



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

600 Washington Street, 7th floor

Boston, MA 02111

TEL: (617) 210-5480 FAX: (617) 210-5755 TTY: (617) 210-5883

www.mass.gov/veterans

MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR

JON SANTIAGO, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

October 8, 2024

Steven T. James
House Clerk
State House, Room 145
Boston, MA 02133

Michael D. Hurley
Senate Clerk
State House, Room 335
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Clerk James and Clerk Hurley,

Pursuant to Section 41 of Chapter 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws, please find enclosed a report submitted by the Veterans Homes Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Santiago".

Jon Santiago

CC:

Secretary Kate Walsh, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Senator Michael Rodrigues, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Representative Aaron Michlewitz, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Senator John Velis, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
Representative Gerard Cassidy, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
Senator Julian Cyr, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health
Representative Marjorie Decker, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health

Veterans Homes Council Annual Report

September 2024

Massachusetts Veterans Home Council Annual Report
Table of Contents

Introduction

Overview & Current Initiatives

- (A) Census and Demographics
- (B) Revenues Received and Expended
- (C) Recommendations
- (D) Staffing Levels
- (E) Grievances and Resolutions
- (F) Regional Equity and Access Recommendations

Introduction

Pursuant to Section 41 of Chapter 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Veterans Homes Council must submit an annual report:

“The report shall include: (A) the census and demographics of each state-operated veterans’ home; (B) an accounting of all revenues received and expended; (C) any recommendations for improvements to the homes; (D) a description of staffing levels at each home and a determination as to whether staffing levels meet industry standards; (E) a list of complaints, charges or recommendations from patients, family members and guardians and corresponding actions taken; (F) recommendations to increase regional equity and accessibility and to provide for equitable access for people of all identities including, but not limited to, race, religion, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation; and (G) all other matters the council considers pertinent. The council shall consider in its reports the needs of the changing veteran population in the commonwealth, including, but not limited to, service-related injuries, mental health and gender related needs. This report shall be submitted to the governor, the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs annually and not later than September 30.”

Overview of the Massachusetts Veterans Homes & Current Initiatives

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts operates two Veterans homes: the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea and the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke, which are collectively referred to in this report as the “Homes.” The Homes focus primarily on providing two major services for Massachusetts veterans: long-term care (i.e., nursing facility) and domiciliary residential services (i.e., room accommodations, daily meals, and social services). Both Homes have a five-member Board of Trustees, each appointed to a seven-year term. The Homes’ mission is to provide services and care to Massachusetts veterans with dignity, honor, and respect.

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

Earlier this year, the MVH at Chelsea moved all long-term care residents into a brand new, state-of-the-art facility based on the latest model recommended by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. This move is consistent with Chelsea’s continued focus on improving the overall quality of life and sense of well-being for our veterans through quality care, interactive activities, and programs that foster connection and community. One current initiative is increasing access to safe and secure outdoor spaces for veterans to relax and enjoy fresh air with their fellow veterans and family.

The MVH at Chelsea also achieved Massachusetts Department of Public Health licensure and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services certification this year. This significant accomplishment was the result of collaborative work with the staff at MVH Chelsea and leadership at the Executive Office of Veterans Services. Staff at MVH Chelsea enhanced their understanding of and compliance with strict and rigorous regulatory standards and implemented new policies and procedures.

The MVH at Chelsea has been focused on internal enhancements for operational efficiency, veteran quality of care, and daily quality of life. The MVH at Chelsea is beginning a major initiative to increase operational efficiency and quality of care by implementing a modern electronic medical record (EMR) system, which will support coordinated patient care and ease administrative burdens. The current goal is to implement the EMR in the MVH at Chelsea starting in November 2024. In addition to operational efficiency, the MVH at Chelsea is enhancing its quality of care by expanding its Quality Assurance and

Performance Improvement program. This program involves identifying opportunities for improvement in areas of clinical care, resident satisfaction, and staff performance. Lastly, staff at MVH Chelsea is currently exploring enhancements to the dining experience for our veterans by utilizing the new facility's amenities and capabilities to create a more personalized and enjoyable dining environment.

