



MONTHLY MUSTER

NOVEMBER 2025

LUTHER VILLAGE VETERANS BREAKFAST

NOVEMBER 8, 2025

On November 8, 2025, the community at Luther Village in Arlington Heights hosted its annual Veterans Breakfast and Celebration, bringing together more than 170 Veterans, family members, and local leaders for a morning of recognition and fellowship. The event served as an opportunity to honor the service and sacrifices of area Veterans while strengthening the bonds that support them throughout the community.

The VACCC was proud to participate in this year's gathering. VACCC Vice President Dutch Degroot, along with members of the VACCC staff, attended the breakfast to show support and stand alongside partners across the region.

They joined Terry Prince, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA), as well as leaders from local American Legion and VFW chapters, who offered remarks of gratitude and encouragement to those in attendance.

The morning also featured remarks from Arlington Heights Mayor Jim Tinaglia, who spoke about the importance of recognizing Veterans' contributions and ensuring that they continue to receive the care, respect, and services they deserve.

His message echoed the spirit of the event - one rooted in appreciation, unity, and community support.

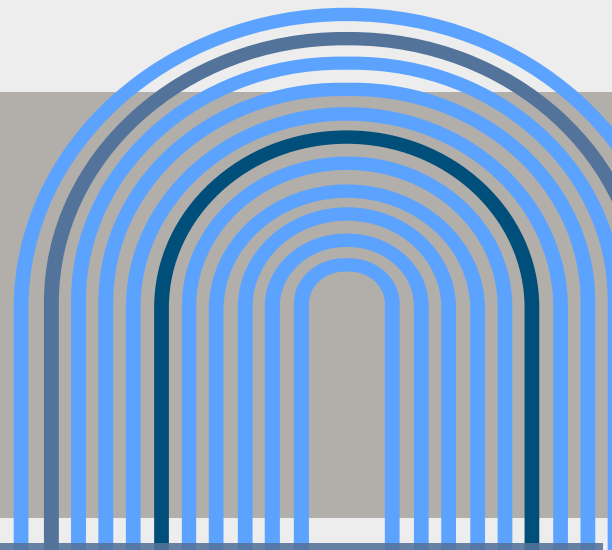
After the formal program, VACCC staff remained available to speak with Veterans, discuss available services, and answer questions related to claims, benefits, and emergency financial assistance. The event offered an excellent opportunity for the VACCC to share its mission, connect with local Veterans, and reinforce its commitment to serving those who served.



VACCC



Veterans Assistance Commission
Cook County



A NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



ELIZABETH D. SOTO
SUPERINTENDENT

As we close the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2025, I am incredibly proud to share the progress, measurable impact, and strategic growth the Veterans Assistance Commission has achieved. This quarter reflects not only increased demand for our services, but also the extraordinary dedication of our VAC staff, leadership team, and partners who continue to uphold our mission with compassion and excellence.

Key Increases in Assistance (Q3 to Q4):

- Rent Assistance: +120%
- Burial & Memorial Assistance: +304%
- Food Cards: +42%
- Personal Hygiene Cards: +22%
- Water Assistance: +39%

Special Programs (Veteran Disbursements)

- September: \$98,600.85
- October: \$111,759.28 – the highest single-month disbursement in VACCC history
- November: \$74,907.74

Totaling \$285,267.87. Q4 Direct Disbursements to Cook County Veterans.

FY25 FOURTH QUARTER IMPACT & SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

The 4th quarter of FY25 was one of our strongest to date. Our team increased engagement with Veterans at an unprecedented level of assistance across Cook County.

Service Activity

- **991** in-office Veteran visits across September, October, and November
- **1,571** calls handled, ensuring crisis response, and benefit support
- **67** outreach events throughout Cook County, expanding our presence in both suburban and city districts
- **181** newly enrolled Veterans receiving services for the first time

Behind each number is a Veteran who came to the VAC seeking stability and support and our staff delivered.

Financial Assistance Delivered

In Q4, the VACCC provided **\$332,267.87** in direct financial assistance. This surge from Q3 reflects a rise in emergency needs and the growing trust Veterans place in our team.

A NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Operational and Program Strength

Throughout the quarter, our office continued elevating operational consistency, including:

- Delivering the highest monthly financial aid ever recorded (October)
- Strengthening our district partnerships, serving Veterans across all 17 Commissioner districts
- Continued success with our QR-code intake system, significantly increasing service accessibility
- Launching new initiatives such as the Senior Veteran Computer Literacy Program and enhancing claims and transportation support

Looking ahead: FY26 Priorities and Growth

As we prepare for FY26, our focus is strategic, data-driven, and aligned with the evolving needs of our Veteran community.

Planned Priorities for FY26

- Strengthening Housing Support Programs
Growing demand signals the need for enhanced rent, mortgage, and utility assistance strategies.
- Expanding VSO Coverage Across Cook County
Continued onboarding of VSOs and building toward our FY26 division structure.

- Enhancing Outreach in High-Need Districts
Q4 district data will guide targeted outreach, ensuring no Veteran is left underserved.
- Operational Expansion Upon Completion of the New VACCC Facility
Staffing will be phased in beginning FY26 to support expanded programming and community services.
- Greater Focus on Crisis Support and Rapid Response
Surges in burial, food, and emergency housing assistance highlight the need for enhanced rapid-deployment resources.

