

2023 FLORIDA VETERAN HEALTH HEROES



A Division of Medical Quality Assurance Publication

A TRIBUTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

*Honoring those who contribute to the
well-being of the nation and its people.*

Florida is home to more than 1.5 million veterans of the United States Armed Forces. The Florida Department of Health (Department) is committed to providing services and resources for veteran health care practitioners and their spouses.

It is our continued goal to make Florida the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

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HEALTH CARE LICENSING SUPPORT SERVICES



The Department is committed to honoring veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. By implementing special fee waivers and expedited licensing, the Department can better assist service members as they grow in their career, wish to practice while stationed in the state, or settle in Florida at the end of their service.

The Department is sensitive to the unique challenges military families face when required to relocate and strives to offer a more seamless licensing process that eliminates additional financial burdens on service members and their loved ones.

FY 2022-23 MILITARY DATA AT A GLANCE

Figure 1: Average Days to License Military Individuals by Pathway

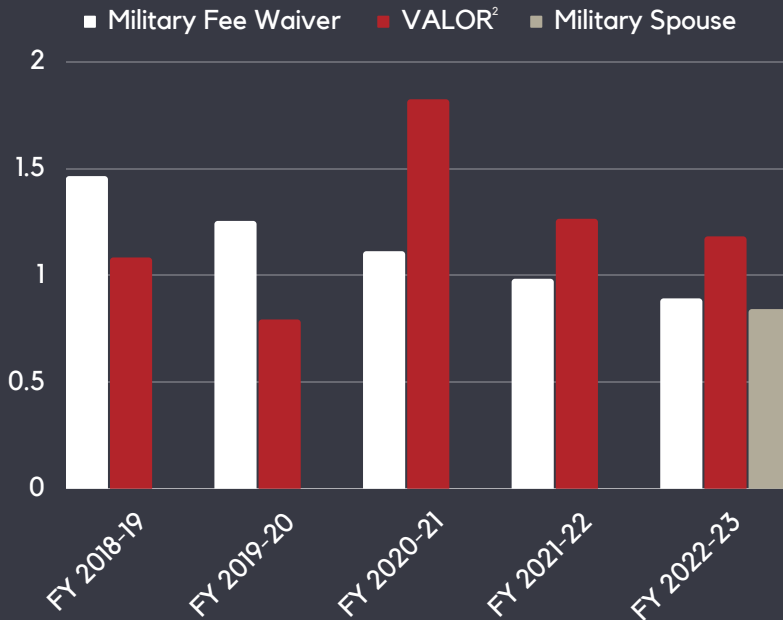
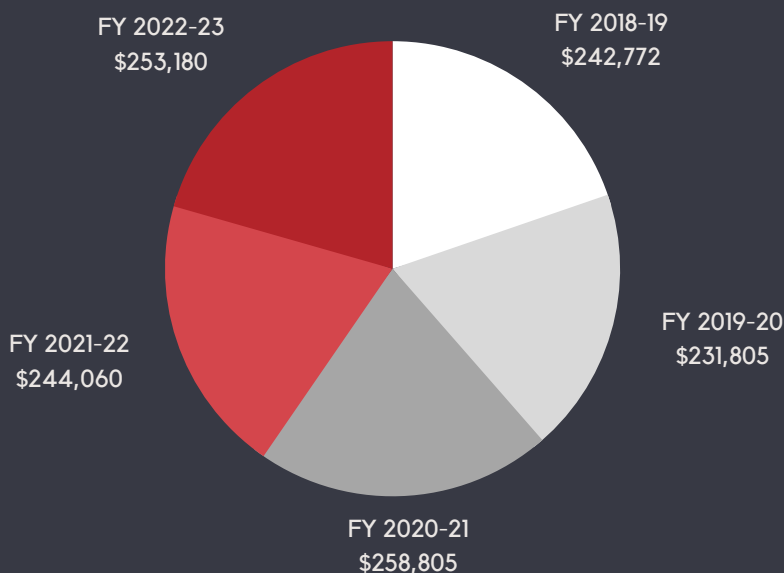


Figure 2: Cost Savings Achieved within the Last Five Years



14,574+ People Served

More than 14,574 veterans, military members, and military spouses doubling as health care practitioners have been licensed through a military pathway¹ at MQA since July 1, 2013.