The domiciliary campus at the MVH Chelsea is also undergoing significant investment and evolution. The MVH at Chelsea domiciliary campus is being redeveloped through a public-private partnership with Pennrose, LLC. The project will result in a complete renovation of the domiciliary campus and the creation of approximately 240 100% veterans' preference affordable housing. The plan accommodates all current domiciliary residents into the new housing units and will offer new, state-of-the-art living quarters for veterans.

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

Earlier this year, the Healey Driscoll administration celebrated the groundbreaking of a new, state-of-the-art long-term care facility at Holyoke. MVH at Holyoke is in the process of constructing this new replacement facility with \$263.5 million in federal funding from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and \$141.9 million in funding from the Commonwealth. With the support of the Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), the building is in the steel infrastructure phase which is expected to be completed in November. A "Topping Off" ceremony is being planned, which will celebrate the last beam being put in place. Veterans and staff will be able to sign this last beam before it is raised and added to the building. The new building remains on schedule for occupancy in 2026. Recent capital repairs to MVH at Holyoke included work to the roof and façade.

The MVH at Holyoke has taken several positive steps to augment quality of care, operational efficiency, and staff recruitment and retention. The first major achievement is securing Massachusetts Department of Public Health licensure as a long-term care provider in July 2024. This accomplishment was the result of collaborative work with the staff at MVH Holyoke and leadership at the Executive Office of Veterans Services. Staff at MVH Holyoke enhanced their understanding of and compliance with strict and rigorous regulatory standards and implemented new policies and procedures. MVH Holyoke will be pursuing certification from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in the coming year.

MVH Holyoke has also enhanced operational efficiency by begin implementing the modern electronic medical record system in September 2024. This system will support coordinated patient care and ease administrative burdens. EOVS leadership is actively engaged in support MVH Holyoke's implementation.

MVH Holyoke has also taken initiative to increase veteran quality of life through miscellaneous activities and enrichment events through the Employee Activities Committee. This is a long-standing committee that plans activities outside of the Home, including attending baseball games, events at various lodges and posts, and other off campus events. These excursions improve the overall quality of life and sense of well-being for our veterans through interactive activities and programs to foster connection, community, and a sense of belonging. A current initiative is to increase access to safe and secure outdoor spaces to relax and enjoy the fresh air with their fellow veterans and family. A newer Employee Engagement Committee plans events works to make a day in the life of a staff member a little easier, including arranging for food trucks for staff, and food and school supply drives.

Census and Demographics:

Massachusetts Veteran Homes at Chelsea

The table below summarizes the total long-term care and domiciliary populations at the MVH at Chelsea as of June 30, 2024. Over the last year, the long-term care facility had 40 admissions, 13 discharges and a waiting list of 117 while the domiciliary had 10 admissions, 19 discharges and 0 veterans on the waiting list.

	Long-Term Care		Domiciliary		Totals	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
WWII	4	4%	0	0%	4	2%
Korea	22	20%	1	1%	23	11%
Vietnam	64	59%	50	46%	114	52%
Lebanon	4	4%	1	1%	5	2%
Grenada	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%
Persian Gulf	2	2%	21	19%	23	11%
Iraq/Afghanistan	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Peace Time	13	12%	35	32%	48	22%
Total	109		109		218	
Men	106	97%	100		206	94%
Women	3	3%	9		12	6%

	Long-Term Care		Domiciliary	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
95 and over	8	7%	0	0
90 – 94	19	17%	0	0
80 – 89	25	23%	13	12%
70 – 79	41	38%	40	37%
60 – 69	15	14%	38	35%
Less than 60	1	1%	18	17%
Total	109		109	

	Long Term Care	Domiciliary
Caucasian	107	81
African American	2	19
American Indian		1
Hispanic		7
Pacific Islands		1

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

The table below summarizes the total long-term care populations at the MVH at Holyoke as of June 30, 2024. Over the last year, the long-term care facility had 47 admissions, 37 discharges and a waiting list of 97 for long-term care.

