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WANDA A. WRIGHT
DIRECTOR

October 1, 2018

Kristine FireThunder
Policy Advisor on Tribal Relations
Office of the Arizona Governor, Douglas A. Ducey
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: Tribal Consultation Annual Report

Dear Director FireThunder:

Pursuant to A.R.S. 41-2051 Section C, Consultation and Cooperation with Arizona Tribes, the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) respectfully submits the ADVS Annual Tribal Consultation Report for the period covering July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

I am pleased to provide you with the Department's efforts to enhance our direct services, outreach, communication and education efforts to the military veterans within American Indian Tribes and Nations during FY2018.

Sincerely,

John F. Scott II, MSW
Deputy Director

cc: President Steve Yarbrough, Arizona State Senate
Speaker J.D. Mesnard, Arizona State House of Representatives
Members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee
Joan Clark, State Librarian, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records



Annual Tribal Consultation Report – FY2018

Agency Overview

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) is the single state administered veteran services agency for Arizona with the overarching goal of championing the provision of veteran services. The department is an advocate for veterans, and provides the following services to Arizona Veterans: skilled nursing, preparation of claims for disability and pensions to the Veterans Administration, burial, approval of GI Bill funding for approved institutions of higher learning, as well as the administration of state and federal grant funding and initiatives that address veteran homelessness, employment, mental health and suicide prevention.

Tribal Liaison

The Department created a Tribal Liaison position in 2014 in accordance with the Executive Order 2006-14. The Tribal Liaison is responsible for facilitating state-tribal consultation for the 22 Arizona tribes, and is tasked with developing a robust network of service provision, consultation, and education of State and Federal benefits amongst the military veterans and their families residing on tribal lands. Since July of 2015, John F. Scott II, then Assistance Deputy Director, has been the Tribal Liaison Representative for ADVS. Mr. Scott is now the Deputy Director and in his place as our current Tribal Liaison Representative is R. Scott Fincher, Assistant Deputy Director.

Tribal Government Consultation Policy

The Department is committed to working with the American Indian Tribes to enhance military veteran services for veterans and their families. The establishment of Tribal Government Consultation Policy ensures that ADVS engages in open, continuous and meaningful collaboration, consultation and services provision with Arizona Tribal Nations. ADVS continues to promote open dialogue, garnering feedback for creating a consultation policy. The ADVS website link for the Tribal Government Consultation Policy can be found here: <https://dvs.az.gov/about>.

The Department conducted a total of 47 reservation specific outreach trips to tribal communities to enhance the provision of service delivery by reaching American Indian veterans living in remote locations throughout the state. The Department also participated in three American Indian Veteran Resource Fairs and two Veteran Summits. In all, the Department provided direct services and/or information about military veteran benefits to over 3,650 American Indian veterans and their families.

In addition to the provision of services to American Indian Veterans and their families, the Department has monitored the Navajo Nation accredited Veteran Service Officers who were trained to provide veterans services on their respective tribal land.

One of the challenges faced by ADVS when outreaching American Indian Veterans and their families is the ability to build cultural rapport with members of various tribes, as many American Indian Veterans and family members have had poor experiences with different government agencies and may not be willing to participate in future services. ADVS understands this and advocates to empower American Indian Veterans and their families by working together to help Arizona's tribes become accredited through the Department of Veterans Affairs to file their own claims with a tribal Veteran Services Officer.

Another challenge was the immense distance between the different rural communities and local available services. Many American Indians faced a lack of transportation or ability to travel to neighboring service providers. ADVS has begun alleviating this burden by creating the Virtual Veteran Benefit Counselor (VBC) sessions state wide. ADVS has provided Virtual VBC sessions, meaning veterans in rural communities have worked with an ADVS VBC on a phone,



Annual Tribal Consultation Report – FY2018

computer or tablet to file for compensation and pension claims from an office close to their home without having to travel too far or worry about transportation over long distances.

Since January 2017, the Department has been instrumental in processing The Native American Veterans Income Tax Settlement Fund (NASF), which was established on July 1, 2016. The NASF was created to refund Arizona income tax erroneously withheld from Native Americans who served in the military while claiming tribal land as their domicile. The NASF is available to assist surviving spouses or personal representatives if the veteran is deceased. More information about these accomplishments is outlined in the chart and major accomplishment section below:

Goal	Objective	Activity and Performance Measure
Visit specific reservations for outreach opportunities	Educate on federal, state and ADVS resources and benefits	From July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, ADVS staff have visited 13 specific Arizona tribal reservations for this fiscal year
Increase the number of outreach work assignments to Tribes in Arizona	Provide more direct services with regards to claim submissions to VA for service related disabilities	From July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, ADVS staff have been in contact with 3,652 American Indian Veterans and their families, indicating a 19.5% increase.
Connect with American Indian Veterans and their families in the rural communities of Arizona	Create a tool that will more efficiently connect ADVS with rural tribal communities	From July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, ADVS has successfully implemented the Virtual Veteran Benefit Counselor sessions statewide and have been able to assist rural American Indian Veterans and their families with claim submissions.

Major Accomplishments

The Department works closely with the Tribes and specifically their Veterans Affairs departments. This fiscal year has seen a 19.5% increase in the direct services provided to American Indian Veterans and their families, and the Department has been able to target 13 specific reservations, averaging roughly one per month. The Department has continued processing the NASF applications, and as a result has been able to serve more American Indian Veterans and their families. By expanding the Virtual Veteran Benefit Counselor sessions statewide, the Department has connected with Arizona's rural tribal communities, bringing them new services and education.

For questions and more information, please contact:
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