

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

Meeting Minutes
24 March 2026 @ 1900 hrs
Hines VA Building 9
5000 S. 5th Ave, Hines, IL 60141

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 1900hrs.
- b. Quorum was established by 2nd Vice President Dutch DeGroot. Leadership noted that the Commission now includes 51 member organizations and 98 delegates and alternates. Members were reminded that the Commission functions as a governmental body and that Illinois Open Meetings Act certification and future Military and Veterans Assistance Act training will be requested and provided.
- c. Recognition of Guests - President Gutierrez
— Maria Gallo, Chief of Staff for Cook County Commissioner Maggie Trevor

II. Opening Reflection — Chaplain George Gandara

- a. Prayer/Reflection Chaplain George Gandara delivered the opening prayer and reflection..
- b. The posting of the colors was performed by the VFW District 4 Color Guard, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Consent Agenda — President Gutierrez.

- a. The minutes of the 16 December 2025 Membership Meeting were presented for approval. Upon motion and second, the minutes were approved by voice vote. A motion to approve the Minutes, was made by Greg Jacobs and seconded by Bill Browne. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

IV. Public Comment.

- a. Public comment was opened with a reminder that future event announcements should, when possible, be distributed by flyer or email in the interest of time. Members and guests were invited to speak.

V. Governance Report — Treasurer Robert Arciola

- a. Treasurer Robert Arciola reported that the membership-side 501(c)(3) balance remained \$5,118.07 as of 1 March 2026, with no deposits or withdrawals during the reporting period. Four donations received at the meeting will be reflected in the next financial update. He also reported that the IRS Form 990 and Illinois Secretary of State annual report had been completed and submitted.

A motion to approve the report, was made by Greg Jacobs and seconded by Patrick Flannigan. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

- b. The item concerning ratification of certain executive board actions remained tabled.

VI. VACCC Office Reports — In the absence of Superintendent Elizabeth Soto and Deputy Superintendent Grant Jacobson, who were attending the NACVSO Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., Conner Intress presented the quarterly operational report on behalf of the office.

a. The report reviewed the Commission’s service pillars, including:

- emergency financial assistance,
- rent and mortgage assistance,
- utility assistance,
- food and hygiene support,
- work attire,
- burial services,
- VSO benefits assistance,
- outreach and partner referral services.

Eligibility requirements were reiterated, including Cook County residency, qualifying discharge documentation, and income thresholds.

Emergency Financial Services

Quarterly disbursements for direct assistance to veterans were reported as approximately:

- December: \$91,000
- January: \$86,000
- February: \$96,000

The office announced that the gas card assistance program would be discontinued for the time being due to low utilization and insufficient cost justification. The office also explained that certain aid resources are procured below face value but issued to veterans at full value, which improves purchasing efficiency but requires explanation in county reporting.

Agency Activity

For the quarter, the office reported:

- 907 veterans visited the office,
- 155 of those were new veterans,
- approximately 1,800 calls were handled,
- 85 outreach events were conducted.

VSO Program

Staff reported that the office currently has three VSOs, with two having access to VA systems and one still completing training and the PIV process.

Q1 claims activity included:

- 319 powers of attorney,
- 294 intents to file,
- 203 new disability claims,
- 147 higher-level reviews,
- more than 500 claim actions completed.

Financial recovery for veterans through VSO work was reported as:

Through the work of our Veteran Service Officers (VSOs), financial recovery for veterans in just the first quarter is as follows:

- December: \$91,889.96
- January: \$97,964.24
- February: \$121,949.39
- Q1 Total: \$311,799.59

This is only one quarter.

Our cumulative total for one year returned to Cook County veterans is now just under \$10 million. When viewed over the course of a year, this trajectory demonstrates how rapidly these recoveries compound—quarter after quarter—driving real, measurable financial impact for those we serve.

Notably, this nearly \$10 million in direct recovery already exceeds the Commission’s annual operating budget multiple times over, clearly illustrating both the value and return on investment of this work.

Special Initiatives

The office highlighted its Military Sexual Trauma initiative, with meetings held on the first Tuesday of each month, both online and in person at 69 W. Washington, Suite 1420. The program is supported in partnership with the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and the Chicago VA Regional Office.

Outreach and Systems Development

The outreach report highlighted continued expansion in community engagement and data tracking. QR codes placed on outreach materials have been scanned approximately 1,000 times since launch. The intake system has directly assisted 641 veterans and captured approximately 2,500 specific service requests.

Q2 priorities were identified as:

- building a centralized Power Apps data system,
- redesigning the VACCC website,
- integrating intake, VSO scheduling, and partner resources,
- improving audit readiness and reporting accuracy.

Presentation Feedback

Members requested clearer formatting for future reports, including:

- printing financial pages in landscape format,
- labeling reports by month and year rather than only fiscal references,
- adding value comparisons such as funds recovered versus operating budget and administrative-versus-direct-service ratios.

A motion to approve the report, was made by Greg Padovani and seconded by Evamarie Duff. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

VII. Bylaws — Chairman Robert Arciola presented the bylaw amendments that had previously been introduced in December. Amendments included, among other items:

- clarifying delegate list preparation with assistance from VACCC office staff,
- removing language inconsistent with the Illinois Open Meetings Act regarding electronic attendance,
- allowing meeting date and time changes when necessary for good order,
- suspending organizations from quorum calculations after two consecutive absences of both delegate and alternate,
- updating executive board and committee references to the Illinois Open Meetings Act,
- changing “Assistant Superintendent” to “Deputy Superintendent,”
- updating the formal adoption date to 24 March 2026.

Following discussion, A motion to approve the bylaw amendments was made by Jim Schultz and seconded by Randall Tyner. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.. Finalized bylaws will be distributed by email and posted on the website.

VIII. Budget — 1st VP Brown. No report.

IX. Services Provided — No substantive report was presented. Members interested in serving on the Services Provided Committee were asked to contact co-chairs Chevonne Woodard and George Gandara so the next committee meeting could be scheduled.

X. Unfinished Business — President Gutierrez

- a. The item regarding Membership Not-for-Profits remained tabled.

