported that the Superintendent’s office would provide the proposed FY2027 budget to the Executive Board in August.

The Executive Board would review the proposal and provide it to the full membership shortly thereafter so members would have sufficient time to review the budget before voting at the third-quarter membership meeting in September.

IX. Services Provided — George Gandara / Chevonne Woodard

a. Updates Chaplain George Gandara discussed the importance of continuing to support Veterans and their family members, particularly homeless Veterans and Veterans experiencing mental health challenges or other significant difficulties.

He described ongoing efforts to provide clothing, food, and other donated resources and emphasized the importance of connecting Veterans with accredited Veteran Service Officers who can assist them with claims and benefits.

Chaplain Gandara invited members to contact him directly when they encounter a Veteran or family member needing assistance and emphasized his commitment to helping connect individuals with appropriate resources.

Chevonne Woodard reported that several individuals had previously expressed interest in joining the Services Provided Committee.

She stated that the committee needed to convene and formalize its membership to increase opportunities for VACCC benefits, services, and programs.

Interested members were invited to provide their contact information to Woodard or Chaplain Gandara. No formal committee activity had yet occurred.

X. Future Meeting Sites Update — 2nd Vice President Dutch DeGroot

a. 22 September 2026 2nd Vice President DeGroot thanked Commander Schultz and Robert E. Coulter Jr. American Legion Post 1941 for hosting the meeting.

He praised the post as a particularly suitable location because of its central location, parking, accessibility, and accommodations.

DeGroot explained that Cook County’s geographic size makes meeting-site selection difficult. Future meeting locations should be centrally located and ADA compliant to minimize unreasonable travel burdens for delegates from different parts of the county.

Members were invited to suggest suitable locations.

The location of the next meeting would be communicated by email once confirmed.

XI. Old Business — President Gutierrez

a. Report on 501(c)(3) Findings President Gutierrez reported that VACCC should move forward with the existing 501(c)(3). He explained that a separate governing board would need to be established, including a president, treasurer, secretary, and additional volunteers.

The not-for-profit would be separate from the VACCC membership and office and could provide additional services that are not currently provided by VACCC.

The new board would be responsible for developing bylaws and establishing a formal governing structure. Members interested in helping establish or serve the organization were invited to speak with President Gutierrez following the meeting.

XII. New Business — President Gutierrez.

President Gutierrez shared observations from his recent embark aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower. He described seeing young Sailors performing highly complex and dangerous flight-deck operations involving aircraft launches and recoveries while maintaining a strong safety culture.

He emphasized that the work was being conducted safely through disciplined processes, procedures, training, and a culture extending from junior enlisted personnel through the ship's senior leadership.

President Gutierrez connected the experience to a rail and maritime industry summit he attended following the embark, where major industry leaders were discussing ways to strengthen safety culture.

He emphasized that it can be easier to bring an established culture into an organization than to attempt to build one entirely from within and noted the potential value of recruiting Veterans who already possess experience working within strong military safety systems.

He reported that industry representatives expressed interest in visiting military installations and improving efforts to recruit Veterans.

No other new business was offered.

XIII. Good of the Order

Several announcements and updates were provided.

Unity Concert for Veterans A Unity Concert for Veterans was announced for 29 August 2026. The event is intended to bring together multiple Veteran service organizations, encourage cooperation across organizational lines, and include a particular focus on women Veterans.

Additional details and flyers were expected to be distributed when available.

Delegate and Alternate Records The importance of maintaining accurate delegate and alternate sign-in information was discussed. A question concerning representation for one post was addressed, and the appropriate representative was asked to ensure that the organization's records were properly updated.

September Budget Vote Members were reminded that the September quarterly membership meeting would include an important vote on the FY2027 budget.

Post 1941 Recognition 2nd Vice President DeGroot apologized for having previously identified the wrong commander of Post 1941 and corrected the record.

Recognition of Chaplain George Gandara Chaplain George Gandara was recognized and congratulated for being named VFW Member of the Year.

XIV. Comments from Special Guest

Nathan Hall, a Veteran and University of Chicago graduate student, presented information regarding his AIM for Peace initiative, short for Alumni-Informed Mentorship for Peace. The project is supported through the Projects for Peace program and is intended to support Veterans participating in Cook County Veterans Treatment Court.

Hall invited Veterans and partner organizations to contribute: Motivational stories.-Personal experiences- Quotes and words of encouragement-Information about Veteran resources and organizations. Contributions could be submitted through a QR code or by email.

The information will be compiled into a Peace Compass journal intended to provide motivation, mentorship, and resource guidance to Veterans participating in the approximately two-year Veterans Treatment Court process. Hall stated that project outcomes would be shared at a future September meeting.

Commissioner Maggie Trevor Cook County Commissioner Maggie Trevor, 9th District, offered brief remarks, acknowledged concerns raised regarding County human resources and staffing, and indicated that the County was aware of the issues and working to move matters forward. President Gutierrez thanked Commissioner Trevor for attending the meeting and for her support of VACCC.

Vanessa Walters, Interim Director of the Cook County Department of Veterans Affairs, was recognized as a special guest in attendance.

XV. Adjournment — President Gutierrez

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion carried without opposition. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2010 hrs.

