

**GRANT OFFICER'S MEMORANDUM NO. 03-26**

FOR: ALL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE JOBS  
FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT RECIPIENTS  
ALL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE STAFF

FROM: KIA MASON  
Grant Officer

SUBJECT: New Jobs for Veterans State Grants Eligible Populations: Surviving Spouses

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**I. PURPOSE**

This memo advises Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) recipients of changes to the criteria for eligibility under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Pub. L. 119-75.

**II. OVERVIEW**

As explained in Veterans Program Letter (VPL) [05-24](#), JVSG Staff Roles and Responsibilities and Coordination with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Services to Veterans, annual appropriations acts may designate populations who are eligible to receive JVSG-funded services in addition to the eligible veterans and eligible persons identified in 38 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) § 4101. Since 2014, these "additional populations" have been:

- transitioning members of the Armed Forces who have participated in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and have been identified as in need of intensive services,
- members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units, and
- the spouses or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members.

In addition to the previously mentioned populations, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, also includes the following two new groups:

- surviving spouses of individuals who died while serving as members of the Armed Forces, and
- surviving spouses of individuals who died as a result of a service-connected disability.

The changes are **not** retroactive. Once recipients have transitioned to using fiscal year (FY) 2026 funds, they may begin providing JVSG-funded services to the two new additional populations as though they were included in VPL 05-24 Section IV.A.2.

Consistent with all other eligible populations, states must accept a customer’s self-attestation as adequate proof of eligibility for JVSG program participation. For full guidance on this subject, refer to Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) [23-19 Change 3](#), Guidance for Validating Required Performance Data Submitted by Grant Recipients of U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Workforce Programs, and its attachments.

### **III. RESCISSIONS**

None.

### **IV. ACTIONS**

- A. Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program specialists (DVOP) may begin serving the additional populations once their state has started using FY 2026 grant funding. The additional populations must be served in accordance with VPL 05-24 as though they were included in section VI.A.2. Services to these populations may continue as long as they are included in future appropriations acts.
- B. The Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) invites recipients to learn more through:
  - the appended Serving Surviving Spouses Questions and Answers,
  - an upcoming JVSG Listening Session on this topic (or its recording, which will be available on [VETS YouTube](#)),
  - future training opportunities offered through VETS’ [National Veterans' Training Institute](#) (NVTI), and
  - routing questions through the assigned Grant Officer’s Technical Representative (GOTR).

### **V. EXPIRATION DATE**

This memorandum will be reviewed for relevance by March 2027 and remains in effect until rescinded.

### **VI. ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix: Serving Surviving Spouses Questions and Answers

## **APPENDIX: SERVING SURVIVING SPOUSES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1. Who are “individuals who died while serving as members of the Armed Forces”?**

According to 38 U.S.C. § 101(10):

“The term ‘Armed Forces’ means the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof.”

Note that the definition includes reserve components. According to 38 U.S.C. § 101(27):

“The term ‘reserve component’ means, with respect to the Armed Forces-

- (A) the Army Reserve;
- (B) the Navy Reserve;
- (C) the Marine Corps Reserve;
- (D) the Air Force Reserve;
- (E) the Coast Guard Reserve;
- (F) the Army National Guard of the United States; and
- (G) the Air National Guard of the United States.”

Eligibility extends beyond the spouses of service members who died as a result of hostile action or otherwise in the line of duty. They qualify for JVSG services (funded by an FY 2026 or later award) regardless of the cause or circumstances of death, as long as the service member was a member of the Armed Forces at the time of their passing.

### **2. Who are “individuals who died as a result of a service-connected disability”?**

These individuals are veterans, not active service members, whom the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) determined had at least one disability as a result of their military service, and who died as a result of that disability.

See [38 Code of Federal Regulations \(C.F.R.\) § 3.312](#) for full discussion of the relationship between a service-connected disability and cause of death.

### **3. Do surviving spouses need to be experiencing one or more of the employment barriers named in VPL 05-24 Section VI.A.1?**

No. The additional populations designated by annual appropriations language do not need to be experiencing an employment barrier. See the VPL 05-24’s Appendix Section D, which says, “These additional populations do not need to be experiencing an additional employment barrier to benefit from the JVSG program by receiving services from a DVOP specialist or for a LVER [Local Veterans' Employment Representative] to work with employers on their behalf.”

**4. What is the relationship between “the surviving spouses of individuals who died as a result of a service-connected disability” and the eligible persons identified in 38 U.S.C. § 4101(5)(A), “the spouse of any person who died of a service-connected disability”?**

These populations are identical. The other eligible persons identified in 38 U.S.C. § 4101(5) (the spouse of active duty service members who are missing in action, captured by a hostile force, or forcibly detained by a foreign power; and the spouse or surviving spouse of a veteran with a total and permanent service-connected disability) must still be experiencing one or more of the employment barriers identified in VPL 05-24 Section VI.A.1.

**5. How are DVOPs impacted by the new additional populations?**

In states that are spending FY 2026 (or later) funds, DVOPs may serve surviving spouses who have been screened and found eligible by American Job Center (AJC) staff or the state’s management information system.