XI. New Business — President Gutierrez

a. Recognition of Bill Browne

President Gutierrez recognized Bill Browne in anticipation of his retirement and presented remarks on Browne's years of support for veterans, including assistance with veteran hiring, workforce initiatives, housing efforts, and educational programming. Browne thanked the membership and stated he would remain involved behind the scenes.

b. Third-Party Audit Update President Gutierrez provided an update on the ongoing third-party audit. He stated that auditors had reviewed matters related to programming, governance, office-board interaction, and financial controls. Once finalized, the audit report will be shared with the membership, posted publicly, and the auditors themselves will be invited to present their findings at a future meeting in the interest of transparency.

c. Building America's Future Event President Gutierrez reported on the Building America's Future event held at the Union League Club on 2 March 2026. The VACCC participated as an exhibitor and engaged with public-sector and infrastructure stakeholders. He noted that several agencies and contractors discussed veteran workforce initiatives and that the VACCC may serve as a pipeline connecting veterans to long-term employment and economic stability. The discussion emphasized large-scale Illinois infrastructure spending through 2030 as a major opportunity for veteran employment.

d. Election of Officers

The membership proceeded with election of officers. The following individuals were elected:

President: Frank Gutierrez

First Vice President: Jesus "Chuy" Segura

Second Vice President: Dutch DeGroot

Treasurer: Robert Arciola

Board Members: Eva Marie Duff, Greg Jacobs, and Randall L. Tyner.

The elections were conducted from the floor, with uncontested offices resolved by unanimous action and the board slate elected together.

XII. Good of the Order — President Gutierrez.

Members shared announcements regarding upcoming events and opportunities, including:

- a homeless veteran awareness and donation event on 20 May,
- a VA services event on 29 April,
- a sailor support outing and fundraiser on 22 May,
- a benefits event at the University of Chicago on 13 April,
- a Leyden Township job fair on 18 April,
- weekly food giveaway and community resource support activities,
- Hines VA Building 217 care and staffing discussions,
- Vietnam veteran recognition events,
- Veteran personal issues reminded this was not in order should be brought up in public comment.
- Moment of silence for those lost in recent conflict
- veteran claims clinics and related community programs,
- Gifts to the Yanks donations for veterans in care facilities.
- Leadership again asked members to send flyers and event details for distribution across the membership rather than relying on lengthy oral announcements.

XIII. Future Meeting Sites Update — 2nd VP DeGroot The next membership meeting was announced for 23 June 2026 at 1900 hrs, with the location to be determined.

XIV. Comments from Special Guest Additional remarks were received from attendees and members, including discussion of veteran care concerns and a request for continued support of veterans across Cook County.

XV. Adjournment — President Gutierrez

The meeting concluded after Good of the Order and closing remarks. Upon a proper Motion by Patrick Flannigan, duly seconded by Larry Nazimek, the meeting was adjourned at 2036 hrs. by unanimous voice vote.

Submitted by *Jim Parker*, Secretary



VACCC MEMBERSHIP SIGN IN SHEET

24 MARCH 2026 MEETING

Sheet 1 of 2

Organization	X	Delegate	X	Alternate Delegate
American Legion 36	X	Patrick Flannigan	X	Greg Jacobs
American Legion 87		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		Walter Parus	X	Greg Padovani
American Legion 216	X	Kevin Ake		None at this time
American Legion 335		Lorenzo A. Fiorentino	X	George R. Gandara
American Legion 478		Beverly A. Fitch		Nickola R Rogers
American Legion 525	X	Laura Matuszal	X	Bill Starr
American Legion 541	X	Joseph Cook		Patrick Hood
American Legion 547	X	Rudy Acevedo		Jorge Reyes-Ortiz
American Legion 615		Ken McClory	X	John Kaminecki
American Legion 690		James Kott	X	Joseph Kraus
American Legion 758		Frank Gutierrez	X	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	X	Clemente Rodriquez	X	John Kerrigan
American Legion 973	X	Richard Lee		Aasi Siddique
American Legion 974	X	Anthony Sicilano	X	Tom Zito
American Legion 1028	X	John Borg	X	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	X	Anthony J. Thomas	X	Frank Kelly



VACCC MEMBERSHIP SIGN IN SHEET

24 MARCH 2026 MEETING

Sheet 2 of 2

Organization		Delegate	X	Alternate Delegate
AMVETS Post 66	X	James E. Schultz	X	James Parker
AMVETS Post 192	X	Herman Deckys	X	Gabriel Bedolla
AMVETS Post 268	X	Eddie Brown Jr.		Richard Nielsen
Coalition Of Veterans	X	Larry Nazimek		
DAV Chapter 84	X	Ken Boor	X	Bill Byers
JWV Post 710		Dr. Jerry Field	X	Dennis Kane
MCL Det 553	X	Randall L. Tyner		Paul Zogg
MCL Det 1408	X	Sergio Correa		Alejandro Morales
MOAA	X	Matthew Garrison		
MOWW	X	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	X	Wally Beckman
VFW 2202		John Healy	X	Dino Moran
VFW 2868	X	Eric "Kermit" Morales	X	Eva Marie duff
VFW 2978	X	Jesus Jimenez		Scott Friedland
VFW 3579	X	Keith Renner	X	Ramon Prieto
VFW 5079	X	Jennipher Glenn	X	Antonio Munoz IV
VFW 5979	X	David Ruiz		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	X	Kevin Calkins	X	John B. Andres Jr.
48 of 51 organizaions		Delegates 40 alternates 25 total 65		



VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

Meeting Agenda
24 March 2026 @1900hr
Hines VA Building 9
5000 5th Ave, Hines, IL 60141

(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, Jesus "Chuy" Segura, Evamarie Duff.
Non voting **Appointees** Jim Parker (*Secretary*), George Gandara (*Chaplain*), Pete Hurt (*Judge Advocate*), Randell Tyner (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