	Long-Term Care	
	Number	Percent
WWII	10	28%
Korea	28	23%
Vietnam	71	61%
Lebanon	0	0
Grenada	0	0
Persian Gulf	1	1%
Iraq/Afghanistan	0	0
Peace Time	7	6%
Total	117	
Men	113	97%
Women	4	3%

	Long-Term Care	
	Number	Percent
90 and over	38	32%
80 – 89	46	40%
70 – 79	29	25%
60 – 69	4	3%
Less than 60	0	0
Total	117	

	Long Term Care	
	Long Term Care	Domiciliary
Caucasian	114	97%
African American	3	3%
American Indian		1
Hispanic		7
Pacific Islands		1

Revenues Received and Expended:

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

The MVH at Chelsea received an appropriation of \$52 million in FY2024 which includes staffing of 400 FTE and revenue of \$10.5 million.

Appropriation Number	Appropriation Name	FY 24 GAA
4190-0010	Administration and Operations	51,351,027
4180-1100	Retained Revenue	600,000
	Total	\$ 51,951,027

Revenue Source	Revenue Source Description	FY 24 GAA
3504	Reimb - Blue Cross Blue Shield	1,506
3505	Reimb - Other Insurance	3,616
3506	Reimb - Direct Patient Payer	1,326,238
3508	Free Meals	25,000
3545	Reimb - Medicare Part D	108,347
4531	Sale of Special Plates	600,000
5203	Medicare Reimbursement	12,668
5204	VA Per Diem Domiciliary Care	2,256,336
5205	VA Per Diem Long Term Care	6,137,150
6900	Miscellaneous	30,000
	Total	\$ 10,500,861

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

The MVH at Holyoke received an appropriation of \$30 million in FY2024 which includes staffing of 356 FTE and revenue of \$6.7 million.

Appropriation Number	Appropriation Name	FY 24 GAA
4190-0010	Administration and Operations	28,728,578
4190-0103	Canteen Retained Revenue	50,000
4190-0300	12 Bed Retained Revenue	824,198
4180-1100	Retained Revenue	400,000
	Total	\$ 30,002,776

Revenue Source	Revenue Source Description	FY 24 GAA
3505	Reimb - Other Insurance	1,677
3506	Reimb - Direct Patient Payer	685,500
3508	Free Meals	30,000
3545	Reimb - Medicare Part D	76,985
4000	Occupancy/Rent Fees	75,000
4033	Agent Rental Service Fee	1,500
4500	Miscellaneous Sales	400
4531	Sale of Special Plates	400,000
4556	Holyoke Canteen Revenue	50,000
5205	VA Per Diem Long Term Care	5,342,034
6900	Miscellaneous	12,000
	Total	\$ 6,675,096

Recommendations:

Electronic Medical Record system (EMR)

Both Massachusetts Homes at Chelsea and Holyoke should complete the implementation of an Electronic Medical Record system. While the Homes are currently undergoing EMR implementation, this report recommends EOVS continue implementation and work to continuously expand its adoption and improve its usage.

Standardize and Professionalize

This report recommends EOVS continue to prioritize standardizing and professionalizing policies and procedures at both Homes. EOVS has recently engaged with a professional consultant to inventory existing policies, craft new policies, and work with EOVS to implement them.

Equity

This report recommends the Homes continue to focus on equity, including regional equity, staff equity, and veteran access equity. In reviewing regional equity, the Homes may consider how to reach and attract veteran residents from throughout the entire state, as well as explore the possibility of expanding the Massachusetts Veteran Homes to additional regions. The Homes may also explore staff equity, including further increasing staff diversity and supporting staff through career pathways. Lastly, the Homes may consider methods to expand engagement with prospective residents to promote a more diverse veteran resident population.