Submitted by *John Kerrigan*, Secretary



VACCC MEMBERSHIP SIGN IN SHEET

23 JUNE 2026 MEETING

Sheet 1 of 2

Organization	X	Delegate	X	Alternate Delegate
American Legion 36	X	Patrick Flannigan		Greg Jacobs
American Legion 87	X	Willie Mack		Ashley Shine
American Legion 104	X	Dennis Chavez	X	Michael Tuman
American Legion 134	X	Donna Manella		Joseph Lampert
American Legion 183	X	Raymond P Toczek		Timothy Bodkin
American Legion 208	X	Walter Parus	X	Greg Padovani
American Legion 216	X	Kevin Ake		None at this time
American Legion 335	X	Lorenzo A. Fiorentino	X	George R. Gandara
American Legion 478	X	Beverly A. Fitch		Nickola R Rogers
American Legion 525	X	Laura Matuszal		Bill Starr
American Legion 541		Joseph Cook	X	Patrick Hood
American Legion 547		Rudy Acevedo		Jorge Reyes-Ortiz
American Legion 615	X	Ken McClory	X	John Kaminecki
American Legion 690	X	James Kott	X	Joseph Kraus
American Legion 758	X	Frank Gutierrez		Beau Butts
American Legion 806		Al Pizarro	X	Peter Hirt
American Legion 829	X	Chevonne Woodard		Vacant
American Legion 888	X	Anthony Muro		Andy Anderson
American Legion 923		Clemente Rodriquez		John Kerrigan
American Legion 973		Richard Lee	X	Aasi Siddique
American Legion 974		Anthony Sicilano	X	Tom Zito
American Legion 1028		John Borg		John Ayala
American Legion 1052		Megan Everett		Brian Phenegar
American Legion 1932	X	James McGee Jr.		Charles Salley
American Legion 1941	X	Robert Stoltz	X	Edward Krzeminski
American Legion 1983		Anthony J. Thomas		Frank Kelly



VACCC MEMBERSHIP SIGN IN SHEET

23 JUNE 2026 MEETING

Sheet 2 of 2

Organization	X	Delegate	X	Alternate Delegate
AMVETS Post 66		James E. Schultz	X	James Parker
AMVETS Post 192	X	Herman Deckys	X	Gabriel Bedolla
AMVETS Post 268		Eddie Brown Jr.	X	Richard Nielsen
CVO		Larry Nazimek		
DAV Chapter 84		Ken Boor		Bill Byers
JWV Post 710		Dr. Jerry Field		Dennis Kane
MCL Det 553	X	Randall L. Tyner		Paul Zogg
MCL Det 1408		Sergio Correa		Alejandro Morales
MOAA		Matthew Garrison		
MOWW		Zhi-cheng, Chen		
PVA	X	Robert Arciola		Robert Statam
VFW 311	X	Aretha Spurlock		Nekohl Johnson
VFW 981	X	Stewart Abbink		Larry Bielski
VFW 1337	X	John "Dutch" DeGroot		Wally Beckman
VFW 2202	X	John Healy		Joe Wein
VFW 2868	X	Eric "Kermit" Morales	X	Eva Marie duff
VFW 2978		Jesus Jimenez		Scott Friedland
VFW 3579	X	Keith Renner	X	Ramon Prieto
VFW 5079		Jennipher Glenn	X	Antonio Munoz IV
VFW 5979	X	David Ruiz	X	Don Hanson
VFW 7186	X	Thomas J. Hughes		Elliott Jones
VFW 8322	X	Paul John Bezazian		Paul Michael Knudtson
VFW 9284	X	Arthur J. Ellingsen	X	Phillip Ferrer (Chappy)
VFW 10778	X	Chuck Bosko		
VVA Chapter 242		Kevin Calkins		John B. Andres Jr.
37 organizaions of 51		Delegates 31 alternates 18 total 49		



Veterans Assistance Commission Of Cook County

May 23, 2026

VACCC FY26 2nd QUARTER REPORT

Superintendent Elizabeth D. Soto

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph showing the silhouettes of several soldiers in full combat gear. They are walking away from the camera, carrying a large American flag. The scene is set outdoors on what appears to be a military base or airfield, with some buildings and trees visible in the distance under a cloudy sky. A dark green rounded rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title and a list of topics.

OVERVIEW

- Mission Statement
- Financials & External Audit
- New VAC Location & Hiring
- VAC Vehicles
- VSO'S
- Outreach



“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 Military Veterans Assistance Act (330 ILCS 45/)

FINANCIALS

2ND QUARTER (MARCH, APRIL, MAY)

PERSONNEL SERVICES	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26
Salary-Wages of Reg Employees	\$ 85,467.86	\$ 88,208.68	\$ 86,270.20
Salary/Turnover Adjustment			
Mandatory Medicare Cost	1,203.34	\$ 1,204.43	\$ 1,214.99
Group Life Insurance	127.66	\$ 127.66	\$ 127.66
Group Health Insurance	9,368.40	\$ 9,368.40	\$ 9,368.40
Group Dental Insurance	469.70	\$ 469.70	\$ 469.70
Unemployment Compensation	35.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00
Vision Care	78.38	\$ 78.38	\$ 78.38
Group Pharmacy Insurance	4,391.14	\$ 4,391.14	\$ 4,391.14
SUBTOTAL: PERSONNEL SERVICES	\$ 101,141.48	\$ 103,883.39	\$ 101,955.47

SPECIAL PROGRAMS	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26
Special or Coop Programs (Veteran Disbursements)	\$ 121,172.69	\$ 129,142.40	\$ 111,445.32
Special or Coop Programs			
Less: Accounting & Gift Card Cost Adjustments	725.34	\$ 489.00	\$ 457.00
SUBTOTAL: SPECIAL PROGRAMS REIMBURSEMENT	\$ 120,447.35	\$ 128,653.40	\$ 110,988.32

FY 26 2ND QTR	FY 26 2ND QTR BUDGET	FY 26 BUDGET
\$ 259,946.74	\$ 391,547.02	\$ 1,566,188.08
-		-
3,622.76	6,550.99	26,203.96
382.98	382.98	1,531.92
28,105.20	28,105.21	112,420.84
1,409.10	1,409.11	5,636.44
105.00	105.00	420.00
235.14	235.14	940.56
13,173.42	13,173.42	52,693.68
\$ 306,980.34	\$ 441,508.87	\$ 1,766,035.48

FY 26 2ND QTR	FY 26 2ND QTR BUDGET	FY 26 BUDGET
\$ 361,760.41	\$ 242,500.00	\$ 970,000.00
1,671.34		
\$ 360,089.07	\$ 242,500.00	\$ 970,000.00