- I. Welcome - President Frank Gutierrez
 - a. Call to Order
 - b. Roll Call/Establish Quorum – 2nd VP DeGroot
 - c. Recognition of Guests - President Gutierrez
- II. Opening Reflection - Chaplain
 - a. Prayer/Reflection
 - b. Posting of Colors/Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Consent Agenda - President Gutierrez
 - a. Approval of Membership Meeting 16 December 2025 Minutes
- IV. Public Comment - President Gutierrez
- V. Governance Report - Treasurer Robert Arciola
 - a. Approval of Previous Financial Reports
 - b. Ratification of Certain Executive Board Actions - Secretary Parker (*tabled*)
- VI. VACCC Report(s) - Superintendent Elizabeth Soto
- VII. Bylaws - Chairman Robert Arciola
 - a. Bylaws Follow-Up: Proposed Amendment to Article V, Section 5.3, Section 5.6, Article VI, Section 6.2, Section 6.3, Article VIII, Section 8.3, Article XI, Section 9.7, Article X, Sections 10.1-10.2-10.3-10.4-10.5-10.6-10.7
- VIII. Budget – VP William Browne.
- IX. Services Provided -
- X. Unfinished Business - President Gutierrez
 - a. Membership NFP Status – Secretary Parker (table)
- XI. New Business - President Gutierrez
 - a. Cook County Auditor Inquiry / Audit Coordination
 - b. Building America's Future Event – March 2, 2026
 - c. Election of officers
- President, Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, 3 board members
- XII. Good of the Order - President Gutierrez
- XIII. Executive Session if warranted.
- XIV. Future Meeting Sites Update - 2nd VP DeGroot
 - a. 22 June 2026 @ 1900, location TBD
- XV. Comments from Special Guest
- XVI. Adjournment

VACCC **1st Quarter** **Report**

Superintendent Elizabeth D. Soto
24, 2026

March





- ***Mission Statement***
- ***Emergency Services***
- ***Financials***
- ***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/)*



***EMERGENCY
SERVICES***



FY26 EMERGENCY FINANCIAL SERVICES

RENT/
MORTGAGE



UTILITY
BILLS



CTA/PACE/~~GAS~~
CARDS



FY26 EMERGENCY FINANCIAL SERVICES

WORK ATTIRE



**FOOD/
HYGIENE**



**BURIAL/
FUNERAL**





FINANCIALS

- ***1st QUARTER (December, January, February)***

PERSONNEL SERVICES	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
Sal-Wag of Reg Employees	\$ 41,743.25	\$ 127,925.08	\$ 42,684.07
Salary/Turnover Adjustment	\$ -	\$ 199.92	
Mandatory Medicare Cost	\$ 589.35	\$ 1,803.91	\$ 600.95
Group Life Insurance	\$ 127.65	\$ 127.66	\$ 127.66
Group Health Insurance	\$ 9,368.44	\$ 9,368.40	\$ 9,368.40
Group Dental Insurance	\$ 469.75	\$ 469.70	\$ 469.70
Unemployment Compensation	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00
Vision Care	\$ 78.38	\$ 78.38	\$ 78.38
Group Pharmacy Insurance	\$ 4,391.15	\$ 4,391.14	\$ 4,391.14
SUBTOTAL: PERSONNEL SERVICES	\$ 56,802.97	\$ 144,399.19	\$ 57,755.30

FY 26 1ST QTR	FY 26 1ST QTR BUDGET	FY 26 BUDGET
\$ 212,352.40	391,547.02	1,566,188.08
\$ 199.92		-
\$ 2,994.21	6,550.99	26,203.96
\$ 382.97	382.98	1,531.92
\$ 28,105.24	28,105.21	112,420.84
\$ 1,409.15	1,409.11	5,636.44
\$ 105.00	105.00	420.00
\$ 235.14	235.14	940.56
\$ 13,173.43	13,173.42	52,693.68
\$ 258,957.46	\$ 441,508.87	\$ 1,766,035.48

SPECIAL PROGRAMS	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
Special or Coop Programs (Veteran Disbursements) - Reimbursement	\$ 91,301.75	\$ 86,394.40	\$ 96,196.28
Special or Coop Programs Less: Accounting Adjustments for Purchase Cost of Cards		\$ 1,001.34	\$ 673.78
SUBTOTAL: SPECIAL PROGRAMS	\$ 91,301.75	\$ 85,393.06	\$ 95,522.50

FY 26 1ST QTR	FY 26 1ST QTR BUDGET	FY 26 BUDGET
\$ 273,892.43	\$ 242,500.00	970,000.00
\$ 1,675.12		
\$ 272,217.31	\$ 242,500.00	\$ 970,000.00

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\$ 273,892.43	\$ 242,500.00	970,000.00
\$ 1,675.12		
\$ 272,217.31	\$ 242,500.00	\$ 970,000.00

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
Prof/Tech Membership Fees	\$ 300.00	\$ 465.00	
Training Program Staff	\$ 770.00		\$ 400.00
Transportation and Travel Expenses	\$ 586.64	\$ 961.92	\$ 427.80
Communication Services	\$ 6,228.77		
Postage	\$ 624.00		
External Graphics and Reproduction Services		\$ 456.10	
Professional Services	\$ 17,748.00	\$ 11,399.80	
Legal Services	\$ 259.50	\$ 2,947.00	\$ 390.00
Office Supplies	\$ 2,091.30	\$ 2,257.33	\$ 405.23
Maintenance and Subscription Services	\$ 2,469.95		
Bank Fees - Amalgamated Bank	\$ 47.76	\$ 136.55	\$ 47.47
Other			
SUBTOTAL: OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 31,125.92	\$ 18,623.70	\$ 1,670.50
TOTAL	\$ 179,230.64	\$ 248,415.95	\$ 154,948.30

FY 26 1ST QTR	FY 26 1ST QTR BUDGET	FY 26 BUDGET
\$ 765.00	\$ 4,006.10	\$ 16,024.40
\$ 1,170.00	\$ 6,730.35	\$ 26,921.40
\$ 1,976.36	\$ 19,487.30	\$ 77,949.20
\$ 6,228.77	\$ 2,421.50	\$ 9,686.00
\$ 624.00	\$ 485.00	\$ 1,940.00
\$ 456.10	\$ 2,910.00	\$ 11,640.00
\$ 29,147.80	\$ 48,500.00	\$ 194,000.00
\$ 3,596.50	\$ 18,187.50	\$ 72,750.00
\$ 4,753.86	\$ 12,125.00	\$ 48,500.00
\$ 2,469.95	\$ 617.49	\$ 2,469.96
\$ 231.78		
\$ -		
\$ 51,420.12	\$ 115,470.24	\$ 461,880.96
\$ 582,594.89	\$ 799,479.11	\$ 3,197,916.44

AGENCY STATISTICS	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
Veterans In Office Visits	287	304	316
Calls Handled	493	729	631
Outreach Events	24	20	41
New Veterans	54	43	58

TOTAL
907
1853
85
155

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 (3/3/2026).

