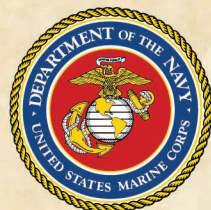


Florida Department of Health
Division of Medical Quality Assurance



Ron DeSantis
Governor



Joseph A. Ladapo MD, PhD
State Surgeon General

FLORIDA VETERAN HEALTH HEROES

2025





MISSION:

To protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.



VISION:

To be the healthiest state in the nation.



VALUES:



INNOVATION

We search for creative solutions and manage resources wisely.



COLLABORATION

We use teamwork to achieve common goals and solve problems.



ACCOUNTABILITY

We perform with integrity and respect.



RESPONSIVENESS

We achieve our mission by serving our customers and engaging our partners.



EXCELLENCE

We promote quality outcomes through learning and continuous performance improvement.

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A Tribute from the Department of Health

Florida is home to more than 1.4 million veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Florida Department of Health (Department) is committed to providing services and resources for active-duty service members, veterans, and military spouses. It is our continued goal to make Florida the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

PROUDLY SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED.



Dear Valued Stakeholders, Partners, and Fellow Floridians,

It is with great pride and deep respect that I extend greetings on behalf of the Office of Veteran Licensure Services (OVLS). As the Executive Director of this vital office within the Department, it is my honor to serve those who have selflessly served us—our nation's active-duty service members, veterans, and military spouses by upholding the efficient, fair, and well-regulated licensure of health care practitioners across our great state.

The past year has been marked by significant achievements that reflect both our mission and our enduring commitment to excellence. Through streamlined licensure processes, expanded outreach initiatives, and meaningful partnerships with organizations such as the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and Veterans Florida, OVLS has continued to reduce barriers for military-trained health professionals seeking to bring their talents to Florida's health care workforce. These efforts have resulted in measurable cost savings, expedited application reviews, and increased access to high-quality health care for our communities.

We are particularly proud of the personalized, concierge-style service we offer exclusively to military veterans and their spouses. Whether through community outreach events, interagency collaboration, or technological innovations, our team works diligently to ensure a smooth, respectful, and efficient licensure experience—honoring the commitment and sacrifice of those who have served in uniform.

As we look ahead, OVLS remains steadfast in our mission to serve those who have protected and served us. Together, with the continued support of our state leaders, agency partners, and the public, we will continue to strengthen Florida's health care system and uphold the integrity of professional licensure.

Thank you for your trust, collaboration, and shared dedication to Florida's veterans and their families.

With respect and gratitude,

Robert "Chase" Wells

Chase Wells
Executive Director
Office of Veteran Licensure Services
Division of Medical Quality Assurance
Florida Department of Health



About the Office of Veteran Licensure Services

The Office of Veteran Licensure Services was established by the passage of House Bill 139 as part of Florida's 2023 legislative session. Housed within the Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA), OVLS was created to support active-duty service members, veterans, and military spouses by offering military fee waivers and expedited licensure processes. In partnership with Veterans Florida, OVLS also facilitates a referral program to aid veterans and their spouses with accessing training, education, and employment opportunities within Florida's health care sector. These efforts aim to alleviate the financial burdens and simplify transactions for military families facing relocation.



The Evolution of Military Licensure Pathways

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, who wish to practice while stationed in the state, or settle in Florida at the end of their service.

1997 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.

2011 Active-Duty Spouses Fee Waiver – Spouses of active-duty members of the U.S. 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.

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

2014 Veteran and Spouse Fee Waiver – In 2014, additional fee waivers were applied to veterans and their spouses when the veteran was honorably discharged within 60 months. In 2022, the time constraint of 60 months on when the individual was honorably discharged was removed, providing additional flexibility for our honorably discharged veterans and their spouses who are seeking licensure. Qualifying veterans and their spouses may receive a fee waiver of fees associated with the initial licensing process for most health care professions.

2014 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.

2016 Military Platform – 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. This authorizes a military health care practitioner to develop and maintain the technical proficiency necessary to meet the present and future health care needs of the U.S. 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.



