

VETERANS ASSISTANCE  
COMMISSION OF  
WINNEBAGO COUNTY, ILLINOIS

*Jesus M. Pereira, Superintendent*



ANNUAL REPORT

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Fiscal Year 2023

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December 2023

Honorable Governor J. B. Pritzker  
207 State House  
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

It is with great pleasure that I present you with the annual report of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County, Illinois, as mandated by the provisions outlined in Chapter 330, Part 45, Section 8 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County offers essential support and services to military veterans who have served in the United States Armed Forces, ensuring assistance for those with an honorable or general under honorable conditions discharge. Moreover, the Commission extends just and necessary aid to the families of veterans and deceased veterans with service, recognizing their need for such support and services.

The fundamental services offered by the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County include:

1. Financial Assistance
2. Veteran Benefits Application Assistance and Representation
3. Transportation
4. Advocacy

In fiscal year of 2023, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County documented 3,122 engagements with veterans in the county. Additionally, the commission allocated \$30,452.50 from its emergency fund and disbursed \$163,095.33 in recurring assistance during this period.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your steadfast support of our county's veterans. Your commitment is truly valued. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Very Respectfully,

Jesus M Pereira, Superintendent

# Glossary of Terms

**Compensation:** See “Disability Compensation”

**Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC):** A tax-free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military service members who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of Veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease.

**Disability Compensation:** A tax-free monetary benefit paid to Veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred in or aggravated during active military service.

**Functional Zero:** A goal that is reached when the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness within a community is less than the average number of Veterans being connected with permanent housing each month.

**Intent-to-File:** An application for Veterans and survivors who intend to file a claim for VA compensation, pension, or survivors’ benefits which preserves the effective date of future benefits while the claimant is gathering supporting documentation for their formal claim.

**Non-Service-Connected Pension:** See “Pension”

**Pension:** A tax-free needs-based monetary benefit paid to wartime Veterans, who meet certain age or non-service-connected disability requirements.

**Pension Management Center:** A department at certain VA Regional Offices that is responsible for processing and adjudicating claims for pension, survivor’s pension, dependency and indemnity compensation, and burial benefits.

**Regional Office:** One of 56 VA offices located nationwide responsible for processing and adjudicating VA benefits which primarily includes disability compensation. Superintendent: The executive powers of the Veterans Assistance Commission vest within this individual and that individual acts as the Chief Veterans Advocate for the Veterans of the County.

**Survivor’s Pension:** A tax-free needs-based monetary benefit payable to a low-income, unremarried surviving spouse and/or unmarried child(ren) of a deceased wartime Veteran.

**VA Health Care:** A comprehensive medical benefits package available to qualifying Veterans which includes primary and specialty care at VA hospitals and clinics.

**Veterans Service Officer:** An individual who is accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs who assists Veterans and their dependents in the filing of claims, and advocacy for, benefits with the VA.

**Work/Study Student:** A Veteran student who is using VA education benefits and is paid by the VA to do VA related work at no cost to the County.