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 price of the gift cards.

VETERAN SERVICE OFFICE

1ST QUARTER

(DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY)



VSO UPDATES

Operational Access

Derek Giffin, VSO Manager

Full operational access to **VA systems** for claims representation and case management

Authorized to access and work within VA claims platforms supporting Veteran representation

Populated all VetraSpec entries to present.

Justyna Berry, VSO Manager

Full operational access to **VA systems** for claims representation and case management

Authorized to access and work within VA claims platforms supporting Veteran representation

Faris , Veteran Service Officer

Pending: VA TRIP Training (Training, Responsibility, Involvement, and Preparation program required for VA system access)

Completed: NACVSO Basic Benefits Course

Operational Impact

Upon completion of VA TRIP training and 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

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

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA CLAIMS CLINICS- VACCC INITIATIVE

Program Launch: December 2025

- Lead Coordinators: Justyna Berry, VSO Manager & Derek Giffin, VSO Manager
- MST Coordinators

Purpose

- Provide trauma-informed benefits assistance and claims development for Veterans affected by Military Sexual Trauma.
- Reduce barriers to reporting and filing claims.
- Increase access to VA benefits and trauma-informed care.
- Provide confidential, supportive assistance to Veterans navigating MST-related claims.

MST



MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA BENEFITS BRIEF & CLAIMS CLINICS

69 W. WASHINGTON, SUITE 1420, CHICAGO, IL 60602
OR

MICROSOFT TEAMS LINK AVAILABLE TO JOIN ONLINE
MEETING ID: 246 595 814 945 10
PASSCODE: WP9JA3R6

9:00 A.M.- 4:00 PM

JANUARY-MARCH

JANUARY 6, 2026 — MST 101: UNDERSTANDING MST
FEBRUARY 3, 2026— MST & MENTAL HEALTH
MARCH 3, 2026— WOMEN VETERANS MONTH: MST AWARENESS

APRIL-JUNE

APRIL 7, 2026 —MST OUTREACH FOR STUDENT VETERANS
MAY 5, 2026-LGBTQ+ VETERANS & MST
JUNE 2, 2026 —MST, HOMELESSNESS & REENTRY POPULATIONS

JULY-SEPTEMBER

JULY 7, 2026 —MST AMONG DEPLOYED & COMBAT-ERA VETERANS
AUGUST 4, 2026-MST CLAIMS DEEP DIVE (EVIDENCE & STATEMENTS) SEPTEMBER 1, 2026 —BARRIERS TO REPORTING & OTHER DISCHARGES

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

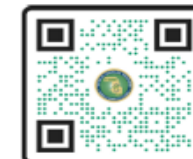
OCTOBER 6, 2026-MST & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH
NOVEMBER 3, 2026 — HEALING PATHWAYS: TRAUMA, GRIEF & IDENTITY

BRIEFING STARTS AT
9:00 A.M.

JUSTYNA.BERRY@COOKCOUNTYIL.GOV
7735206950 (CALL OR TEXT)

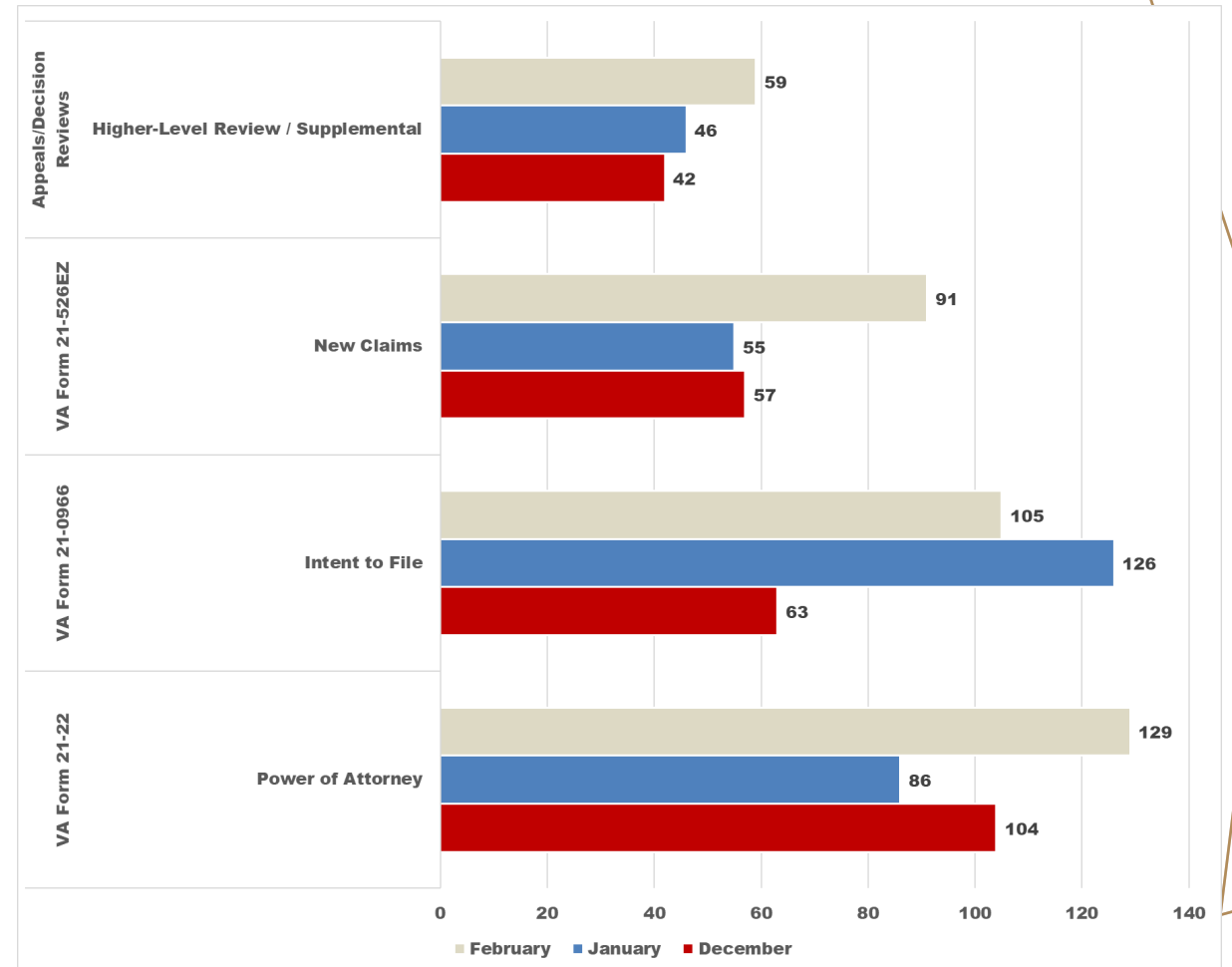
REGISTER:
[HTTPS://FORMS.OFFICE.COM/G/DA/X8PP65D1](https://forms.office.com/G/DA/X8PP65D1)