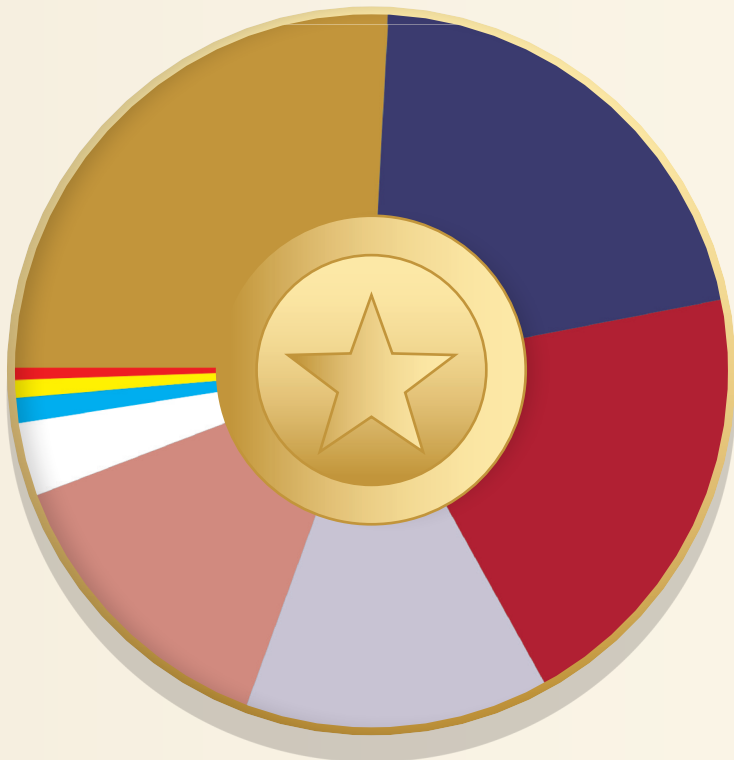
Appendix I:

Statutorily Required Military Licensure Data

Figure 1:
Education and Training Background of Military Licensees

This section records the educational and training backgrounds of each individual seeking licensure. During FY 2024-25, a significant number of military practitioners sought licensure through the VALOR, VALOR Spouse, Active-Duty Spouse, Fee Waiver, and Temporary Military Platform pathways.

Among the 5,752 total applicants, masters degrees (15.4%) were the most common qualification, followed closely by associate degrees (12.5%) and certifications (12.1%). Bachelor’s degrees (8.1%) and doctoral degrees (8.0%) nearly tied for prevalence, coming together to highlight the multifaceted educational backgrounds of our military applicants.



Most Common Qualifications

Masters degrees: 889	High school diplomas: 120
Associate degrees: 723	Post-Doctorate: 35
Certifications: 694	Postgraduate: 22
Bachelor’s degrees: 466	No degree: 21
Doctoral degrees: 462	



Number of Referrals Made for Vocational Assistance

Figure 2:

Record of Health Care Licenses Held by Military Practitioners Across States

The following map includes each health care license an individual holds in another state, irrespective of the current status of such license.