**6. How are LVERs impacted by the newly-identified additional populations?**

LVERs work on behalf of all veterans, eligible persons, and additional populations identified in annual appropriations. In states that are spending FY 2026 (or later) funds, LVERs may include these surviving spouses as they advocate with business, industry, and other community-based organizations.

**7. What documentation can be used to verify that someone falls into one of these new additional populations?**

As with all other populations, self-attestation of eligibility during screening is sufficient proof that an individual is eligible to receive JVSG-funded services. See VPL 05-24 Section VI.A.3, which says, “States must accept an individual's verbal, written, or electronic confirmation of their eligibility status and experiences as sufficient evidence for referral to DVOP services.”

**8. How should states report on services to the new populations using the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL)?**

These surviving spouses will continue to be captured by indicating “3” under Element 301. As always, states should also take care to capture eligibility in participants’ case files.

**9. Should states include these surviving spouses in their JVSG State Plans?**

At the time of this writing, states are preparing midpoint modifications to their program years (PY) 2024-2027 JVSG State Plans. VETS does not expect states to include the newly eligible surviving spouses in their plans at this time. There is also no need for states to submit a subsequent plan modification in order to serve these spouses since the services should not significantly impact the way that states carry out their JVSG program. States should include the new populations in their PYS 2028-2031 plans.

**10. Will VETS update its current guidance to include these new populations?**

Yes. VETS will update VPL 05-24 as well as VPL 01-24 Attachment 1 to incorporate the adjustments to the additional populations.

**11. Are the new additional populations eligible for priority of service?**

The definition of covered persons who are eligible to receive priority of service for any program that is funded, in whole or in part, by DOL has not changed. The spouse of a veteran who died of a service-connected disability continues to be eligible for priority of service, and the spouse of an individual who died while serving as a member of the Armed Forces is not eligible for priority of service.

According to 38 U.S.C. § 4215:

“The term ‘covered person’ means any of the following individuals:

(A) A veteran.

(B) The spouse of any of the following individuals:

- (i) Any veteran who died of a service-connected disability.
- (ii) Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for assistance under this section, is listed, pursuant to [section 556 of title 37](#) and regulations issued thereunder, by the Secretary concerned in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days: (I) missing in action, (II) captured in line of duty by a hostile force, or (III) forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power.
- (iii) Any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability.
- (iv) Any veteran who died while a disability so evaluated was in existence.”

**12. Can a state serve the newly-identified additional populations using carry-in funding from FY 2025 or earlier?**

States are unable to charge their pre-FY 2026 JVSG awards for services to the new additional populations.

See the terms and conditions of the award’s JVSG Special Grant Provisions, Section IV.C, which says: “Except for the expenditure of incentive award funding, recipients must obligate or expend funds on a first-in, first-out basis, charging to the grant award with the shortest period of availability first.”

### 13. Will states' allocations be increased to support the additional populations?

States' allocations are based on a number of factors, none of which are directly related to surviving spouses. The most significant factor is the level of funding that Congress annually appropriates for JVSG, which, since FY 2023, has remained steady at \$185 million. Appropriated funding is allocated to states as follows:

- Per 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2)(B)(i), appropriated funding is allocated to states based on the ratio of “(I) the total number of veterans residing in the State that are seeking employment; to (II) the total number of veterans seeking employment in all States.”
- Per the implementing regulations at [20 C.F.R. Part 1001 Subpart F](#), VETS uses the most recent three-year averages from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey for veteran population and the Local Area Unemployment Survey for unemployed populations to adhere to the statute's directive.

Therefore, only the states' veteran and unemployment populations are considered.

States are not required to refer all DVOP-eligible customers for DVOP services, and it is critical that recipients follow VPL 05-24 Section VI.D, which says:

**“Managing the DVOP Specialist Caseload.** VETS does not set caseload goals or limits for DVOP specialists. Instead, states are responsible for regularly monitoring caseloads to ensure each assigned DVOP specialist is allowed sufficient time to:

- Deliver high-quality individualized career services through a case management approach;
- Maintain comprehensive, well-documented case management files; and
- Accept new participants who are prioritized based on the order described in 38 U.S.C. § 4103A(a): first, special disabled veterans (see 38 U.S.C. § 4211(1)); then, other disabled veterans (see 38 U.S.C. § 4211(3)); and, lastly, other eligible veterans and eligible persons in accordance with priorities determined by the Secretary.”

### 14. How many surviving spouses are now eligible for JVSG services?

There is little data available to estimate the number of newly-eligible populations, but we note that:

- According to the [Defense Casualty Analysis System](#), roughly 1,000 active duty service members die per year; and according to [Military OneSource](#), 47.6 percent of active duty members are married. This could mean that 476 surviving spouses of service members may become eligible each year.
- According to the [VA](#), approximately 1,635,000 civilian veterans aged 18-64 were reported to have a service-connected disability in 2023. However, there is no estimate of how many pass away as a result of their disability.