# Veterans Assistance Commission Delegates and Alternates 2023

Title	Name	Post/Ship/
President	Dave Davis	American Legion Robert Carlson Post #1207
Administrative Coordinator	Nancy Clark	National Women Veterans United Rockford, She Vets Chapter
Finance Coordinator	Todd Burton	Disabled American Veterans Blackhawk Life Chapter #29
Services Coordinator	Terrell Lewis	Am Vets Rock River Valley Chapter #922
Delegate	Ken VanLandeghem	American Legion Holtz – Hirst Post #288
Alternate	Raymond Dhom	American Legion Holtz – Hirst Post #288
Delegate	Jeff Greer	American Legion Walter Graham Post # 332
Alternate	Amy Mullins	American Legion Walter Graham Post # 332
Delegate	Willie Evans	American Legion Jefferson/Horton Post #340
Alternate	George Blake	American Legion Jefferson/Horton Post #340
Alternate	George Meissen	American Legion Robert Carlson Post #1207
Alternate	Keith Ray	Disabled American Veterans Blackhawk Life Chapter #29
Delegate	Donald Reynolds	Marine Corps League Post #83
Alternate	Oscar Guterrez	Marine Corps League Post #83
Delegate	Curly Thompson	Montford Point Marines Beloit-Rockford Chapter #41
Alternate	Stephen Serwatka	Montford Point Marines Beloit-Rockford Chapter #41
Alternate	Maryna Misiewicz	National Women Veterans United Rockford, She Vets Chapter
Delegate	Robert Lamay	Navy Club Ship #1
Alternate	Dallas Heffron	Navy Club Ship #1
Delegate	Richard Martin	United States Submarine Veterans Inc. - Illinois Base
Alternate	Renee Martin	United States Submarine Veterans Inc. - Illinois Base
Delegate	Lana McCants	Veterans of Foreign Wars – Thomas Lawler Post #342
Alternate	John Kline	Veterans of Foreign Wars – Thomas Lawler Post #342
Delegate	David Draeger	Veterans of Foreign Wars – VFW Roscoe Post #2955
Alternate	Rueben Hernandez	Veterans of Foreign Wars – VFW Roscoe Post #2955
Delegate	John Guler	Veterans of Foreign Wars – VFW Ross/Pearson Post #5149
Alternate	F.S. Tate	Veterans of Foreign Wars – VFW Ross/Pearson Post #5149
Delegate	John S. Hood	Veterans of Foreign Wars – VFW Loves Park Post #9759
Alternate	Ken Seay	Veterans of Foreign Wars – VFW Loves Park Post #9759
Delegate	Allen Hogle	Vietnam 2 Now
Alternate	Dan Jensen	Vietnam 2 Now
Delegate	Jerry Egilske	Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #984
Alternate	Mark Lawrence	Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #984
Delegate	Calvin Johnson	Voiture 40 & 8 Blackhawk Voiture No. 408
Alternate	Michael E Johnson	Voiture 40 & 8 Blackhawk Voiture No. 408

# Our Mission

The Veterans Assistance Commission strives to improve the lives of Winnebago County veterans and their families by providing, at no cost, assistance with applying for benefits and services they are entitled to. These benefits and services include but are not limited to:

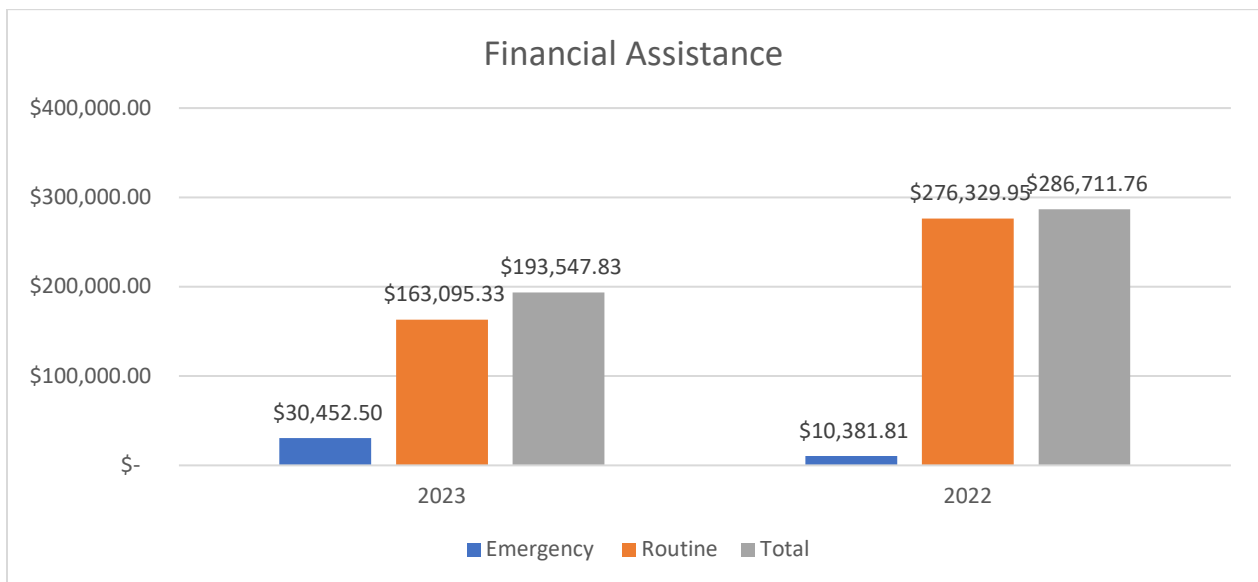
1. VA Disability Compensation
2. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
3. Non-Service-Connected Pension
4. Survivors Pension
5. VA Health Care
6. Emergency Housing Services
7. Financial Assistance (Routine and Emergency)
8. Education Benefits
9. Transportation Services
10. Employment & Training Referrals