Scan to RSVP



Q1 OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

- Power of Attorney Established: **319**
 - Intent to File Submissions: **294**
 - New Disability Claims Filed: **203**
 - Higher-Level Review Appeals: **147**
- Over 500 claim actions initiated this quarter.



FINANCIAL IMPACT TO VETERANS

- December Benefits Awarded: **\$91,889.96**
- January Benefits Awarded: **\$97,960.24**
- February Benefits Awarded: **\$121,949.39**

Note: February totals are preliminary. A significant number of claims remain pending VA adjudication and are expected to result in additional retroactive awards.

Total Q1 Impact: \$311,799.59 (delivered to Cook County Veterans)

\$9,392,662.00 in annual VA compensation is currently being delivered to Cook County Veterans represented by VACCC.



OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

1ST QUARTER

(DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY)



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.



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.

Q1 TRACKING DATA BREAKDOWN

QR Code Tracking Data

Metrics gathered through a program which tracks how often people use our QR codes. Captures areas scanned from, unique scans, as well as which QR codes they use.

Intake Form QR Code

Scan: **1137**

VACCC Web Page: **418**

Linktree: **382**

VACCC Facebook Page: **131**



Connect
with us

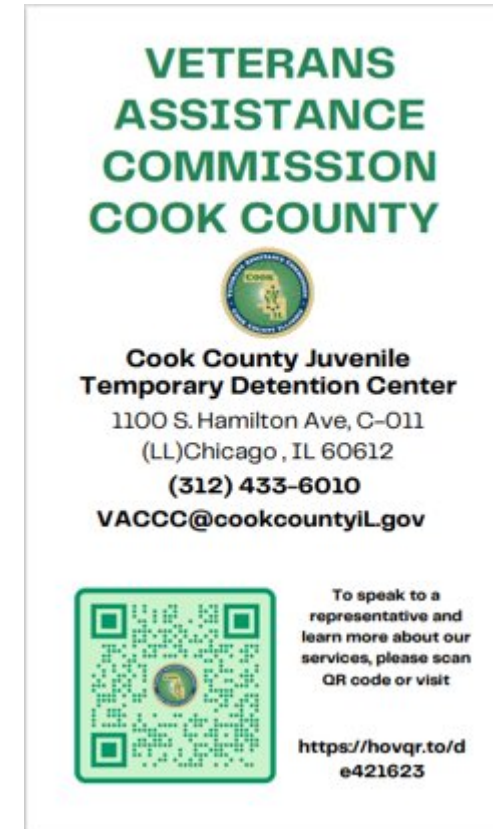


VACCC
[HTTPS://HOVQRTO/E55409
22](https://hovqr.to/e5540922)


Scan now to follows
us on our social media




https://linktr.ee/Veterans_Assistance_Commission



VETERANS
ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION
COOK COUNTY



**Cook County Juvenile
Temporary Detention Center**
1100 S. Hamilton Ave, C-011
(LL)Chicago, IL 60612
(312) 433-6010
VACCC@cookcountyil.gov



To speak to a
representative and
learn more about our
services, please scan
QR code or visit

[https://hovqr.to/d
e421623](https://hovqr.to/de421623)