Engagement

The Massachusetts Veteran Homes have an opportunity to increase engagement with their host communities, the veteran community, and the healthcare community. This report recommends exploring partnerships and collaboration with all possible stakeholders, including local community groups, elected officials, veteran volunteer groups, and healthcare institutions. The updated definition of a veteran in the recently passed HERO Act is a positive development that can support engagement efforts moving forward.

Staffing Levels:

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

Department	# Positions FTE	# of Staff	# of Vacancy
Administration	14	10	4
Facility Operations	32	23	9
Finance	14	11	3
Food Services	56	48	9
House Keeping	43	40	3
Medical Staff	7	5	2
Nursing Administration	37	28	9
Nursing – RN	14	13	1
Nursing – LPN	28	27	1
Nursing – CNA	94	89	4
Public Safety	17	13	4
Recreation	14	4	10
Residential Services	16	15	1
Social Services	6	6	0
Therapy (PT, OT, SLP)	9	6	3
Total	400	337	63

The MVH at Chelsea staffing pattern is developed by analyzing a variety of key factors, including resident needs, census levels, and the complexity of care required. This involves reviewing shift coverage, staff-to-resident ratios, and peak activity times to ensure an appropriate number of caregivers, nurses, and support staff are on duty at all times.

The effectiveness of staffing levels is also monitored through incident reports, resident feedback, and staff input. A balanced workforce is maintained by regularly assessing workload distribution and adjusting schedules to ensure consistent, high-quality care for our veterans. Staffing patterns are monitored and informed through ongoing data analysis and performance reviews to ensure that staffing patterns are consistent with safe, efficient, and compassionate care. Comparative analysis of staffing levels in long term care are often focused on direct care staff. The average direct care staffing in June was 7.68 staff Hours per Resident Day - .76 RN, 1.33 LPN, 5.68 CNA, which is well above industry standards.

To better recruit, retain, and support staff, MVH has implemented several new initiatives aimed at supporting and attracting qualified staff. First, MVH at Chelsea updated its hiring strategy to attract candidates with higher skill sets to ensure we meet the growing demands of our veterans and the organization. This update prioritizes individuals who bring advanced expertise, technical proficiency, and a strong background in their respective fields. This recruitment strategy enhances the team's ability to deliver high-quality care, innovate, and address complex challenges effectively.

MVH Chelsea is also investing in current staff, particularly through its new onboarding and inclusivity programs. The MVH at Chelsea Staff Development team provides oncoming staff with a 5-day orientation process where new staff members are introduced to a variety of departments and complete hands-on competencies for procedures and equipment. Staff also receive other annual training including dementia training, infection control requirements, Antibiotic Stewardship, Patient Centered Care, Medication Administration and Management, Effective Communication, Behavioral Health/De-escalation, Abuse, Neglect, Misappropriation and Exploitation, Environment of care, safety and security, Emergency Management and the state assigned MassAchieve classes.

To further invest in frontline staff, EOVS worked with SEIU 888 to implement a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to establish a career ladder for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) at the MVH Chelsea. This joint initiative aims to equitably recognize qualified bargaining unit staff and provides CNAs an opportunity for career advancement within their field. The MOA delineates the creation of position descriptions, staffing needs assessments at each facility, and the promotion process for eligible employees. It also memorializes the position descriptions that will be used for all levels of the Nursing Assistant job series, addresses current staffing needs at each Massachusetts Veterans Home, and describes the reclassification and promotion process moving forward. For over 30 years, CNAs at the Massachusetts Veterans Homes have primarily been classified at the entry-level CNA 1 position, with only a few reaching the CNA 2 level. With the introduction of the nurse career ladder, employees will now progress through four levels of the CNA job series based on their skills, experience, and responsibilities.

