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October 30, 2026

Timothy Carroll
House Clerk
State House, Room 145
Boston, MA 02133

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

Dear Clerk Carroll and Clerk Hurley,

Pursuant to Section 12 of Chapter 115A of the Massachusetts General Laws, please find enclosed the annual report from the Office of Veterans Homes and Housing within the Executive Office of Veterans Services (EOVS).

Sincerely,

Eric Goralnick

CC:
Senator John Velis, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
Representative Joe McGonagle, House Chair, Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs

State of the Commonwealth's Veterans Homes

November 2026

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Introduction

The Commonwealth operates two Veterans Homes: the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea and the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke (the "Homes"). Both provide long-term and skilled nursing care, and Chelsea also provides domiciliary housing. Each Home has a five-member Board of Trustees appointed to seven-year terms.

Pursuant to Section 12 of Chapter 115A of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of Veterans Homes and Housing within the Executive Office of Veterans Services (EOVS) must submit an annual report on the state of the Veterans Homes. In accordance, the report shall include the following: (i) the quality of care provided at the Homes; (ii) the financial status of the Homes; (iii) the uniformity of programs at the Homes; (iv) the capital needs of the Homes; and (v) the status of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' accreditation.

Overview and Current Initiatives

Since EOVS was established in 2023, the Homes have professionalized operations, standardized practices, and improved quality of life for residents.

Under Chapter 144 of the Acts of 2022, the two Massachusetts Veterans Homes (MVH) and their executive directors report directly to the EOVS Secretary. The Act also redefined the responsibilities of the local Boards of Trustees, created the Veterans' Homes Council, established the Office of Veterans Homes and Housing within EOVS, and created an Ombudsperson role at each Home. It also required each Home to be licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Both Homes now meet these requirements: Chelsea since September 2023 and Holyoke since April 2025. Both are led by licensed nursing home administrators.

Two system-wide initiatives are now complete. An Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system has been in use at both Homes since 2024, improving documentation, care coordination, and quality oversight. With a professional consultant, EOVS also merged each Home's policies and procedures into a single framework aligned with CMS, DPH, and VA requirements. Both initiatives are described further under Uniformity of Programs.

The EOVS Ombudsperson program is fully in place. The Ombudsperson at each Home receives, investigates, and resolves complaints from residents, their representatives, and staff. Ombudspersons work on site but report directly to EOVS, independent of Home leadership, and help identify opportunities for improvement.

The Homes continue to prioritize equitable access for veterans across the Commonwealth and career growth for staff. Holyoke's new facility nearly doubles capacity, from 128 to 234 veterans. The Certified Nursing Assistant career ladder offers four levels of advancement, supporting a stable, permanent workforce at both Homes.

Overview of the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

The Massachusetts Veterans Home (MVH) at Chelsea opened in 1882 as the first veterans' home in the Commonwealth. Today it provides long-term and skilled nursing care, domiciliary housing, and support services, with 154 long-term care beds and 125 domiciliary beds. Its long-term care facility, opened in 2023, follows the VA Small Homes model, with a home-like design that offers residents more privacy and more shared space for socializing. This summer, Chelsea completed demolition of its former long-term care building.

MVH at Chelsea has been licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) since September 2023. It has been certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) since March 2024, following a deficiency-free VA survey in December 2023. The Executive Director is a licensed nursing home administrator (LNHA) with more than 25 years of experience.

Chelsea's domiciliary campus will be redeveloped through a public–private partnership with Pennrose LLC, which will create approximately 240 affordable housing units with 100% veterans' preference. Redevelopment plans are described under Capital Needs.

Overview of the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

The MVH at Holyoke opened in 1952 to provide veterans with long-term and skilled nursing care. Construction of its new eight-story facility, which nearly doubles capacity from 128 to 234 veterans, is substantially complete and remains ahead of schedule. The Home is now completing the DPH, CMS, and VA surveys required for the new building, and residents will move in through a phased transition shortly after. During the transition, the Home will operate portions of both buildings at once, and the current facility remains fully licensed and certified throughout. Over the past year, staff have trained on the new building's equipment, systems, and procedures and prepared to adopt the small home model of care. The project is described further under Capital Needs.