Q1 TRACKING DATA BREAKDOWN

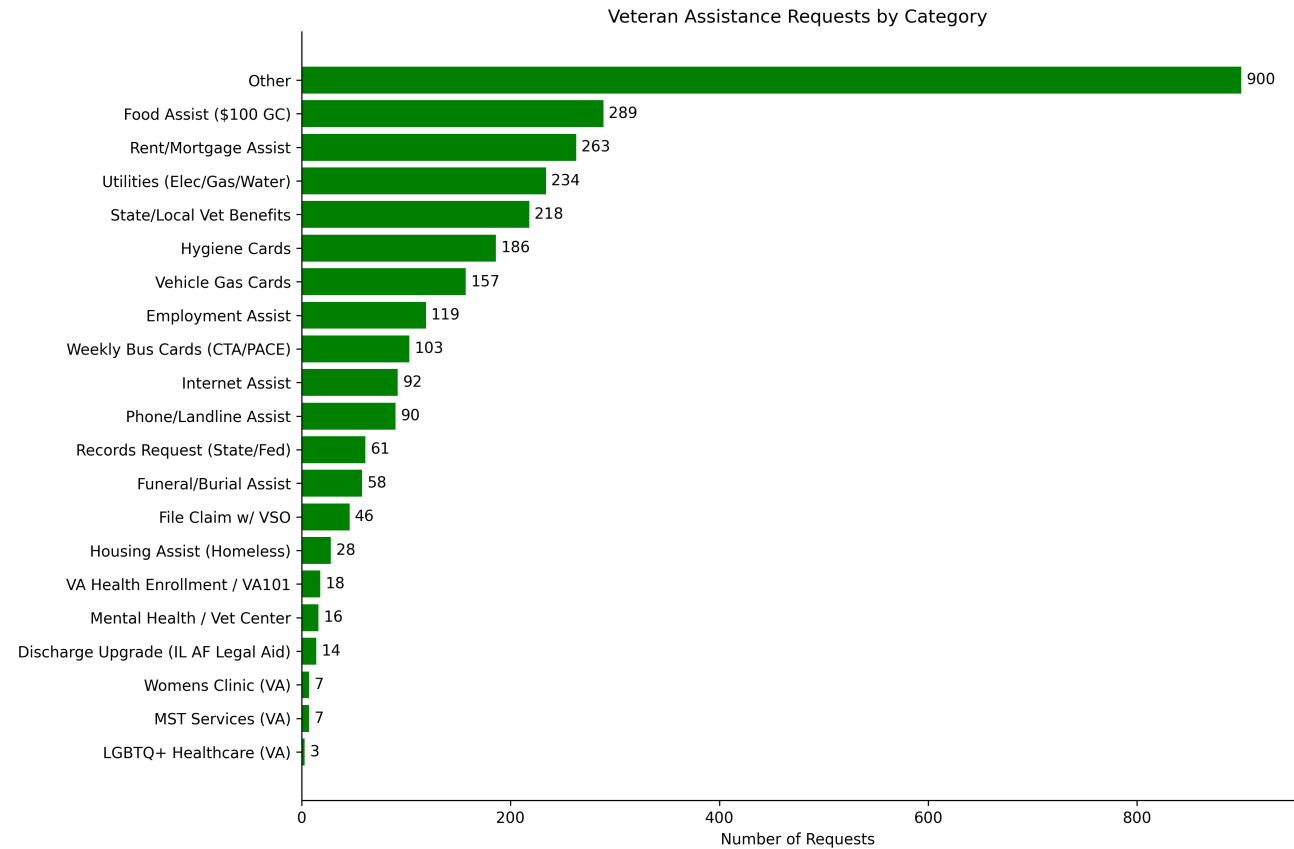
Intake System Metric Breakdown

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): **641**

Total individual services requested: **2,646**

Note: May include duplicates. Used as indicator of outreach interest. Chart and total individual services will denote requests past Q1.



FY26 Q1 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) Q1 Engagement Metrics:

VetConnect Events: **42**

VetTalks: **1**

Resource Events: **32**

Ceremonial: **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

(FY25 Q4 Engagement Metrics (Comparison):

Events Attended: **30** (non-reoccurring office hours)

Office Hour Visits: **37**

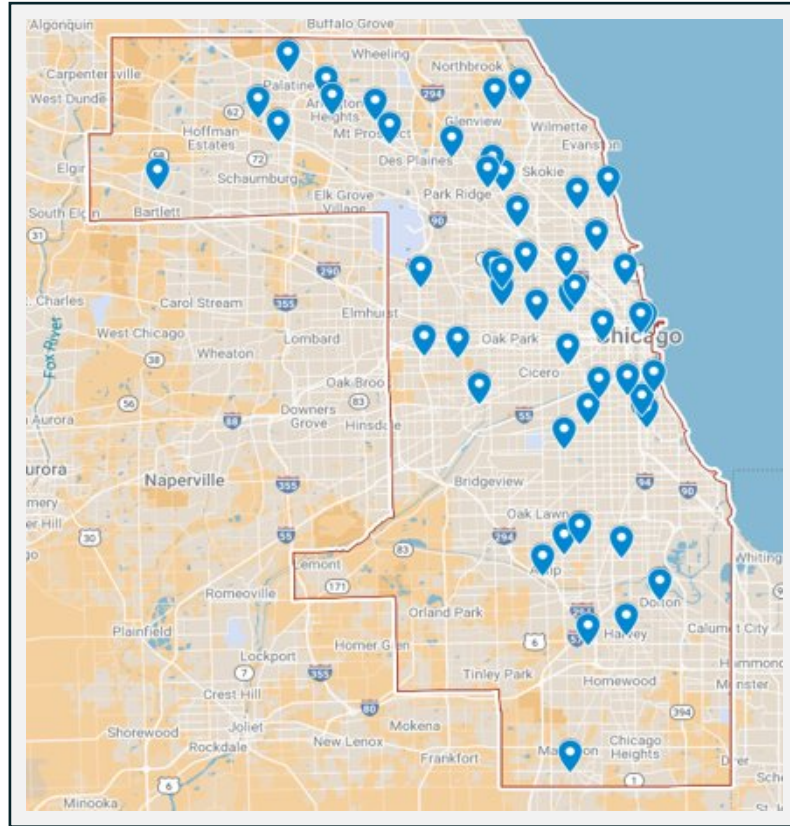
Total Outreach Events: **67**

Total Assisted (intake form submissions
since start of program): **482**

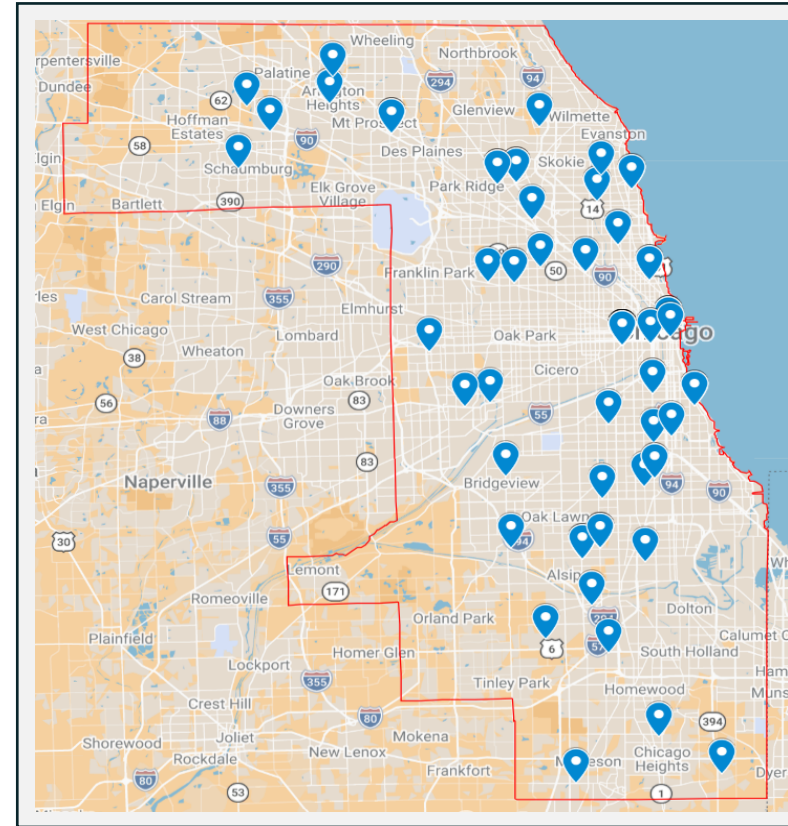
Total Interaction of Veterans: 1,035

This includes all Veterans who attended each event

FY25 Q4 (67 EVENTS)