0.93 Average Days to License

MQA licensed military individuals most efficiently in FY 2022-23 when compared to the previous four years. That is, MQA licensed qualified applicants within an average³ of 0.93 days compared to 1.38 days in FY 2018-19.

As shown by Figure 1, military spouses⁴ experienced the fastest licensure when compared to qualified applicants for military fee waivers and VALOR during FY 2022-23.

\$2.2 Million in Cost Savings

Over \$2.2 million cost savings were achieved by veterans, active military members, and military spouses since 2013, more than \$1.2 million of which was saved within the last five years alone (Figure 2).

1 - See page 7-8 for more information on military licensure pathways for qualified health care practitioner applicants.

2 - Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response System (VALOR) - see page 8 for more details.

3 - Reflects a weighted average.

4 - This data measure was not captured prior to FY 2022-23.

The Newly Established

OFFICE OF VETERAN LICENSURE SERVICES

In 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 139, establishing the Office of Veteran Licensure Services (OVLS) within the Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) to assist veterans and their spouses with the health care licensure process.

In partnership with Veterans Florida, OVLS will also facilitate a referral program to assist veterans and their spouses with obtaining training, education, and employment in Florida's health care professions.



Introducing

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OVLS

Staff Sergeant Sam Tyler has been preparing for his newest assignment as the first director of OVLS for a very long time. His military career was built on the development of new projects and programs, and he is a champion for connecting veterans to resources in the Sunshine State!

A native of Grove Hill, Alabama, Sgt. Tyler enlisted in the Air Force in 2015 after deciding to pivot from a career in music. This was a fortuitous step, as his grandfather had served in the Marine Corps and his uncle in the Army. At 19 years old, Sgt. Tyler was stationed at the 51st Civil Engineering Squadron in South Korea. During this assignment, he served as a member of a command support staff and conducted administrative work with evaluations, records, and emergency and security management.

Sgt. Tyler credits his experiences in South Korea with developing into the professional that he is today. Luckily, Sgt. Tyler's supervisor, Jennifer Tucek, helped him learn about life and work. "To this day, I can still give her a call for anything that I need."

A formative experience from Sgt. Tyler's deployment to Kuwait was when he joined a new unit to establish a command staff "from the ground up." Within one month, the command staff of three were involved in administrative tasks and providing support to airmen who were working on anti-terrorism assignments. In Sgt. Tyler's words, this experience was where he learned "how to establish something new and make it work."

Sgt. Tyler was stationed at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, where he was assigned to the 628th Comptroller Squadron, 628th Air Base Wing, and 373rd Training Squadron, respectively. In each of these assignments, Sgt. Tyler took on additional roles of responsibility and honed his skills as a manager. Sgt. Tyler was promoted to Senior Airman in June 2018 and promoted to Staff

Sergeant in March 2020. It was his latest promotion that led Sgt. Tyler to become the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge with Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFROTC) Detachment 172 at Georgia's Valdosta State University.

In working with the AFROTC, Sgt. Tyler leveraged his administrative knowledge and skills to help empower future airmen. That assignment was unique in that it came at a time when Sgt. Tyler "really started aspiring to management and to make an impact on others." Working with future airmen allowed for Sgt. Tyler to have a positive impact on graduating students who were preparing to enter the military as commissioned officers.

Sgt. Tyler was drawn to Florida as a veteran because the state had everything he wanted. While close in proximity to his home state of Alabama, Sgt. Tyler remarked that the Sunshine State is well-suited for veterans: "Florida is home to a million-and-a-half veterans and I think that number is growing every single day. And the infrastructure here for veterans is great and everywhere you look, you find some sort of military installation or support organization. I think the support here in Florida is just extremely robust."