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	FY 26 2ND QTR	FY 26 2ND QTR BUDGET	FY 26 BUDGET
Professional Membership Fees	\$ 11,480.00	\$ 100.00		\$ 11,580.00	\$ 4,006.10	\$ 16,024.40
Training Program Staff	7,220.00	\$ 3,000.00		10,220.00	6,730.35	26,921.40
Transportation and Travel Expenses	4,215.02	\$ 14,226.67	\$ 420.48	18,862.17	19,487.30	77,949.20
Communication Services				-	2,421.50	9,686.00
Postage		\$ 624.00		624.00	485.00	1,940.00
External Graphics and Reproduction Services			\$ 1,691.65	1,691.65	2,910.00	11,640.00
Professional Services	3,230.02	\$ 20,663.76	\$ 26,083.65	49,977.43	48,500.00	194,000.00
Legal Services	1,134.00	\$ 3,825.90	\$ 441.00	5,400.90	18,187.50	72,750.00
Office Supplies	1,293.86	\$ 404.17	\$ 614.66	2,312.69	12,125.00	48,500.00
Maintenance and Subscription Services				-	617.49	2,469.96
Bank Fees - Amalgamated Bank	455.76	\$ 93.64	\$ 49.77	599.17		
Other				-		
SUBTOTAL: OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 29,028.66	\$ 42,938.14	\$ 29,301.21	\$ 101,268.01	\$ 115,470.24	\$ 461,880.96
TOTAL	\$ 250,617.49	\$ 275,474.93	\$ 242,245.00	\$ 768,337.42	\$ 799,479.11	\$ 3,197,916.44

AGENCY STATISTICS	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	TOTAL
Veterans In Office Visits	338	354	303	995
Calls Handled	606	842	450	1898
Outreach Events	36	38	41	115
New Veterans	53	68	77	198

Note 1: The Personnel and Operations expenditures are subject to change as month-end entries may not be processed at the time of the data run (6/8/2026).

Note 2: The Special or Coop Veteran Disbursement amount has been updated to comply with generally accepted accounting principles, and the gift card values have been adjusted to match the purchase costs of the gift cards.



KEY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTS

1. Housing & Burial Support

- **Mortgage Assistance: \$22,778.57** was provided to help Veterans maintain homeownership.
- **Rent Assistance: \$66,401.82** was allocated to prevent rental hardships.

2. Funeral Assistance:

- **Burial Support: \$75,539.18** was issued to assist Veteran families with funeral expenses.

3. Necessities & Well-Being

- **Personal Hygiene Cards: \$41,500.00** was distributed to assist with essential hygiene-related needs.
- **Food Card Assistance:** Veterans received **\$70,600.00** in food aid to support household food security.
- **Gas Cards: \$300.00** was issued to help Veterans meet immediate transportation and fuel-related needs.
- **Work Uniform Assistance: \$100.00** was provided to support employment-related expenses.

4. Utility Support

- **Electric Bill Assistance: \$34,349.26** was provided to help Veterans maintain essential electricity services.
- **Gas Bill Assistance: \$35,715.89** was allocated to assist with heating and cooking costs.

- **Water Bill Assistance: \$5,794.04** was used to support Veterans with water utility expenses.
- **Phone Assistance: \$854.85** was provided to help Veterans maintain access to communication services.
- **Internet Assistance: \$783.30** was provided to support essential connectivity needs.

5. Transportation Assistance

- **CTA Single-Ride Support: \$1,303.50** was allocated to assist Veterans with immediate transit needs.
- **CTA 7-Day Card Support: \$5,740.00** was issued to ensure longer-term mobility for Veterans.

6. Service Reach & Engagement

- Total Veterans Served: **995 Veterans** received financial assistance and support services.
- Demographics: **832 male Veterans and 163 female Veterans** were assisted during the quarter.
- Call Volume: **1,898 calls** were handled, reflecting strong engagement with Veterans seeking aid.
- Community Outreach: **115 outreach events** were conducted to connect with and assist Veterans.
- New Veterans: **198 new Veterans** engaged with the VACCC services during this quarter.

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County

Report to the Executive Board
May 12, 2026

"The VACCC followed either its established accounting policy regarding which resources (that is, restricted, committed, assigned or unassigned) are considered to be spent first for expenditures for which more than one resource classification is available or followed paragraph 18 of GASB Statement No. 54 to determine the fund balance classifications for financial reporting purposes.

Management has followed applicable laws and regulations in adopting, approving and amending budgets.

We have no knowledge of allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the VACCC's financial statements involving:

- a. Management.*
- b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control.*
- c. Others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.*

We have no knowledge of noncompliance or suspected noncompliance with laws and regulations.

We are aware of no deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting, including significant deficiencies or material weaknesses, in the design or operation of internal controls that could adversely affect the VACCC's ability to record, process, summarize and report financial data."

NEW VAC LOCATION & HIRING UPDATE



**Circuit Court of Cook
County's
Third Municipal District:**

***2121 Euclid Ave., Suite
106
Rolling Meadows, IL
60008***

Grand Opening: TBD

VEHICLE UPDATE

FY2026	Ford Bronco Sport	Bronco Sport
FY2026	Ford Maverick Hybrid	Maverick XLT
FY2026	Ford Maverick Hybrid	Maverick XLT
FY2026	Transit 15 Passenger Van	T350 MED ROOF WAGON AWD

VSO DEPARTMENT

2ND QUARTER
(MARCH, APRIL, MAY)

Justyna Berry

VSO Manager

Resigned from the VACCC on 13 May 26. We thank her for all her work for the Veterans and beneficiaries of Cook County and wish her nothing but the best going forward.

Unfortunately, her departure does mean that the VSO team only has one point of entry into VBA systems. Her regular MST seminars are currently suspended.

Derek Giffin

VSO Manager

Attended his first NACVSO Convention in Reno earlier this month.

VACCC continues expanding VSO capacity to improve access to VA benefits for Cook County Veterans.