Over the last year, MVH at Chelsea provided all staff with training for “LGBTQ Identities and Advocacy” and are in the process of completing a course titled “Understanding Military Culture”, an intense 350+ hour course that provides education on post-traumatic stress disorder, crisis response and military culture. These two trainings provide staff with greater awareness and cultural fluency to provide better care to veterans and collaborate with colleagues.

MVH Chelsea regularly hosts various types of professional development training designed to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and competencies of our staff through continuous training and professional development opportunities. The training program is designed to ensure that the team remains up to date with the latest healthcare practices, regulatory requirements, and resident care techniques. By focusing on areas such as clinical skills, leadership development, and resident-centered care, MVH at Chelsea is building a highly qualified workforce capable of delivering the highest quality care to our residents. The goal of training is to increase mentorship, career growth, and cross-functional collaboration to create cohesive and capable teams, resulting in higher quality services for veterans.

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

Department	# Positions FTE	# of Staff	# of Vacancy
Administration	10	10	0
Facility Operations	13	13	0
Finance	12	9	3
Food Services	41	32	9
House Keeping	31	25	6
Medical Staff	6	5	1
Nursing Administration	21	22	-1
Nursing – RN	21	28	-7
Nursing – LPN	43	30	13
Nursing – CNA	82	94	-12
Public Safety	5	6	-1
Recreation	11	10	1
Social Services	5	5	0
Total	302	289	13

The MVH Holyoke staffing pattern is developed by analyzing a variety of key factors, including resident needs, census levels, and the complexity of care required. This involves reviewing shift coverage, staff-to-resident ratios, and peak activity times to ensure an appropriate number of caregivers, nurses, and support staff are on duty at all times.

The effectiveness of staffing levels is also monitored through incident reports, resident feedback, and staff input. A balanced workforce is maintained by regularly assessing workload distribution and adjusting schedules to ensure consistent, high-quality care for our veterans. Staffing patterns are monitored and informed through ongoing data analysis and performance reviews to ensure that staffing patterns are consistent with safe, efficient, and compassionate care. Comparative analysis of staffing levels in long term care are often focused on direct care staff. Comparative analysis of staffing levels in long term care are often focused on direct care staff. The average direct care staffing for FY 24 were 6.72 staff Hours per Resident Day – 1.0 RN, 1.3 LPN, 4.4 CNA, which is well above industry standards.

MHV Holyoke has made significant investments in staff training and professional development.

Holyoke’s Staff Development team maintains a high level of education for both clinical and non-clinical departments throughout the Home. Orientation is a 5-day process where new staff members are introduced to a variety of departments and complete hands-on competencies for procedures and equipment. This education is refreshed annually at the MVH’s Safety Fair. This fair includes presentations from Human Resources, Occupational Health, Infection Prevention, Social Work, Facilities, Informatics and Central Supply. Other annual trainings include dementia training, infection control refreshers, Antibiotic Stewardship, Patient Centered Care Fair/Annual Competencies, Medication Administration and Management, Medication Administration Competency, Nebulizer Treatment Competency, LGBTQ Identities and Advocacy, Effective Communication, Trauma Informed Care, Behavioral Health/De-escalation and the state assigned MassAchieve classes. MVH Holyoke is working to develop a standard

exit interview to be conducted with any staff member who leaves the organization after their probationary period.

To further invest in frontline staff, EOVS worked with SEIU 888 to implement a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to establish a career ladder for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) at the MVH Holyoke. This joint initiative aims to equitably recognize qualified bargaining unit staff and provides CNAs an opportunity for career advancement within their field. The MOA delineates the creation of position descriptions, staffing needs assessments at each facility, and the promotion process for eligible employees. It also memorializes the position descriptions that will be used for all levels of the Nursing Assistant job series, addresses current staffing needs at each Massachusetts Veterans Home, and describes the reclassification and promotion process moving forward. For over 30 years, CNAs at the Massachusetts Veterans Homes have primarily been classified at the entry-level CNA 1 position, with only a few reaching the CNA 2 level. With the introduction of the nurse career ladder, employees will now progress through four levels of the CNA job series based on their skills, experience, and responsibilities.