Sgt. Tyler stands ready to execute the vision of OVLS by using his administrative and leadership capabilities to create "something that works and is efficient in getting our veteran health care practitioners what they need."

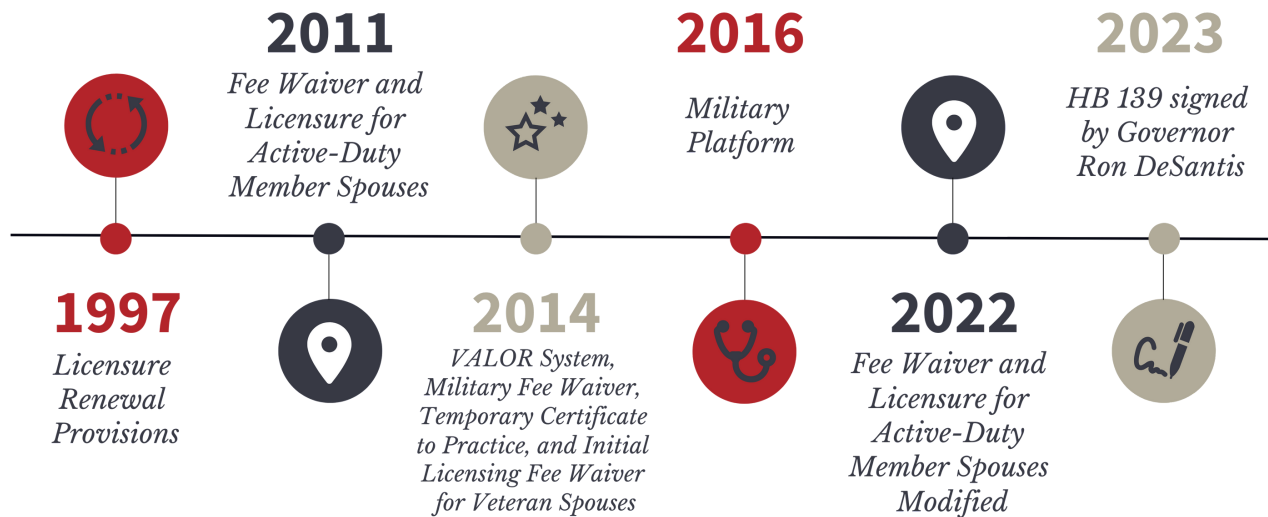
**SGT
SAM
TYLER**



Evolution of

MILITARY PATHWAYS

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LICENSURE RENEWAL PROVISIONS

In 1997, a provision was enacted that allows active-duty military members to place their license on military status, which keeps the license in good standing without requiring the service member to renew or pay renewal fees during the duration of the service member's active-duty service.

ACTIVE-DUTY SPOUSES FEE WAIVER



126

Previous
Five-Year Totals

Spouses of active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces may be eligible to receive a professional license to practice their health care profession in Florida, allowing the opportunity to work in their respective profession while their spouse is assigned to a duty station in Florida. To reduce the barrier of entry into a profession, the state eliminated its use of issuing temporary licenses for active-duty spouses in 2022 and shifted to issuing full professional licenses.

VALOR

 **1,665** Previous
Five-Year Totals

Military pathways expanded significantly in 2014, including expedited licenses for recently discharged, or soon-to-be discharged, active-duty service members through the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response System (VALOR). Application fees, initial licensure fees, and unlicensed activity fees are removed through this pathway, and spouses of active-duty service members may also be eligible for expedited licensing.

VETERAN AND SPOUSE FEE WAIVER

 **6,442** Previous
Five-Year Totals

In 2014, additional fee waivers were applied to veterans and their spouses when the veteran was honorably discharged within 6 months from the time the application for licensure was submitted. Qualifying veterans and their spouses may receive a fee waiver of fees associated with the initial licensing process for most health care professions.