Holyoke continued its strong regulatory performance. The Home renewed its DPH license in June 2026 and outperformed health deficiency index benchmarks on both its DPH/CMS and VA surveys. It received three clinical citations from DPH/CMS and one from the VA. The surveying agencies accepted the Home's corrective action plans, and the Home is in compliance with all applicable regulations. Direct care staffing averaged 6.56 hours per resident day in FY2026, including 1.33 registered nurse hours, well above industry standards.

Holyoke received CMS certification in July 2025, effective April 14, 2025, completing the Chapter 144 requirement that both Homes be licensed by DPH and certified by CMS. Certification allows the Home to bill Medicare for eligible services, which supports operations and expands access to care. It also places Holyoke in CMS's Five-Star Quality Rating System, which compares nursing homes regionally and nationally. As a newly certified facility, Holyoke is building the reporting history needed for its first rating, with the goal of achieving five stars over time.

Quality of Care

Each Home runs a Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) program, a data-driven system for monitoring care, identifying problems, and testing solutions. A multidisciplinary QAPI team at each Home, including managers and frontline staff, meets monthly. The team draws on clinical quality measures, DPH, CMS, and VA survey results, and feedback from the Resident and Family Councils, town halls, satisfaction surveys, and the grievance process. EOVS's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Quality and Quality Manager oversees both programs through a shared quality dashboard. Each Home reports quarterly to the Secretary and shares QAPI results with its Board of Trustees and the Veterans' Homes Council.

As of September 2026, Holyoke performed better than national nursing home averages on four of the seven quality measures CMS uses, and Chelsea on three of seven. Chelsea's overall CMS Care Compare rating rose to four stars this year, driven by an improved four-star staffing rating. Both Homes have targeted improvement initiatives for measures that trail national averages.

At Holyoke, this year's priorities were reducing medication errors and avoidable hospitalizations. Through ongoing monitoring, root cause analysis, staff education, and mentoring, the Home has strengthened how it identifies and corrects medication errors. Its rates of hospitalization and emergency department visits remain well below national averages. At Chelsea, QAPI work expanded this year through the "Audit for Excellence" program, in which staff review other departments' operations to strengthen accountability and survey readiness. Clinical initiatives focused on fall prevention, infection prevention, and reducing preventable transfers to emergency departments.

Both Homes staff well above industry standards. In FY2026, direct care staffing averaged 6.56 hours per resident day at Holyoke and 6.07 at Chelsea. Both Homes have also nearly eliminated reliance on outside staff: agency staff make up less than 1% of Holyoke's workforce, and contracted staff make up 1.6% of Chelsea's skilled nursing workforce. This gives veterans consistent, familiar caregivers.

Resident and family satisfaction remains high. Independent firms survey residents and families monthly: At Chelsea, approximately 98% of respondents would recommend the Home. At Holyoke, 100% of respondents would recommend it, placing the Home in the 95th percentile nationally. Both results exceed national averages. Chelsea identified communication as an area to improve and has expanded resident and family communications, including improved newsletters and digital content.

Financial Status

The Massachusetts Veterans Homes are funded through the Commonwealth's annual General Appropriations Act (GAA). Reimbursements from residents, Medicare, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are deposited in the Commonwealth's General Fund to offset operating costs, except for a small amount of retained revenue. Daily care charges may be waived or reduced based on monthly income or qualifying disabilities.

Financial Status of the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

The MVH at Chelsea received an appropriation of $46.0 million in FY2026 which includes staffing of 371.1 full-time employees and revenue of $18.5 million.