Training Status:

Faris Karadsheh

Veteran Service Officer

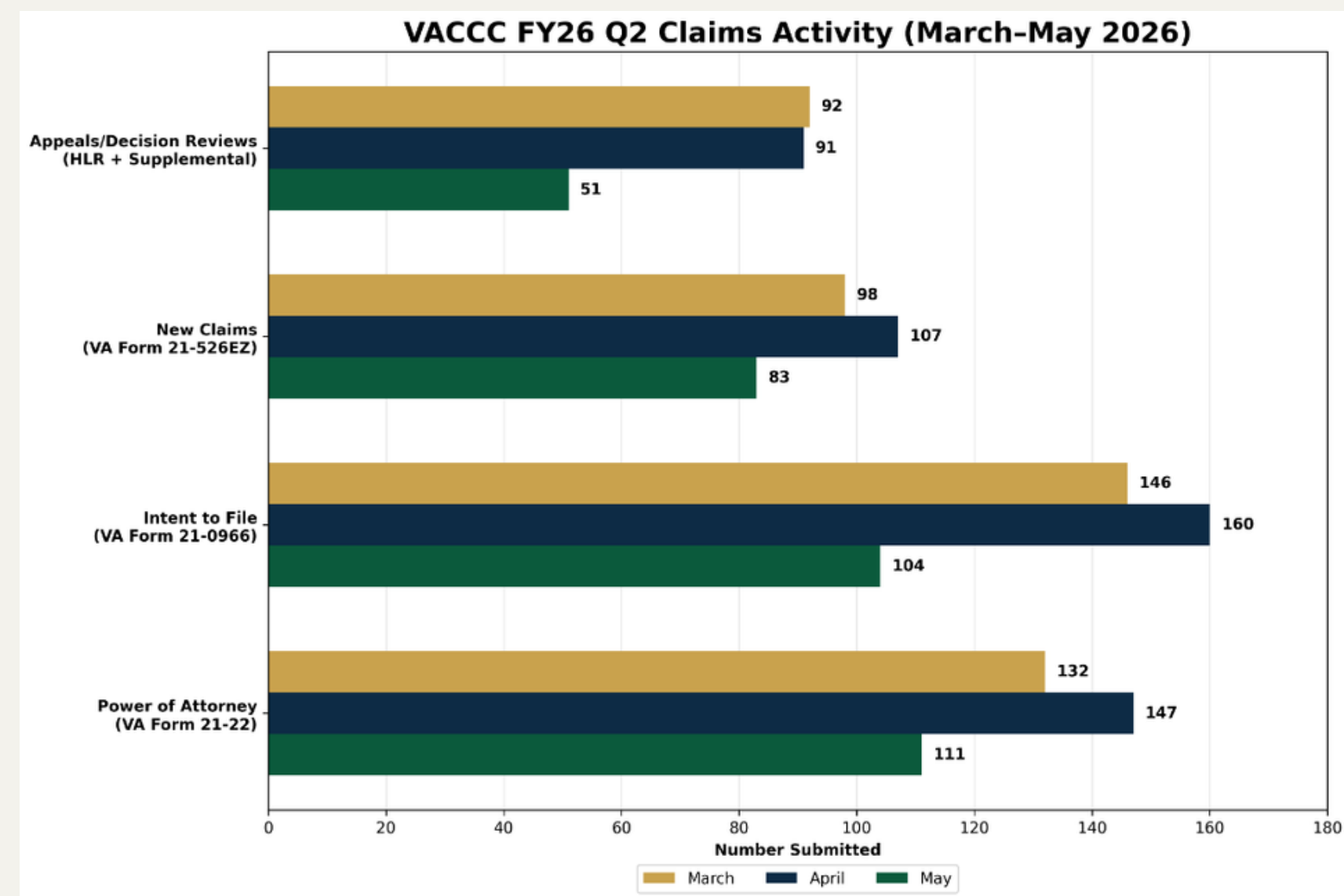
- Pending: PIV packet has been submitted to VBA, by the time of this presentation status may have changed. NACVSO has granted him OGC Accreditation number **61243**.
- Completed: NACVSO Basic Benefits Course, VA TRIP training, and also attended his first NACVSO Convention earlier this month.

Operational Impact:

Upon completion of system credentialing, VSO Faris will obtain access to VA systems and will be able to fully assist Veterans with:

- Claims submission
- Evidence development
- Appeals support
- Benefits counseling

Q2 OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY



- **POA Established:** 390
- **New Disability Claims Filed:** 288
- **Intents to File:** 410
- **Higher-Level Reviews and Supplemental Appeals:** 234 (along with 7 Appeals to the Board of Veterans Appeals)
- **Total Claim Actions Completed:** 1329



FINANCIAL IMPACT TO VETERANS

Retroactive Recoveries:

- March: **\$179,256.60**
- April: **\$194,367.60**
- May: **\$262,444.08**

Total: **\$636,068.28**

Total Q2 Impact: **\$3,045,535.77 (delivered to Cook County Veterans)**

Note: May totals are preliminary. A significant number of claims remain pending VA adjudication and are expected to result in additional retroactive awards. **\$12,438,197.77** in annual VA compensation is currently being delivered to the 1,224 Cook County Veterans currently represented by the VACCC.

MISSION STATEMENT

The VACCC is committed to meeting Veterans where they are – delivering accredited services with intention, urgency, and equity. Through strategic, data-driven outreach, we engage Veterans in their own communities, prioritize underserved populations, and ensure timely, inclusive access to the benefits they've earned. Our work is grounded in action, guided by outcomes, and designed to close gaps – not wait for Veterans to navigate them alone.



OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

2ND QUARTER
(MARCH, APRIL, MAY)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FY26



Expand Community-Based Access to Veteran Services

Objective:

Deliver services directly to Veterans through trusted, accessible locations across Cook County.

Key Strategies:

- Establish permanent and rotating outreach schedules in underserved areas.
- Prioritize visibility at community events, shelters, churches, and Veteran-focused hubs.



Optimize Services Through Data and Responsiveness

Objective:

Use real-time data and outcome tracking to guide decisions, allocate resources efficiently, and adapt quickly to emerging Veteran needs.