This past year, MVH at Holyoke completed a class called Leading an Empowered Organization, where 40 formal and informal leaders participated, learning techniques to strengthen the bonds with line staff and engaging them in decision making. The Staff Development team is working to create training available to all staff based on this class. MVH Holyoke also presented a class in Civility and Respect to all staff.

MVH at Holyoke Human Resources staff worked in collaboration with the Volunteer Coordinator to establish relationships with surrounding schools. The team attends various hiring events to recruit both full time staff and volunteers.

MVH at Holyoke has three employee recognition programs. The first is the "You're Awesome" kudos card. This card is given to an employee by another employee to recognize a job well done, an extra effort or a helping hand in making the day better for veterans and staff. All recipients of a "You're Awesome" card are called out in that week's Staff Update email. The second employee recognition is the "Value Victor" award, an Employee of the Month program. This staff member is nominated by another employee. These nominations are blinded and reviewed by a committee of fellow staff members that make a final selection. The Value Victor has their picture place in the Value Victor display for the year and they get a preferred parking space. The third employee recognition is the MVH at Holyoke Challenge Coin. These coins are only issued by the Executive Director and the Director of Nursing and go to staff members who have truly gone above and beyond. Only a few of these coins have been issued thus far but this program will grow in meaning and recognition over time.

Grievances and Resolutions:

The EOVS Ombudsperson program was established in 2023 and includes two positions with responsibility for each of the Massachusetts Veterans Homes. These individuals work closely with residents, families, staff and leadership with a focus on resident rights. One critical piece of this role is to receive concerns, report them to EOVS, and to engage in problem-solving to reach an effective resolution. When issues or complaints are raised, the ombudspersons engage in reporting, investigation and collaboration with personnel best able to resolve the issue.

When issues or complaints are raised, follow-up includes reporting, investigation and collaboration with personnel best able to resolve the issue. For example, if a resident were to tell a nurse that they are receiving the wrong meal, the nurse will connect with a food service supervisor, and they would resolve the issue together. The nurse then ensures the change was made. A supervisor or manager oversees the resolution process with confirmation that the staff member was educated and is performing their work in a resident-centered manner. Follow-up with the complainant provides updates and the status of the problem resolution and validates that the issue was resolved. In the rare case that an issue is not resolvable, the reason is explained to the complainant.

At the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea (MVH at Chelsea), a total of 38 issues or complaints were received with all but one being resolved. Examples include Access to Information (3), Clinical Care (3), Dietary (3), Social (3), Resident to Resident Issues (6), Environment (9).

At the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke (MVH at Holyoke), a total of 129 issues or complaints were received with all but three being resolved. Examples include Dietary (5), Resident to Resident Issues (39), Environment (25) and Family Related (21). Staff training supports and encourages residents to share any concern.

Regional Equity and Access:

The Healey-Driscoll Administration reviewed the Massachusetts Veterans Homes as part of its inaugural Equity Assessment required through Executive Order No. 612, *Instituting the Practice of Equity Assessment Government-Wide and Creating the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Increasing Equity Through Data*. The Homes received a grade of “On the Right Track” using criteria that assessed Access, Fairness, Transparency, Accountability, and Accessibility.

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

MVH at Chelsea maintains relationships with many community groups and receives support from the City of Chelsea, VFW, American Legion, Middlesex County Sheriff, Jewish War Veterans, Swampscott Kearsarge Lodge #217, and the DAV. These organizations frequently sponsor recreational activities for our veterans such as an annual cookout, ice-cream socials, Navy Band Quartette, bingo, and family dinners. Chelsea veterans participate in all Memorial Day and Veteran Day events. Residents also participate in the 4th of July parade in Saugus.