Appropriation Number	Appropriation Name	FY 26 GAA
4180-0100	Administration and Operations	46,060,259
	Total	**$46,060,259**

Revenue Source	Revenue Source Description	FY 26 GAA
3504	Reimb - Blue Cross Blue Shield	4,376
3505	Reimb - Other Insurance	98,118
3506	Reimb - Direct Patient Payer	1,786,590
3508	Free Meals	30,000
3545	Reimb - Medicare Part D	147,300
5203	Medicare Reimbursement	14,430
5204	VA Per Diem Domiciliary Care	2,658,052
5205	VA Per Diem Long Term Care	13,751,954
6900	Miscellaneous	12,000
	Total	**$18,502,820**

Financial Status of the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

The MVH at Holyoke received an appropriation of $32.98 million in FY2026 which includes staffing of 345.6 full-time employees and revenue of $9.4 million.

Appropriation Number	Appropriation Name	FY 26 GAA
4190-0100	Administration and Operations	30,794,720
4190-0103	Canteen Retained Revenue	50,000
4190-0300	12 Bed Retained Revenue	2,139,643
	Total	**$32,984,363**

Revenue Source	Revenue Source Description	FY 26 GAA
3505	Reimb - Other Insurance	9,386
3506	Reimb - Direct Patient Payer	152,416
3508	Free Meals	30,000
3545	Reimb - Medicare Part D	54,000
4000	Occupancy/Rent Fees	1,209,000
4033	Agent Rental Service Fee	1,500
4500	Miscellaneous Sales	400
4556	Holyoke Canteen Revenue	50,000
5205	VA Per Diem Long Term Care	7,871,365
6900	Miscellaneous	12,000
	Total	**$9,390,067**

Uniformity of Programs

The Homes are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as long-term care facilities, and recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) State Veterans Home Program as nursing homes. Both Homes maintain standardized programs and services and demonstrate ongoing compliance with the rigorous standards established by DPH, CMS, and the VA through annual unannounced surveys.

The Homes provide resident-centered care tailored to the unique needs of every resident. This holistic model supports residents' physical, mental, and emotional well-being while promoting dignity and independence. The Homes also offer a range of social, recreational, and therapeutic activities tailored to each veteran's interests and abilities, including music therapy, arts and crafts, fitness programs, and opportunities for spiritual enrichment through religious services.

EOVS completed a comprehensive review of all policies and procedures in partnership with an external consultant. Each Home had approximately 200 policies, which were reviewed through a structured process to merge and align policies from both Homes into a single comprehensive policy framework. The new framework reflects industry best practices and ensures compliance with VA, CMS, and DPH regulations, resulting in standardized care practices across both Homes.

The Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system has been fully implemented at both Homes, including the integration of pharmacy, laboratory, and imaging services. Implementation included a thorough workflow analysis, fostering collaboration between the Homes and resulting in greater consistency and standardization. EOVS continues to work with both Homes and the vendor to expand the system's use and functionality.

The new MVH at Chelsea facility was constructed using the VA Small Homes model, an architectural approach that places residents at the center of care. This design moves away from traditional institutional layouts focused on operational efficiency, creating a more home-like and person-centered environment. The new facility at MVH Holyoke was built to the same standards, and once residents move in, both Homes will operate under the VA Small Homes model.

To further advance professionalism and standardization, the EOVS Office of Veterans Homes and Housing provides oversight, guidance, and support to both facilities. The office is led by a licensed nursing home administrator and staffed by professionals with extensive experience in management, organizational transformation, strategic planning, workforce development, quality improvement, and regulatory compliance.

Capital Needs

Capital Needs at the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Chelsea

Resident veterans at the MVH at Chelsea now reside in a new, state-of-the-art 154-bed long-term care facility. With major construction and move-in completed, the Home is working with the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to address any outstanding items. This past summer saw the completion of the demolition of the former Quigley Building, and tunnel and site improvements now underway will add green space and provide access to Malone Park. The Home also completed an elevator sprinkler project this year, resolving a prior VA Life Safety corrective action item.