Key Strategies:

- Make data-informed decisions on staffing, programming, and outreach deployment.
- Maintain responsiveness as a core standard – ensuring Veterans get answers and action, not delays.



FY26 Q2 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Direct Outreach Initiative:

Launched April 7, 2025

Events at churches, VFWs, elected officials' offices, and community spaces. Sites selected using district-level Veteran density and underutilization data

(FY26) Q2 ENGAGEMENT METRICS:

VetConnect Events: **69**

VetTalks: **0**

Resource Events: **35**

Ceremonial: **12**

Total Outreach Events: **116**

Total Assisted (directly assisted by staff): **410**

Total Interaction of Veterans: **1,466**

(FY26) Q1 ENGAGEMENT METRICS:

VetConnect Events: **42**

VetTalk Events: **1**

Resource Events: **32**

Ceremonial Events: **10**

Total Outreach Events: **85**

Total Assisted (directly assisted by staff): **282**

Total Interaction of Veterans: **695**

*This includes all Veterans who attended each event

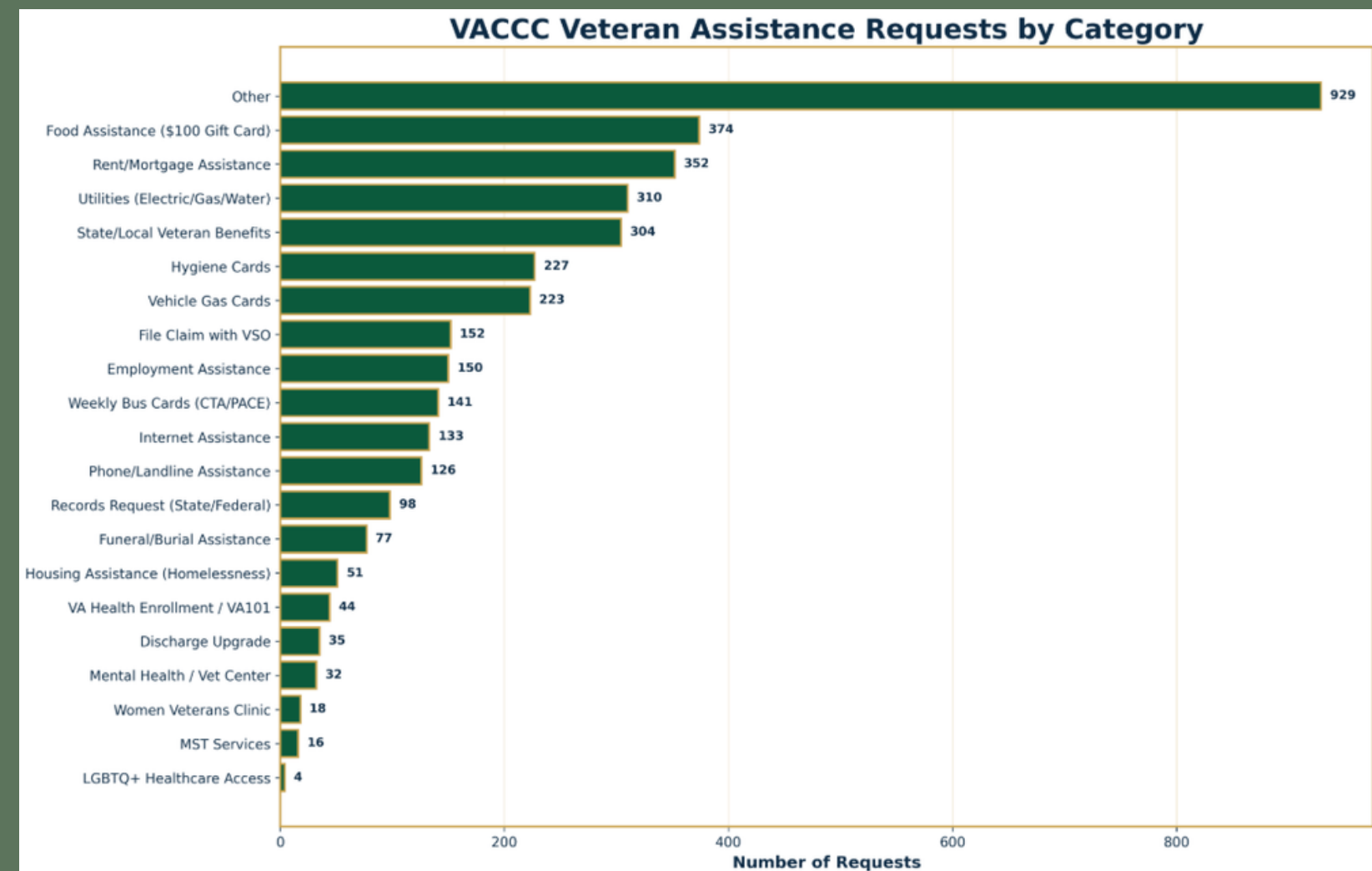
Q2 TRACKING DATA BREAKDOWN

Intake System Metric Breakdown

Metrics gathered through MS Forms. Form captures name, number, email, and service request, but does not verify identity.