TEMPORARY CERTIFICATE

A Temporary Certificate to Practice in an Area of Critical Need was also established in 2014 for active-duty commissioned medical officers and veterans who served at least 10 years (for allopathic and osteopathic physicians). There is no application fee for physicians seeking this certificate.

MILITARY PLATFORM

 **6** Previous
Five-Year Totals

In 2016, a temporary certificate was established, allowing for active-duty military health care practitioners to practice on a military platform. A military platform is defined as a military training agreement with a nonmilitary health care provider that is designed to develop and support medical, surgical, or other health care treatment opportunities in a nonmilitary health care provider setting to authorize a military health care practitioner to develop and maintain the technical proficiency necessary to meet the present and future health care needs of the United States Armed Forces. The license is valid for six months but is renewable with proof of continuing military orders for an active-duty assignment and evidence of continuation as a Military Platform participant.

FLORIDA VETERAN HEALTH HEROES



The willingness of America's veterans to sacrifice for our country and its freedoms has earned them our lasting gratitude. Upon returning from military service, they continue contributing to our communities as licensed health care practitioners offering health and well-being services.

They double as first responders, physical therapists, nurses, lab technicians, psychologists, dentists, and more. Their dedication to service is a trait that helps build up our agencies and teams. As they work tirelessly to bring about changes to improve the health of Floridians, they achieve inspiring things. We call them Veteran Health Heroes; despite taking off their uniforms, they have never stopped serving.



JAY OSTIA, MS, LAT, ATC MARINE RESERVE

As a veteran of the United States Marine Corps Reserve, Mr. Jay Ostia successfully integrated his passion for art into his vocation as an athletic trainer and successful business owner. Mr. Ostia credits his service in the Marine Reserve for teaching him how to set goals, always be prepared, resist complacency, and rely on community during times of adversity.

Mr. Ostia never expected to accept a career in health care. In fact, his passion is art. Still, due to his preparation in his college's ROTC program, Mr. Ostia had also considered becoming a military officer. So, taking a leap of faith and a leave of absence from art school, Mr. Ostia enlisted in the Marine Reserve in 2012.

While preparing for the various fitness demands of the Marines, Mr. Ostia became interested in athletic training due to its focus on preparing the mind, body, and spirit. When he saw people wearing Temple University athletic training apparel, he researched the program, applied, and began exploring sports medicine and athletic training.

In his six years of service, Mr. Ostia honed his leadership skills and developed the mental toughness that prepared him for challenges in his health care career. He shared that field operations taught him that "nothing is ever set in stone. We try to plan and be proactive, but you understand things can change at any moment. You have to think about the ramifications for the future—later on down the road. If you try to live in that comfort, you get complacent. They say in the military that complacency kills."

Recalling one moment early in his career as a graduate assistant sideline athletic trainer, Mr. Ostia

shared when one of his high school players went down: "He was paralyzed, and things became really very quickly. It felt like hours stabilizing him. Dealing with all that madness is unforgettable. The best way to describe it, in health care sport coverage... at any second, things can get really bad. I've had to respond to fractures, dislocations... anything can happen."

A consistent theme in Mr. Ostia's journey is that of resilience. In his first year and a half in the Marine Reserve, he and his training unit were challenged to push themselves beyond the limits of where they thought they could go—physically and mentally. Fortunately, Mr. Ostia and the members of his team worked together to complete their shared goal in training exercises and thrived.

As a health care practitioner passionate about the role of mental health care for veterans, Mr. Ostia combined the discipline learned from the Marine Reserves with his athletic training skills to explore products that further the well-being of his patients. As a founder of his own company, Mr. Ostia develops tactical medical kits for use by nurses and athletic trainers in high schools, the National Football League (NFL), and Major League Baseball.

Recalling the bonds that he shares with his training unit "buddies," Mr. Ostia is grateful that they never hesitate to show him kindness and camaraderie. One of his fondest memories is being a member of the flag-opening crew for the National Anthem performance during a National Football League (NFL) game in Philadelphia. Afterwards, Mr. Ostia a fellow service member proudly expressed gratitude to Mr. Ostia for his service.