Closing Thoughts

The strength of the VACCC lies in our people: our VSOs, outreach team, administrative staff, leadership and partners. Their work ensures that every Veteran who walks through our doors receives not just assistance, but a path forward.

As Superintendent, I remain committed to upholding the integrity of our mission, strengthening our presence in every community, ensuring equitable access to services AND Advocating for the resources needed to meet rising demands.

FY25 was a year of growth, impact, and resilience. FY26 will be our year of expansion, modernization, and strengthened support for our Cook County Veterans and their families.

With gratitude and respect,



Superintendent

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County

69 WEST WASHINGTON GRAND OPENING NOVEMBER 14, 2025

The VACCC formally opened its newest service location at 69 West Washington, marking a significant step forward in expanding accessible, centralized support for Veterans across Cook County. The ribbon-cutting ceremony brought together VACCC leadership - including President Frank Gutierrez—alongside community partners and county officials such as President Toni Preckwinkle, Commissioner Tara Stamps, Commissioner Josina Morita, and representatives from Commissioner Miller’s office. Their attendance underscored the

county’s shared commitment to strengthening the network of services available to those who served. The new office will be managed by Justyna Berry, who will oversee daily operations, staff coordination, and direct engagement with Veterans seeking assistance.

The 69 West Washington location is built to function as a comprehensive resource hub, offering full VSO claims and benefits services, on-site benefits counseling, and guidance navigating federal, state, and county programs.

In a major enhancement to VACCC’s service model, the site will also operate as a specialized MST triage point, providing a confidential and trauma-informed entryway for survivors of Military Sexual Trauma. Trained staff will assist Veterans in accessing clinical care, crisis resources, financial supports, and long-term case coordination.

VACCC leadership emphasized that this new downtown location addresses the growing need for fast, reliable, in-person support in the heart of Chicago’s civic center. By combining claims expertise with targeted MST triage capabilities, the office aims to reduce barriers to care and ensure timely, compassionate assistance.



Stand Up Veteran's Day Awards Musical & Luncheon

November 15, 2025

The VACCC had the privilege of attending the Stand Up Veteran's Day Awards Musical & Luncheon, hosted by the Arthur Lockhart Resource Institute in partnership with Congressman Danny K. Davis. Held at Healing Temple Church on Chicago Avenue, the event brought together Veterans, families, community leaders, and faith partners for a powerful afternoon of recognition and reflection.

The ceremony featured remarks from a distinguished lineup of officials, including Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, Congressman Danny K. Davis, Alderman Chris Taliaferro, Alderwoman Emma Mitts, State Representative LaShawn Ford, State Representative Camille Y. Lilly, and Cook County Commissioner Tara Stamps. Each spoke on the challenges and opportunities facing Veterans, as well as the broader issues impacting the citizens of Chicago and Cook County. Their collective message emphasized unity, continued advocacy, and the responsibility to protect and uplift those who served.

Following the program, VACCC staff were grateful to stay on-site to support the Veteran community directly. Our team provided assistance with VA claims and benefits, Emergency Financial Services, resource referrals, and general navigation of federal, state, and county programs. We were honored to contribute to an event centered on appreciation, service, and community strength.

Events like Stand Up Veteran's Day highlight the importance of partnership across government, community organizations, and local advocates. The VACCC remains committed to working alongside these leaders to ensure every Veteran in Cook County receives accessible, compassionate, and comprehensive support.



VSO Corner

Our Veterans Service Officers continued to deliver strong, steady support throughout November, helping Veterans and their families move closer to the benefits they've earned. The numbers below reflect the dedicated work happening every day across our offices.

Power of Attorney Support (VA Form 21-22)

We assisted **111** Veterans in designating representation , an essential first step that ensures they have skilled advocacy throughout their claims journey.

Intent to File Submissions (VA Form 21-0966)

VACCC filed **91** Intent to File forms this month, protecting Veterans' effective dates and securing their place in line for future benefits.

New Claims Filed (VA Form 21-526EZ)

Our team submitted **53** new claims, each one representing a Veteran's story, their service, and their right to be heard and supported.

Appeals & Decision Reviews

We submitted **34** appeals and higher-level reviews, standing by Veterans who are seeking clarity, correction, or a second look at their previous VA decisions.

Total Claims Submitted in November: 87

These numbers reflect more than activity, they show impact. Every form, every conversation, and every claim moved a Veteran closer to stability, care, and recognition. Our VSO team continues to lead with compassion, accuracy, and a commitment to meeting Veterans where they are.

December is already shaping up to build on this momentum, and we look forward to continuing to expand outreach, claims support, and community partnerships across Cook County.

NOVEMBER 2025 CLAIMS & APPEALS ACTIVITY – SERVING COOK COUNTY'S VETERANS

Contact Us



Scan now to follow
us on our Social
Media



Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center

1100 S. Hamilton Ave, C-011

(LL)Chicago , IL 60612

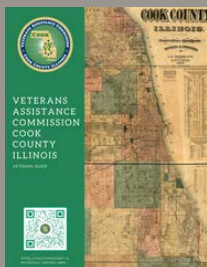
(312) 433-6010

VACCC@cookcountyil.gov



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representative and
learn more about our
services, please scan
QR code or visit

<https://hovqr.to/de421623>



For a Digital Copy of our
Veterans Resources
Guide please scan



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