Additionally, MVH at Chelsea hosts monthly resident council and town hall meetings. These meetings are an opportunity for residents and their families to connect with leadership and staff at the Homes to collaborate on improvement and enhancements. Staff at MVH Chelsea record actionable items, explore resolutions, and work with residents, families, and staff to follow up with solutions.

MVH at Chelsea is committed to ensuring that all residents are fully aware of their rights as residents. These rights are posted on each unit with the contact details for the EOVS ombudsperson, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs ombudsman, MVH at Chelsea’s compliance officer and the MA Department of Public Health. This past year, EOVS created an Ombudsperson program. The Ombudsperson educates staff about resident rights through one-on-one and larger training sessions. The Ombudsperson is very visible at the MVH and supports each Homes’ commitment to assisting staff gain a more complete understanding of resident rights, including their entitlements to respectful treatment, privacy, and participation in care decisions. Any resident or family member may report an issue or request assistance. In addition, staff and residents are aware of the availability of grievance forms, which are accessible on each nursing unit.

Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

MVH at Holyoke holds annual meetings with the broader veteran community. Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) and veteran organizations are invited to listen to updates from MVH at Holyoke and discuss various processes like admissions and infection control practices. The MVH enjoys support from the Vietnam Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans. These organizations sponsor recreational activities for veterans and offer support, advice, and guidance.

To further increase outreach, and recruit staff and volunteers, MVH Holyoke visits local libraries, senior centers and colleges. The volunteer coordinator and human resources staff schedule tabletop events at community centers, and resources are left for veterans interested in more information about admissions and eligibility. MVH Holyoke is also increasing visibility through new social media posts for admissions and eligibility, participation at local senior centers and veteran organizations, and providing informational brochures to community centers and veteran organizations.

MVH at Holyoke is a member of the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, supporting events throughout the year, most notably is the Annual St Patrick's Day weekend which includes resident participation in the parade. The veterans from MVH Holyoke also support local Veterans Day and other holiday events, like Bright Nights at the Springfield Symphony.

MVH at Holyoke has monthly resident council and town hall meeting and a monthly family advocacy meeting. These meetings are an opportunity for residents and their families to connect with leadership and staff at the Homes to collaborate on improvement and enhancements. Staff at MVH Holyoke record actionable items, explore resolutions, and work with residents, families, and staff to follow up with solutions.

MVH at Holyoke is committed to ensuring that all residents are fully aware of their rights as residents. These rights are posted on each unit with the contact details for the EOVS ombudsperson, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs ombudsman and the MA Department of Public Health. This past year, EOVS created an Ombudsperson program. The EOVS ombudsperson educates staff about resident rights through one-on-one and larger training sessions. The Ombudsperson is very visible at the MVH and supports each Homes' commitment to assisting staff gain a more complete understanding of resident rights, including their entitlements to respectful treatment, privacy, and participation in care decisions. Any resident or family member may report an issue or request assistance. In addition, staff and residents are aware of the availability of grievance forms, which are accessible on each nursing unit.

Conclusion

The Massachusetts Veterans Homes at Chelsea and Holyoke have made tremendous strides in resident care, professionalization, and operational improvements over the last year. The Homes have both ushered in a new era of veteran care with the opening of the new facility at MVH at Chelsea and the groundbreaking of a new facility at MVH at Holyoke. Resident quality of care continues to be enhanced with licenses and certifications from the Department of Public Health and the centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as well as the implementation of the EMR at both Homes. The Homes have invested in existing staff through the implementation of the CNA career ladder and numerous professional development trainings. The launch of the Ombudsperson program at both Homes has further increased the quality of services provided to residents, families, and staff by ensuring issues are recognized and addressed.

The Healey Driscoll administration looks forward to implementing further improvements and attaining even newer heights in providing services and care to Massachusetts veterans with dignity, honor, and respect.