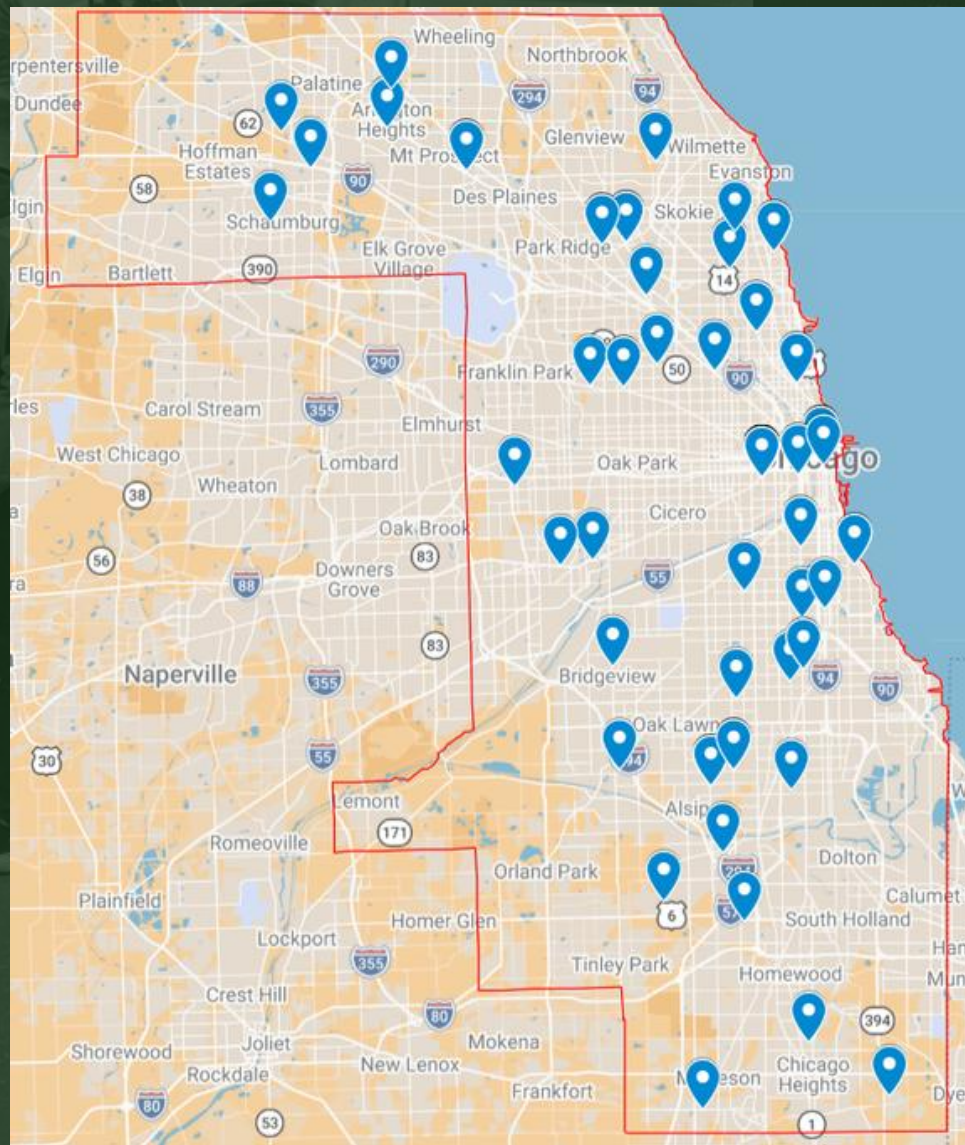
- Total Assisted (all categories of intake form submissions since start of program): **948**
- Total individual services requested: **3,796**

Note: May include duplicates. Used as indicator of outreach interest. Chart and total individual services will denote requests past Q2.

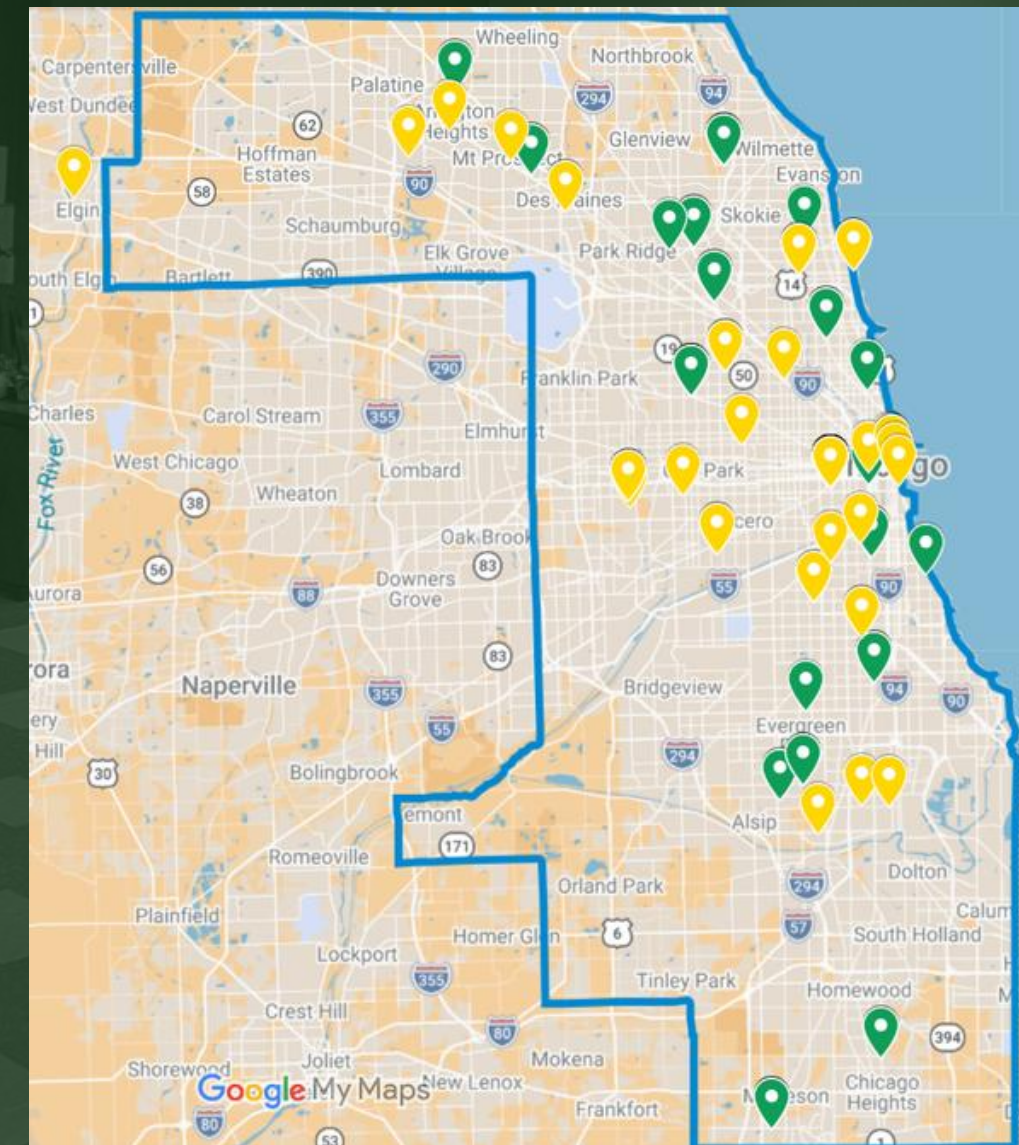


FY26 Q1 AND FY26 Q2 COMPARISON

FY26 Q1 (85 EVENTS)