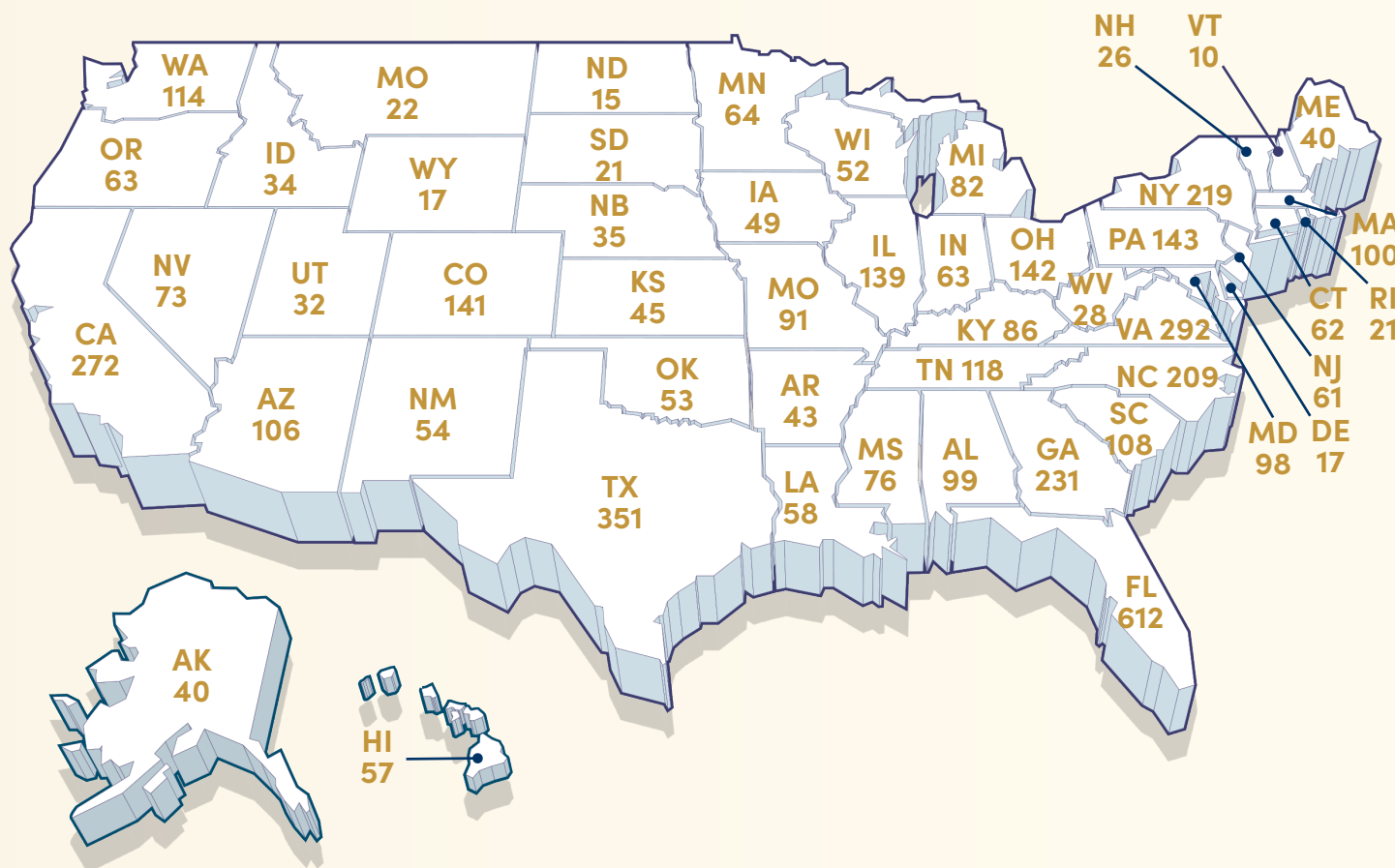
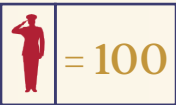


Figure 3:

Military Licensure Applications Received

This section includes the number of licensure applications received. In FY 2024-25, MQA received 5,752 applications from military health care practitioners. Of those, 4,262 individuals were served/licensed.



At a Glance:

FY 2024-25 Military Licensure Data



OVLS OUTREACH The Office of Veteran Licensure Services attended five outreach events during the FY 2024-25. Such events included job fairs, board meetings, and events with Veterans Florida, as well as the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. The OVLS looks forward to continued participation in outreach opportunities.



REGISTERED NURSES This profession accounted for the highest number of licensure applications submitted through Florida's military pathway this year. Their strong representation reflects both the demand for skilled nursing professionals and the continued commitment of military-connected individuals who transition into civilian health care roles while maintaining their dedication to public service.