Mr. Ostia, we salute you for your service in the United States Marine Reserve, and we are grateful for your continued contributions to the field of athletic training!



DR. JAN ADAMS

NAVY

Dr. Jan Adams was born into a family of military service members, health care workers, and educators. Each of her five brothers served in the Vietnam War, and her mother was a nurse. Dr. Adams' biggest role model was her aunt who was a nurse and an educator.

Dr. Adams joined the Navy Reserve while in nursing school, and she worked in the orthopedics unit, which she loved. Serving as the cornerstone of her 28 years of service, Dr. Adams reflected on the leadership principles she was taught: "[The military] really likes you to grow educationally. They look for leaders."

Her first duty station was in Philadelphia after three months of training in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Temple University. She then continued her service at the naval hospital in Philadelphia where she was designated as a critical care nurse. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Adams was stationed at Camp Lejeune where she served in the Naval Medical Center Lejeune ICU unit.

Further applying her leadership skills, Dr. Adams became a member of the development team for the construction of a new hospital. Dr. Adams even received the opportunity of a lifetime—duty in Naples, Italy: "It was a small, four-bed ICU and I loved it. The ICU unit was closed and became a special care unit [and] 60% of your time was spent on vacation. We went to every country in Europe we were allowed to go to. We traveled to many countries, [sharing] nurse coverage in different countries where needed."

A crowning achievement in Dr. Adams' storied career as a naval nurse was her eight years of duty at the 1,000-bed Portsmouth Naval Hospital. During this time, she was promoted to House Supervisor and later served as the nursing director for the ear, nose, and throat (ENT) clinic—the busiest in the military.

In 1992, Dr. Adams retired from the Navy and began a journey as a nursing educator: "I loved it, caught the teaching bug, and now teach graduate students."

Dr. Adams came to Florida almost on a whim: "My husband wanted to retire. We literally spun the globe, and it landed here." Dr. Adams brought her passion for the nursing profession with her to Florida, where she has served as the immediate past president of the Florida Nurses Association, and doubles as the current Co-Director of the Nursing Action Coalition of Florida and Associate Dean of the School of Nursing at Mary Baldwin University.

Dr. Adams frequently visits Tallahassee to advocate on behalf of the nursing profession: "It is not uncommon that something does not pass [in the Legislature] the first time. We are going back this year. We were told that this is going to be the year of health care. We need nurses! We already know that we need 40,000 nurses by 2035. We are going to have a very high over-65 population and [must] provide that care."

When reflecting on her achievements, Dr. Adams remarked, "I would do it all again. It has been a wonderful journey. It's all been a learning moment and a moment I would repeat if I could."

Dr. Adams, we salute you for your love of service and leadership in the profession of nursing!

Thank You



*Thank you, veterans, military active members,
and spouses for your unwavering commitment to
serve your country and its people!*

STATEWIDE RESOURCES

Florida is home to more than 1.4 million veterans and their families. As one of the nation's most veteran-friendly state, Florida's agencies and partners offer various resources and opportunities to help veterans find meaningful employment, support their families, and continue contributing to their communities when returning to civilian life.

Employment and Business

- Employ Florida Vets:
veteran.employflorida.com
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve: esgr.mil
- Florida State Veterans' Homes Recruitment:
FloridaVets.org/were-looking-for-you

Benefits

- eBenefits, Gateway to Benefit Information:
eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/learn
- Post 9/11 GI Bill and Veteran Education Benefits:
va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11

Agencies

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: va.gov
- Florida Department of Military Affairs: dma.myflorida.com

Veterans' Resources

- Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Military Veterans Assistance Program:
MyFloridaLegal.com/consumer-protection/mvap



QUESTIONS?

CONTACT US

We encourage those seeking more information about licensing for veterans, military members, and military spouses to visit our website, FLHealthSource/VALOR, as a one-stop-shop that provides additional resources including FAQs application requirements.



FLHealthSource.gov/VALOR



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