FY26 Q2 (116 EVENTS)



NOTE: YELLOW INDICATES NEW OUTREACH LOCATIONS. GREEN INDICATES LOCATIONS PREVIOUSLY VISITED BY VACCC STAFF.

FY26 Q2 EVENT LISTINGS

Building America's Future Resource Event	65 W Jackson Blvd, Chicago, IL 60604
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave, Chicago, IL 60707
MST Benefit Brief & Claims Clinic Speaking Event	69 W. Washington Suite 1420, Chicago IL 60602
Alderman Jim Gardiner VetConnect Event	5460 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60630
Alderwoman Debra Silverstein VetConnect Event	2949 W. Devon Chicago IL 60659
Jesse Brown Vetconnect Event	820 S. Damen chicago IL 60612
Auburn Gresham VA Clinic Office Hours Resource Event	7731 S. Halsted St, Chicago IL 60620
Alderman Raymond Lopez VetConnect Event	2650 W. 51st chicago il 60632
Worth Township Resource Event	11601 S Pulaski Rd, Alsip, IL 60803
Commissioner Kevin Morrison VetConnect Event	270 N Grove Ave, Elgin, IL 60120
Jesse Brown VetConnect Event	820 S damen chicago il 60612
Niles VFW Resource Event	7255 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714
Prairie State College Office Hours Resource Event	202 S Halsted St, Chicago Heights, IL 60411
Loyola University of Chicago VetConnect Event	6443 N sheridan rd suite 171
Cook County Assessor's Office Press Brief Ceremonial Event	118 N Clark St #320, Chicago, IL 60602
Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 S Damen Chicago Illinois 60612
Jesse Brown Patient Orientation Speaking Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
UIC Office Hours Resource Event	750 S. Halsted Street, Room 248, MC 117, Chicago, IL 60607
Richton Park Vet Center Office Hours Resource Event	4511 Sauk Trail Richton Park, IL 60471
Alderman Nicole T. Lee VetConnect Event	3659 S. Halsted St. Chicago, IL 60609

Skokie Court house VetConnect	5600 Old Orchard Rd, Skokie, IL 60077
De Paul University Office Hours Resource Event	1 E. Jackson Blvd. 6th Floor, Suite 6070, Chicago, IL 60604
Hines HUD VASH VetConnect Event	5000 5th ave Hines IL 60141
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Frisbie Senior Center Resource Event	52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Alderman Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave Unit #C118 - Suite A, Chicago, IL 60707
Alderman Ruth Cruz VetConnect Event	5418 West Belmont, Chicago IL 60641
Jesse Brown Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S. Damen Chicago IL 60612
McKinley Park Fieldhouse Resource Event	2210 W Pershing Rd, Chicago, IL 60609
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Resource Event	820 S. Damen Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Matt Martin VetConnect Event	4243 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60618
1st Quarterly Meeting Resource Event	5000 S 5th Ave, Hines, IL 60141
Alderman Matthew J. O'Shea VetConnect Event	3207 W 111th St., Chicago, IL 60655
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Richton Park Vet Center Resource Event	4511 Sauk Trail, Richton Park, IL 60471
Bridgeport VFW Post 5079 Resource Event	3200 S May St, Chicago, IL 60608
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Debra Silverstein VetConnect Event	2949 W Devon Ave, Chicago, IL, 60659
Alderman Jim Gardiner VetConnect Event	5460 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60630
Auburn Gresham VA Clinic Office Hours Resource Event	7731 S Halsted St, Chicago IL 60620

Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 S Damen, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Stephanie D. Coleman's VetConnect Event	1137 W. 63rd St, Suite C., Chicago, IL 60621
43rd ward Alderman Knudsen VetConnect Event	2523 N Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60614
Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 S Damen Chicago, IL 60618
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave, Chicago, IL 60707
MST Brief and Claims Clinic Speaking Event	69 W Washington Suite 1420, Chicago, IL 60602
Loyola University of Chicago Office Hours Resource Event	6443 N Sheridan Rd, Suite 171, Chicago 60626
Prairie State College VetConnect Event	202 s halsted chicago il 60641
Jesse Brown VetConnect Event	820 s Damen chicago il 60612
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Skokie Courthouse VetConnect Event	5600 old Orchard rd Skokie IL 60077
Alderman Nicole T. Lee VetConnect Event	3659 S. Halsted St. Chicago, IL 60609
Worth Township VetConnect Event	11601 S Pulaski Road Alsip IL 60803
Niles VFW Resource Event	7255 N Caldwell Ave. Niles, IL 60714
Jesse Brown VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Chicago IL 60612
Alderwoman Ruth Cruz 30th ward Vetconnect Event	5418 W Belmont Ave, Chicago, IL 60641
Jesse Brown VA Hospital Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Wheeling Township Office Hours Resource Event	1616 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60004
Healing Temple Church Speaking Event	4941 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60651
HUD-VASH Office Hours VetConnect Event	5000 S 5th Ave, Hines, IL 60141