\$529,061 ACHIEVED IN COST SAVINGS The accumulation of military health care practitioners, representing 87 different professions, have collectively saved \$529,061 in licensing fees thanks to MQA's expedited and reduced-cost licensure services. By offering these benefits to military members and their families, MQA has not only simplified the licensure process, but also delivered substantial financial relief. This initiative underscores MQA's dedication to supporting military practitioners as they integrate into Florida's health care workforce, ensuring they can continue their essential work with minimal delays and costs.



U.S. ARMY This branch emerged as the most represented branch of prior military service among licensure applications received through Florida's military pathways. Their strong presence reflects the Army's continued influence in shaping skilled professionals who transition into civilian health care roles with discipline, leadership, and a commitment to service.

OVLS OUTREACH

The OVLS Executive Director Chase Wells attended a webinar hosted by Veterans Florida as a panel member on a roster of four to include representatives from the Florida Department of Commerce, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. The webinar was geared toward explaining resources and pathways for military veterans and their spouses to become gainfully employed in Florida, whether it be as a health care practitioner or otherwise. The webinar was successful and may be viewed at [Youtube.com/@VeteransFlorida](https://www.youtube.com/@VeteransFlorida).

At the invitation of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, the OVLS attended the annual Military and Veterans Appreciation Day at the Capitol. The opportunity to exhibit on the third-floor rotunda enabled the OVLS to market the recently developed Cleared to Care initiative, which requires many health care professions to be background screened in their application process for Florida licensure.



“Veterans Florida is proud to collaborate with the Florida Department of Health’s Office of Veteran Licensure Services to ensure that Florida’s veterans, military spouses, and transitioning servicemembers have a clear, streamlined, and supportive path into health care careers. Through our monthly referral process and collaborative outreach, most recently our joint informational webinar, we’ve connected veterans and their families with the tools and guidance they need to navigate licensure requirements efficiently. This partnership exemplifies the impact that focused, interagency cooperation can have in transforming veteran talent into vital contributions to Florida’s workforce.”

Joe Marino
Executive Director
Veterans Florida



Florida Veteran Health Heroes

The willingness of America's veterans to sacrifice for our country and our 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.



Lieutenant Colonel Kelley M. Henson

is exceedingly dedicated to giving back to the health care and military community, highlighted by her dedication to the pursuit of knowledge in nursing and service in the U.S. Air Force. Her 11 years of nursing practice prior to joining the Air Force provides a unique perspective on health care and continuing her practice in the military feeds the passion she has always had for the profession of nursing.

Born and raised in Opelika, Alabama, Kelley always demonstrated an interest in health sciences, as much of her family was in the medical field. Receiving her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of West Georgia and Master of Science in Nursing from Vanderbilt University, she practiced as a civilian nurse and nurse practitioner for 11 years until joining the Air Force in 2013. Kelley's interest in joining the Armed Forces was ignited after attending her brother's Army boot camp graduation, astounded by the transformation that she witnessed in her brother and compelled by a deep sense of patriotism.

After joining the Air Force, Kelley pursued her Doctor of Nursing Practice from the University of Virginia in 2017. From there, she has taken many opportunities to intersect her love for travel with her passion for her work as a pediatric nurse practitioner and military officer, including being stationed at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, Florida. Over the years, Kelley has been able to assist the transfer of patients returning from combat into aircrafts and leading the pandemic response for Ramstein Air Base. She has worked with 20+ countries to advance research, evidence-based practice, and innovation in military medicine. She also served on a medical mission trip to Honduras, providing health care to over 1,500 individuals, leading her to obtain certification as an international health specialist. This certification will enable her to pursue further global health work, where she can collaborate with other militaries and non-governmental agencies to train together and provide care to individuals facing health disparities and/or crisis.