FY26 Q1 (85 EVENTS)



FY25 Q4 AND FY26 Q1 COMPARISON

FY26 Q1 EVENT LISTINGS

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VACCC Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Timmy Knudsen VetConnect Event	2523 N. Halsted Street Chicago, IL 60614
MST Brief Session Resource Event	69 W Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602
Commissioner Maggie Trevor VetConnect Event	220 W Campbell St, Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Alderman James Gardiner VetConnect Event	5460 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60630
Congresswoman Delia Ramirez SAN Ceremony	1 W Conti Pkwy, Elmwood Park, IL 60707
Commissioner Kevin Morrison VetConnect Event	1325 Wiley Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60173
Alderman Debra Silverstein VetConnect Event	2949 W Devon Ave, Chicago, IL 60659
Worth Township VSO Claims Clinic Resource Event	11601 S Pulaski Rd, Alsip, IL 60803
Commissioner Dr. Kisha E. McCaskill VetConnect Event	13820 Central Park Ave, Robbins, IL 60472
Niles VFW Resource Event	7255 N Caldwell Ave. Niles, IL 60714
Harper College Resource Event	1200 W Algonquin Rd, Palatine, IL 60067
Commissioner Donna Miller VetConnect Event	21737 Jeffrey Ave, Sauk Village, IL 60411
Alderman Matt Martin VetConnect Event	4243 N. Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60618
Alderwoman Maria Hadden VetConnect Event	1447 W Morse Ave, Chicago IL 60626
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VACCC Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen, Chicago, IL 60612
Commissioner Jessica Vásquez VetConnect Event	2934 N. Milwaukee ave, Chicago, IL 60618
Alderman Anthony Napolitano VetConnect Event	7231 West Touhy, Chicago 60631
Frisbie Senior Center Resource Event	52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Commissioner Dr. Kisha McCaskill VetConnect Event	3039B West 159th Street Markham, IL 60428

FY26 Q1 EVENT LISTINGS

Alderman Matt O'Shea VetConnect Event	3207 W 111th St, Chicago, IL 60655
Trickster Cultural Center VetTalk Event	190 S Roselle Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60193
Westchester Village Hall Resource Event	10300 W Roosevelt Rd, Westchester, IL 60154
Alderman Nicole Lee VetConnect Event	3659 S Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60609
Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago IL 60612
VA Medical Unit New Beginnings Resource Event	8140 S Racine Avenue, Chicago, IL 60620
MST Brief & Claims Clinic Resource Event	69 W Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602
Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 s damen ave Chicago,IL 60612
VACCC at Drug Treatment Court Skokie Speaking Event	5600 Old Orchard Road, Skokie, IL 60077
Alderman Ray Lopez Veteran Honor Ceremonial Event	7536 S Harlem Ave, Bridgeview, IL 60455
Worth Township VetTalk	11601 S Pulaski Rd, Alsip, IL 60803
Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 S Damen, Chicago, IL 60612
Commissioner Aguilar's Open House Resource Event	7833 Ogden Avenue, Lyons, IL 60534
Niles VFW Resource Event	7255 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Frisbee Senior Center Resource Event	52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Napolitano Vetconnect Event	7231 w touhy Chicago IL 60631
Alderman Lamont J. Robinson VetConnect Event	928 E. 43rd St, Chicago, IL 60635
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 s. Damen Chicago il 60612
No Veteran Left Behind Speaking Event	69 W Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602

FY26 Q1 EVENT LISTINGS

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S. Damen ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Matt O'Shea VetConnect Event	3207 W 111 St, Chicago, IL 60655
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Timmy Knudsen Vetconnect Event	2523 N. Halsted Street Chicago, IL 60614
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave Unit # C118 - Suite A Chicago, IL 60707
MST Brief and Claims Clinic Speaking Event	69 W Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602
Jesse Brown VAMC Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Debra Silverstein VetConnect Event	2949 W. Devon Ave. Chicago, IL 60659
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center VetConnect Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Auburn Gresham VA Clinic Resource Event	7731 S Halsted St, Chicago IL 60620
Alderman Ray Lopez VetConnect Event	2650 West 51st Street, Chicago, IL 60632
Commissioner Maggie Trevor VetConnect Event	220A W. Campbell St. Arlington Heights, IL 6005
Worth Township Speaking Event	11601 S Pulaski Alsip, IL 60803
Evanston Vetcenter VetConnect Event	1901 W. Howard st Evanston IL 60202
Jesse Brown VA medical center Vetconnect Event	820 S. Damen ave, Chicago IL 60612
Niles VFW Resource Event	7255 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714
University of Illinois - Chicago Office Hours Resource Event	750 S. Halsted Street, Room 248, MC 117, Chicago, IL 60607
Prairie State Resource Event	202 S. Halsted St. Chicago Heights, IL, 60411
University of Illinois - Chicago Office Hours Resource Event	750 S. Halsted Street, Room 248, MC 117, Chicago, IL 60607
Alderman Nicole T. Lee VetConnect Event	3659 S. Halsted St. Chicago, IL 60609
Chicago Vet Center Resource Event	8658 South Sacramento Avenue Chicago, IL 60652