FY26 Q2 EVENT LISTINGS

Frisbie Senior Center Resource Event	52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave Unit # C118 - Suite A Chicago, IL 60707
Alderman Matthew J. O'Shea VetConnect Event	3207 W 111th St., Chicago, IL 60655
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Richton Park Vet Center VetConnect Event	4511 Sauk Trail Richton Park, IL 60471
Rolling Meadows Senior and Veteran Resource Event	3000 Central Road Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
American Legion 36 Coffee and Conversation Speaking Event	1291 Oakwood Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Skokie Courthouse VetConnect Event	5600 Old Orchard Rd, Skokie, IL 60077
VA Medical Mobile Unit Resource Event	1250 W 119TH ST, CHICAGO, IL 60643
American Legion Post 36 Claims Clinic VetConnect Event	1291 Oakwood Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Alderman Matt Martin VetConnect Office Hours VetConnect Event	4243 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60618
Jesse Brown VA Medical Clinic VetConnect Event	820 South Damen Avenue Chicago, IL 60612
De Paul University Office Hours VetConnect Event	1 E. Jackson Blvd. 6th Floor, Suite 6070, Chicago, IL 60604
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Raymond Lopez VetConnect Event	2650 West 51st Street, Chicago, IL 60632
Commissioner Maggie Trevor VetConnect Event	220A W. Campbell St. Arlington Heights , IL 60005
Alderman Stephanie D. Coleman's VetConnect Event	1137 W. 63rd St, Chicago, IL 60621
MST Claims Clinic and Benefits Brief Speaking Event	69 W Washington, Chicago IL 60602
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave, Chicago, IL 60707

VACCC Jesse Brown Program Display Speaking Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Veterans Town Hall and Resource Event	344 W 119th St, Chicago, IL 60628
Alderman Debra Silverstein VetConnect Event	2949 W. Devon Ave. Chicago, IL 60659
Alderman Jim Gardiner VetConnect Event	5460 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60630
Auburn Gresham VA Clinic Office Hours VetConnect Event	7731 S Halsted St, Chicago IL 60620
Skokie Courthouse VetConnect Event	5600 Old Orchard Rd, Skokie, IL 60077
Chicago Vet Center Resource Event	8658 South Sacramento Avenue Chicago, IL 60652
Alderman Nicole T. Lee VetConnect Event	3659 S. Halsted St. Chicago, IL 60609
Camo to Community - Women Veteran Speaking Event	4511 Sauk Trail, Richton Park, IL 60471
Evanston (IL) Vet Center Director VetConnect Event	1901 W Howard St, Evanston, IL 60202
Niles VFW Post 3579 Resource Event	7255 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Praire State College VetConnect Event	202 S. Halsted St. Chicago Heights, IL., 60411
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Wheeling Township VetConnect Event	1616 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60004
Berwyn Claims Clinic Resource Event	6919 Roosevelt Road Berwyn IL 60402
Hines VA HUD VASH VetConnect Event	5000 S 5th Ave, Hines IL 60141
De Paul University VetConnect Event	1 E. Jackson Blvd, Chicago, IL 60604
GenCenter (formerly Frisbie Senior Center) Resource Event	52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave, Chicago, IL 60707

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Commissioner Jessica Vásquez/Alderman Anthony Quezada VetConnect Event	2934 N Milwaukee, Chicago IL 60618
Alderman Anthony V. Napolitano VetConnect Event	7231 W. Touhy Ave. Chicago, IL 60631
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Ruth Cruz VetConnect Event	5418 West Belmont, Chicago IL 60641
Skokie Courthouse Office Hours VetConnect Event	5600 Old Orchard Rd, Skokie, IL 60077
Memorial Day Ruck March VetConnect Event	50 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect, IL 60056
American Legion Post 50 Speaking Event	12800 Highland Ave, Blue Island, IL 60406
Major General John A. Logan Memorial Day Commemoration Speaking Event	900 S Michigan Ave, Chicago IL 60605
Alderman Matt Martin VetConnect Event	4243 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60618
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Matthew J. O'Shea VetConnect Event	3207 W 111th St., Chicago, IL 60655
Alderman Lamont J Robinson VetConnect Event	928 E. 43rd St, Chicago, IL 60635
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Cicero Post Coffee and Conversation Ceremonial Event	5820 W 35th St, Cicero IL 60804
Cicero Post Claims Clinic Resource Event	5820 W 35th St, Cicero IL 60804

FY26 Q2 ACHIEVEMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

Achievements

Finalized PowerApps Data System

VACCC completed the implementation of its PowerApps platform, creating a centralized system for tracking Veteran interactions, scheduling services, and managing outreach activities across departments.

- Centralized Outreach, EFS, and VSO data into a single platform.
- Enabled event tracking, Veteran engagement tracking, and appointment scheduling.
- Integrated outreach requests directly with the VACCC calendar
- Standardized intake (external and internal) and referral processes to improve service delivery
- Modernized internal document tracking and operational workflows

Link: [VACCC Internal Operations Portal](#)

Objectives

- **Redesign VACCC Website**
 - Redesign VACCC Website Launch an updated, user-friendly website consolidating VACCC services, events, partner resources, and Commission records into one accessible platform for Veterans and staff.
- **Expand and Develop**
 - Volunteer and VACCC Internship Program Expand volunteer and internship programs to grow organizational capacity, support outreach and administrative functions, and deliver professional development opportunities while enhancing Veteran-facing services across Cook County.
- **Expand and Refine Outreach Operations**
 - Grow outreach efforts and streamline internal processes to build a stronger service pipeline — connecting Veterans from field, online, and social media engagements to VACCC programs quickly and efficiently.





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

HHC (Hamilton Headquarters Chicago)

1100 S. HAMILTON AVE., Suite C-011, Lower Level
CHICAGO, IL. 60612
• 312.433.6010

CRO (Chicago Regional Office)

69 W. WASHINGTON St., SUITE 1420
CHICAGO, IL. 60602
• 312.603.3865

HOURS OF OPERATION

MONDAY-FRIDAY: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
BENEFIT WINDOW CLOSSES AT 3:00 p.m.

WEBSITE: [HTTPS://VACCOOKCOUNTY.ORG](https://vaccookcounty.org)
OFFICE EMAIL: VACCC@COOKCOUNTYIL.GOV



QR CODE LINK:

<https://forms.office.com/g/Vpajyw5dLR>

