

## Streamlining state veterans' home to improve services

Written by Staff Reports

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**SANTA FE** – The Department of Veterans Services and the Department of Health proposed streamlining the State Veterans' Home in Truth or Consequences to improve services for New Mexico's veterans Jan. 5.

The proposal, if approved by the legislature, will move management of the State Veterans' Home from DOH to DVS, aligning both state and federal resources to better serve veterans.

"The Department of Health and Department of Veterans Services have had a long-standing working relationship and have developed this plan to serve our veterans and their families in the best way possible," Governor Susana Martinez said. "This transition takes an important step to improve government efficiency by ensuring that we are better utilizing our resources."

The care veterans receive at the state veterans' home will be further enhanced by allowing the NMDVS to utilize its connections with the VA Health Care System, the VA regional benefits office, and other organizations that serve veterans.

The move also brings New Mexico in line with the model used by most states in the nation of management of state veterans' homes by state veterans' departments instead of by state health departments.

NMDVS Secretary Jack Fox said that day-to-day operations at the veterans' home will not be affected by the change.

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“Because our sole mission is service for all veterans in New Mexico, we will rely on the current facility administration and staff to continue its excellent level of service for the residents to help us fulfill our mandate of ‘Serving Those Who Served,’” he said.

Fox also said that current facility director Colleen Rundell and her entire administrative staff will not only remain, but are looking forward to becoming an integral part of the NMDVS.

“We’ve had an excellent relationship with Colleen ever since she assumed the director’s position this past February,” he said. “We look forward to having her leadership for many more years to come.”

In order for the change to take effect, state lawmakers will have to pass legislation during the upcoming legislative session to make changes to state statute.

The New Mexico State Veterans’ Home is located on sixteen acres and offers 135 nursing home and ten assisted-living beds. The state-of-the-art facility was established as the state’s only state veterans’ home in 1985.

In May of 2015, the VA awarded a \$17.1 million grant to the facility for the construction of a 59-bed expansion project to include a 39-bed Alzheimer’s unit, a 20-bed Skilled Nursing Unit, a new rehabilitation section for inpatient and outpatient services, and a new pool.

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