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County has undergone significant changes and accomplished notable milestones this year. The commission's staff now includes Superintendent Jesús M Pereira, Executive Assistant Debra Hoover, Senior Veteran Service Officer Julie Weis, Senior Veteran Service Officer Gary Christopher, Veteran Service Officer Kristine Spivey, Veteran Service Officer Ray Richmond, Financial Assistance Coordinator Crystal Desroberts Administrative Assistant Francesca Montañéz, and Driver John Clark.

This year represents a historic moment as the employees of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County are receiving full employment benefits, aligning with those available to all other Winnebago County employees. We express our sincere gratitude for the support and understanding demonstrated by the County Board Chairman, the County Board, and all Winnebago County employees. This significant stride not only contributes to the well-being of our team but also underscores the county's dedication to honoring and appreciating the service of our veterans.

# Financial Assistance

The Commission extends financial support to all honorably discharged County Veterans, encompassing various forms of assistance such as rental and mortgage aid, utility payments, assistance for medically indigent individuals, emergency shelter for homeless Veterans, those at risk of homelessness, and those displaced by natural disasters. Additionally, the Commission provides burial assistance for indigent Veterans.



This year the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County provided \$193,546.83 in financial assistance, representing: \$163,095.33 in routine assistance which includes rental assistance and utility assistance; and \$30,452.50 in emergency services which includes prevention of homelessness, emergency housing, and prevention of utility shutoff.

We expect a rise in regular financial aid and a reduction in emergency assistance during the fiscal year 2024. Our outreach and marketing efforts for this fiscal year are focused on reaching a larger number of veterans in Winnebago County than ever before, contributing to the anticipated increase in routine financial support. Enhanced collaboration among our community partners and stakeholders, along with more efficient utilization of resources, is underway to better address the needs of our veterans. This approach is poised to make a substantial impact on emergency financial assistance in the future.

# Outlook for Fiscal Year 2024

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County faced challenges during fiscal year 2023. The Commission successfully navigated the transition to a new Superintendent. Moreover, amendments to the Military Veterans Assistance Act necessitated the adoption of relevant county policies, resulting in improved benefits for our employees and enhanced access to county support services. These changes also prompted a revision of Commission Bylaws.

During this fiscal year, our team expanded to include a total of nine employees, a strategic move aimed at better serving the veterans in Winnebago County. As our team continues to come together, our focus will be on streamlining processes, utilizing electronic means to enhance access to our services, and strengthening our partnerships with community stakeholders.

The need for additional funding arises from the expansion of our team, increased costs associated with employee benefits, and the broadening scope of our services. The Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County is committed to collaborating with the County Board to carefully manage our future fiscal requirements. This collaboration aims to ensure the effective operation of a well-staffed and efficient Veterans Assistance Commission.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jesús Pereira". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jesús M Pereira  
Superintendent