

Chapter 707

(Senate Bill 857)

AN ACT concerning

**State Government – Department of Veterans Affairs – Veterans’ Services
Specialists**

FOR the purpose of requiring ~~certain~~ units of State government to ~~assign a full-time~~ designate an employee of the unit as a veterans’ services specialist to coordinate services with the director of the veterans Outreach and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans Affairs and attend certain training, to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with certain information, and to post certain information on the unit’s Web site; ~~making the Act applicable to certain units of State government;~~ requiring certain governmental units to direct veterans to contact the Department and provide the veterans with certain contact information; requiring the Department to coordinate certain meetings and submit a certain report; and generally relating to veterans’ services specialists at units of State government.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
 Article – State Government
 Section 9–943
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2014 Replacement Volume and 2016 Supplement)

BY adding to
 Article – State Government
 Section 9–944
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2014 Replacement Volume and 2016 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – State Government

9–943.

(a) (1) For the purposes of reaching any veteran, veteran’s dependent, or veteran’s survivor in need of assistance in obtaining services or benefits granted by the law, the director shall develop and implement an outreach plan.

(2) In order to carry out the director’s responsibilities under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the director may:

(i) enter into contracts; and

(ii) work with governmental units and community-based organizations, including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Aging, faith-based groups, veterans groups, senior centers, adult day care centers, institutions of higher education, and other entities the director considers appropriate.

(b) (1) The director shall develop mechanisms for outreach to be disseminated by direct mail and through community-based veterans organizations, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and any other State agency or unit the director considers appropriate.

(2) The mechanisms for outreach shall include:

(i) the development of a pamphlet describing the services provided by the Outreach and Advocacy Program;

(ii) a regular newsletter;

(iii) brochures describing various benefits or any other issue or benefit of interest to veterans or their dependents; and

(iv) other measures the director considers appropriate.

(c) The Department shall develop and maintain a database of veterans in the State.

(d) The Department, in conjunction with the types of community-based organizations listed in subsection (a)(2) of this section, shall develop a survey to assist in identifying veterans and dependents who may be eligible for pension programs.

(e) The Program shall:

(1) in conjunction with other governmental units and community-based groups, seek out veterans and their dependents who may be eligible for pension program benefits; and

(2) provide wounded or disabled veterans with information on available services and benefits and support in obtaining these services and benefits.

9-944.

(A) IN THIS SECTION, “SPECIALIST” MEANS ~~A FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE OF AN~~ EMPLOYEE DESIGNATED BY A GOVERNMENTAL UNIT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RESPONDING TO AND ASSISTING VETERANS WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE UNIT OR WHO CONTACT THE UNIT FOR ASSISTANCE.

~~(B)~~ ~~THIS SECTION APPLIES TO:~~

- ~~(1) THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES;~~
- ~~(2) THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES;~~
- ~~(3) THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD;~~
- ~~(4) THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE; AND~~
- ~~(5) PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE.~~

~~(C)~~ (B) EACH GOVERNMENTAL UNIT ~~SUBJECT TO THIS SECTION~~ SHALL:

(1) ~~ASSIGN A FULL TIME EMPLOYEE~~ DESIGNATE AN EMPLOYEE OF THE UNIT, WHO TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE IS A VETERAN, AS A VETERANS' SERVICES SPECIALIST FOR THE UNIT AND WHOSE DUTIES INCLUDE THE COORDINATION OF VETERANS' SERVICES WITH THE DEPARTMENT;

(2) PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT WITH ANY NONPROTECTED OR NONPRIVATE INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES THE UNIT PROVIDES TO VETERANS; AND

(3) POST ON THE UNIT'S WEB SITE:

(I) ALL SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS FROM THE UNIT;

(II) THE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE UNIT'S VETERANS' SERVICES SPECIALIST; AND

(III) A LINK TO THE DEPARTMENT WITH THE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.

~~(D)~~ (C) THE VETERANS' SERVICES SPECIALIST SHALL:

(1) COORDINATE THE PROVISION OF VETERANS' SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE UNIT WITH THE DEPARTMENT; AND

(2) ATTEND ANNUAL TRAINING THAT THE DEPARTMENT PROVIDES CONCERNING THE COORDINATION OF VETERANS' SERVICES.

~~(E)~~ **(D)** ON REQUEST FOR SERVICES BY A VETERAN, A GOVERNMENTAL UNIT THAT DOES NOT PROVIDE SERVICES TO VETERANS SHALL DIRECT THE VETERAN TO CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT AND PROVIDE THE VETERAN WITH THE DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION.

(E) **THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:**

(1) COORDINATE A MEETING EACH QUARTER, OR AS OTHERWISE NECESSARY, WITH GOVERNMENTAL UNITS TO DISCUSS AND RECEIVE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION; AND

(2) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 15 EACH YEAR, REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THIS ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2017.

Approved by the Governor, May 25, 2017.