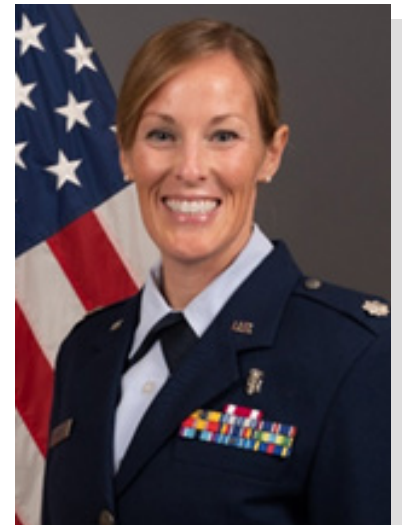
A highlight of her continuing service in the U.S. Air Force would be working as an executive officer under a 3-star general fighter pilot, who served as the Deputy Commander for Air Combat Command and was a seasoned fighter pilot at Langley Air Force

Base. Kelley states that doing this one-year assignment provided her with a vastly different perspective to military service.

When asked about her first experiences in the service, Kelley absolutely lights up when recounting stories of her instructors and fellow flight members.

Her most memorable lesson learned was that although it was overwhelming at first, it is clear now that her instructors challenged them to foster cohesion with teammates and a sense of dedication to the mission. She is still close with several members of her flight and says the biggest gift the military bestowed upon her was the ability to be more open-minded to differing perspectives.

Today, Kelley continues her active-duty service as Chief Nurse Executive and Deputy Group Commander for the 27th Special Operations Medical Group, 27th Special Operations Wing, at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico. She is responsible for all nursing services and medical technician staff, overseeing their training, scope of practice, career development and counseling, and clinical processes. Kelley's dedication to her craft is evident through her work and everyday life, and her commitment to furthering her education in all things nursing greatly distinguishes her as a respected Veteran Health Hero.



Craig Hutchinson,

born in Cheyenne, Wyoming and raised in Florida, has served over two decades of military health care service, being an Aerospace Medical Technician in the U.S. Air Force. His active-duty journey and transition into civilian life is a true testament of resilience and commitment to serving his country and community.

During his time in college, Craig highlights his feelings of indecisiveness and need for more independence. He and a friend decided to enlist at the same time, and Craig feels it ended up being a perfect fit. His decision for choosing the Air Force was based on his father's six years of service, as well as feelings that the Air Force would be able to provide the stability and independence he craved. When joining, he was open minded about what career path he would take, and a medical job was the first available.

Craig went on to serve 22 years in the Air Force, working in multiple clinical and hospital settings including medical intensive care units, medical wards, hyperbaric medicine, gastroenterology technician, primary medical clinics, pediatric clinics, and immunizations clinics. As a technician he was trained as an emergency medical technician, but could work everywhere in a hospital, emergency or clinical setting within the Air Force.

During his service, Craig was able to travel and experience things he may not have had the chance to do otherwise. A few places he was stationed include Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi and Travis Air Force Base in California. Craig and his family ultimately moved to Panama City, Florida, stationed at Tyndall Air Force Base, where he would eventually retire in 2018. In between these locations, Craig had the opportunity to deploy to several different locations overseas, including Germany and Qatar.

Upon retiring, Craig decided to not continue in the health care field. He was able to take a few months off after retirement to decompress and remembers the feelings of sadness that accompanied leaving the familiar environment of friends and the military community, unsure of where life would take him next. Over the years, Craig has pursued his interest in fields other than medicine, including getting his real estate license and obtaining a military

contracting job as a civilian. Today, he works logistics for the civil engineering community. This entails aiding teams of people deploying out to handle civil engineering emergencies across the country.

Looking back on his time in the service, Craig believes his strong work ethic, sense of integrity, and punctuality can be attributed to the military. Additionally, he believes working in health care has fueled a magnified sense of empathy for others, as he saw patients day in and day out struggling with health issues and helped them to the best of his ability. Craig states how he will forever be an advocate for health care and the military community, as he will always cherish the shared experience of sacrifice and commitment to serve with his fellow military peers and families.

Having retired in Florida, Craig enjoys spending his free time golfing, taking the boat out, and relaxing with family when everyone is able to get together. Craig says he does not regret one day of his service, his journey and developed values classifying him as one of Florida's respected Veteran Health Heroes.



Louann Robinson's

military to health care journey is a true demonstration of certainty and dedication. With four years of service and a continued life as a military spouse, Louann has experienced one of the many versions of military community and lifestyle that exist for our veterans and their spouses, having been both.