FY26 Q1 EVENT LISTINGS

Jesse Brown VA VetConnect Event	820 S. Damen ave, Chicago IL 60612
Alderman Gilbert Villegas VetConnect Event	6560 W Fullerton Ave, Chicago, IL 60707
Frisbie Senior Center Resource Event	52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL 60016
VOIL Partner Speaking Event	6001 S Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60621
Alderman Anthony Napolitano 41st ward	7231 W Touhy Ave, Chicago IL 60631
Alderman Anthony Quezada VetConnect Event	2934 N Milwaukee Ave, Unit C
VA Medical Mobile Unit St. Leo Resource Event	7750 S Emerald Avenue, Chicago, IL 60620
Alderwoman Ruth Cruz 30th ward VetConnect	5418 w. Belmont ave Chicago IL, 60641
Jesse Brown Medical Center Resource Event	820 S Damen Jesse Brown VAMC Chicago IL 60612
Commissioner Donna Miller VetConnect Event	15440 S Central Ave, Oak Forest IL 60452
Wheeling Township Office Hours Vet Connect	1616 n. Arlington Heights rd Arlington Heights IL 60004
Middle Eastern Conflict Ceremonial Event	11000 Depot St. Worth, IL, 60482
De Paul University Office Hours Resource Event	1 E. Jackson Blvd. 6th Floor, Suite 6070, Chicago, IL 60604
Chicago Heights Vet Cener Resource Event	4511 Sauk Trail, Richton Park, IL 60471
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Office Hours Resource Event	820 S Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60612
Alderman Matt Martin VetConnect Event	4243 N. Lincoln Ave chicago Il 60618
Giles Post 87 Veterans Resource Event	5745 S State St, Chicago, IL 60621
Alderman Maria Hadden VetConnect	1447 W. Morse ave Chicago IL 60626
Alderman Matthew J. O'Shea VetConnect Event	3207 W 111th St., Chicago, IL 60655
Jesse Brown VA VetConnect	820 s damen ave chicago il 60612
Alderman Lamont J Robinson VetConnect Event	928 E. 43rd St, Chicago, IL 60635

FY26 Q1 EVENT LISTINGS

VA Medical Mobile Unit Resources Event (Jesse Brown)	1250 west 119th street chicago il
Coffee and Conversation Speaking Event	8844 Ogden Ave, Brookfield, IL 60513

FY26 Q2 OBJECTIVES

Finalize PowerApps Data System

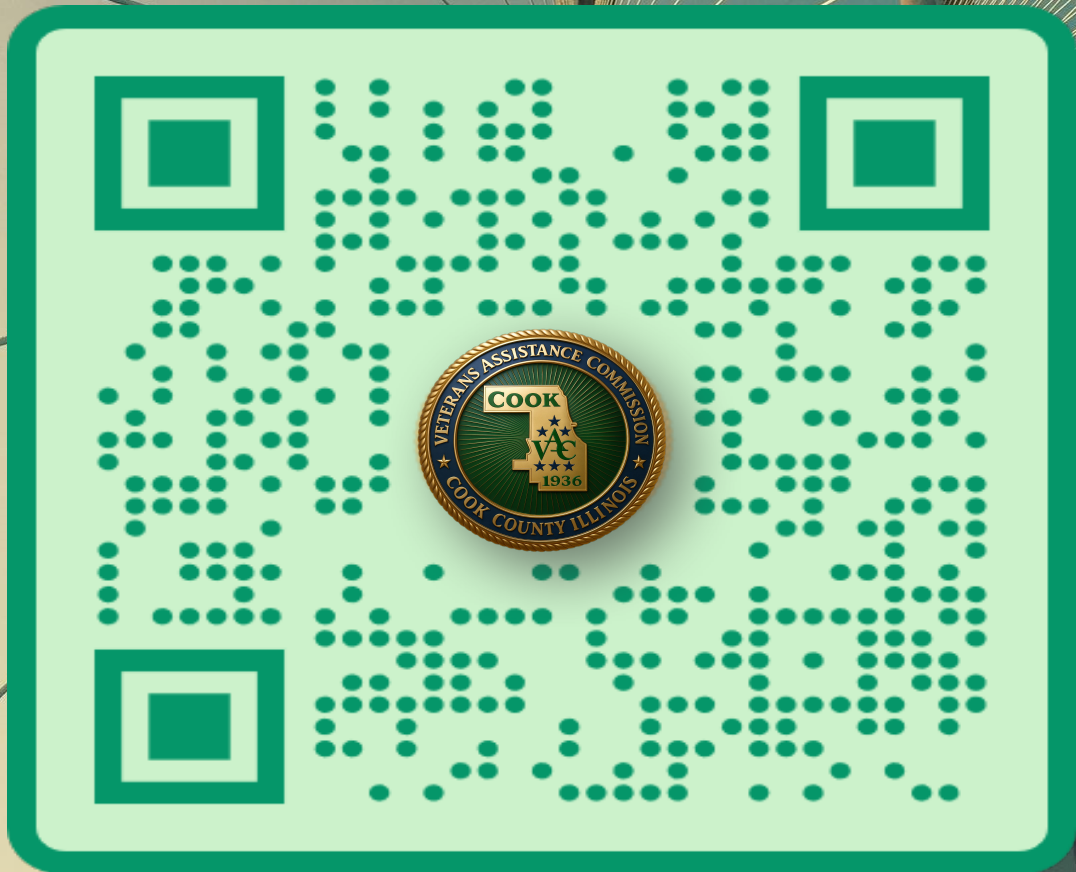
Complete implementation of the VACCC PowerApps platform to **centralize outreach, Emergency Financial Services, and VSO program data** for streamlined reporting and service coordination amongst departments/teams.

Redesign VACCC Website

Launch an updated website that integrates VACCC services, events, and partner resources into a **single, user-friendly platform** for Veterans to easily access assistance, connect with staff, and access Commission records.

Expand and Refine Outreach Operations

Continue growing outreach efforts while refining internal processes to create a **stronger service pipeline** connecting Veterans from field engagement, online platforms, and social media to VACCC programs quickly and efficiently.



HHC (Hamilton Headquarters Chicago)

1100 S. HAMILTON AVE., Suite C-O11, 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

To speak to a representative and learn more about our services, please scan QR code or visit: <https://hovqr.to/de421623>