The MVH at Chelsea has partnered with DCAMM, Pennrose, and Soldier On through a public–private redevelopment initiative to modernize its domiciliary campus. The redevelopment will create approximately 240 affordable housing units with 100% veterans' preference and will transition current domiciliary residents into the new housing units. This year, swing-space work in the Keville and Sullivan buildings reached substantial completion, and planning progressed for relocating the Domiciliary Clinical Care Unit and related resident programs. The Phase 1 real-estate closing was tentatively scheduled for fall 2026. This work is being coordinated to minimize disruption to residents and maintain continuity of services.

Capital Needs at the Massachusetts Veterans Home at Holyoke

With the support of DCAMM, construction of the MVH at Holyoke's replacement facility is substantially complete and remains ahead of schedule. The project is funded with $263.5 million in federal funding from the VA and $221 million from the Commonwealth. The new eight-story building will have the capacity to house 234 veterans. In addition, Holyoke will expand services for Commonwealth veterans through a new adult day health program designed to serve 40 to 50 participants. Resident move-in will follow completion of the required DPH, CMS, and VA surveys, with full project completion, including demolition of the current facility and site restoration, by 2028.

Status of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Accreditation

Both Homes' nursing home programs are recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as State Veterans Homes. As part of this recognition, the VA conducts unannounced surveys at each Home annually to ensure continued compliance with rigorous VA regulations for long-term care, including domiciliary services. In the most recent survey cycle, both Homes were surveyed, and both nursing home programs maintained full VA certification.

The new MVH at Chelsea received formal VA certification in March 2024, following a deficiency-free survey in December 2023 that evaluated all quality-of-care measures, life safety code standards, and VA long-term care regulations. The VA conducted its most recent annual survey of Chelsea in December 2025, noting six deficient practices in the nursing home and four in the domiciliary. The VA granted full certification of the nursing home after reviewing and accepting the Home's corrective action plan. The domiciliary program received provisional certification pending finalization of a sharing agreement between the Home and the VA. EOVS is working with the VA to complete the agreement and obtain full certification for the domiciliary. In addition, Chelsea completed an elevator sprinkler project this year that resolved a prior VA Life Safety corrective action item.

The VA conducted its annual survey of the MVH at Holyoke nursing home program in January 2026. The survey found only one deficiency, an exemplary outcome, and the VA granted full certification after reviewing and accepting the Home's corrective action plan. The VA will also survey Holyoke's new facility for initial recognition as part of the transition, alongside the required DPH and CMS reviews.

Conclusion

The Massachusetts Veterans Homes at Chelsea and Holyoke have continued to make tremendous strides in the quality of resident care, professionalization, standardization, and operational improvements over the past year. The Homes' leadership and staff continue to enhance residents' quality of care and life through initiatives including expanded quality improvement programs, staffing levels well above industry standards, minimal reliance on agency staff, the Ombudsperson program, a continued focus on resident and staff equity, and the CNA career ladder. Chelsea's overall CMS rating rose to four stars this year, and Holyoke continued its strong performance on state, federal, and VA surveys.

Both Homes continue to advance uniformity through the shared EMR system, a unified policy framework, and QAPI programs overseen by EOVS. Each has also made significant progress in addressing capital needs. At Chelsea, demolition of the former long-term care building is complete and redevelopment of the domiciliary campus into veterans' preference affordable housing is advancing. At Holyoke, construction of the new 234-bed facility is substantially complete and ahead of schedule. Both Homes remain licensed by DPH and certified by CMS, both nursing home programs maintain full VA certification, and EOVS is working with the VA to bring Chelsea's domiciliary program to full certification.

The Executive Office of Veterans Services looks forward to welcoming veterans to the new Holyoke facility, implementing further improvements, and reaching even greater heights in providing services and care to Massachusetts veterans with dignity, honor, and respect.