Born and raised in Eagle Bend, Minnesota, Louann was unsure of her next step when graduating high school. A friend of hers, in the process of enlisting in the military, invited her to meet with his recruiter, and Louann decided to join the Air Force. She entered as an airman basic and went into security forces, where most of her military service was spent. She provided security for aircraft areas as well as entries and exits for crafts and crew, provided extra security for sensitive missions, and served as airbase ground defense offering extra security for the perimeter of defense. At the time, women had only been a part of that career field for about five years.

Louann's resilience and work ethic only strengthened during her time in the Air Force. When asked how she got through her first days in the service, she described how growing up in the farm community fostered her ability to cope with what training dished at her. The durability and adaptiveness she possessed growing up led to a quick adjustment to military life and working with others.

Louann served at Ramstein Air Base in Germany for two years, followed by two years at F.E Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. A memorable moment during her time in Germany was marked by a part of her unit getting deployed to Kuwait during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991. Louann expressed interest in this mission, but was told the crew excluded females, who were less preferred in Kuwait. In addition to women being so new to the military security workforce, she felt dissatisfied with this preference. Knowing she was doing the exact work as the men in her field, this further cultivated feelings of social isolation. However, this did not deter her commitment to her country and work. While in Germany, she enjoyed being engulfed in a different culture and new experiences with her fellow airmen.

Louann was honorably discharged in Cheyenne. Highlighting feelings of readiness but anxiousness, she was unsure of what to expect from life outside

the military. This was a substantial transition period for her, as she was used to the security of the military environment. Her spouse is currently active duty, so she is still able to surround herself with that familiar military community. Louann did not have a career in medicine in mind when joining the military, but once she transitioned back into civilian life, she attended nursing school at a community college in Cheyenne, and eventually obtained her Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in Healthcare Systems Leadership at Norwich University.



Her experience in the military has provided long-term standards for her expectations and work ethic that bleed into the work she does today. Louann highlights the importance of these traits when people's lives are on the line, noting how her ability to communicate, provide quality care, and provide feedback to leadership are traits she gained during her service that she uses every day.

Louann's family has recently moved from Hawaii to Florida, and today, she works as the director of a progressive care unit in Fort Pierce. Louann leads a team of over 80 health care practitioners, working with them as a team to provide expert care to patients every day. In a quote from her experience getting licensed with us, she states, "The staff member in the office was exceptionally helpful and responsive to my questions and needs. She was timely and facilitated the process with ease... I've been licensed in several other states, and by far, Florida was most helpful and the only one with office staff at the ready to help facilitate the licensing and fees (which were none from what I remember)."

In her free time, she relishes in traveling and activities that involve being outside with her family. Louann's Air Force service and contributions to Florida health care are indispensable, and we thank her for being one of our Veteran Health Heroes.



Appendix II:

Statewide Resources

Florida is home to more than 1.4 million veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. As one of the nation's most military-friendly states, Florida's agencies and partners offer various resources and opportunities to help veterans, active-duty service members, and their spouses find meaningful employment 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](https://eBenefits.VA.gov/eBenefits/Learn-Post-9-11-GI-Bill-and-Veteran)
- Veteran Education Benefits: [VA.gov/ Education/ About-GI-Bill-Benefits/Post-9- 11](https://VA.gov/Education/About-GI-Bill-Benefits/Post-9-11)



Agencies

- US. Department of Veterans Affairs: VA.gov
- Florida Department of Military Affairs: DMA.MyFlorida.com
- Florida Department of Veterans: FloridaVets.org



Veteran Resources

- Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Military Veterans Assistance Program: [MyFloridaLegal.com/ Consumer-Protection/MVAP](https://MyFloridaLegal.com/Consumer-Protection/MVAP)
- Veterans Florida: VeteransFlorida.org



THANK YOU

Thank you, veterans, active-duty service members, and spouses for your unwavering commitment to serve your country and its people!

Are you a military health care practitioner who is interested in being featured in next year's publication? **Please contact OVLS at 850-245-4207.**





**Florida
HEALTH**