

2024



# FLORIDA VETERAN HEALTH HEROES

*A Division of Medical Quality Assurance Publication*



**RON DESANTIS, GOVERNOR**  
**JOSEPH A. LADAPO, MD, PHD, STATE SURGEON GENERAL**

## **MISSION:**

To protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

## **VISION:**

To be the healthiest state in the nation.

## **VALUES:**

### **I**NNOVATION

We search for creative solutions and manage resources wisely.

### **C**OLLABORATION

We use teamwork to achieve common goals and solve problems.

### **A**CCOUNTABILITY

We perform with integrity and respect.

### **R**ESPONSIVENESS


We achieve our mission by serving our customers and engaging our partners.

### **E**XCELLENCE

We promote quality outcomes through learning and continuous performance improvement.

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★ **A TRIBUTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH** ★

Florida is home to more than 1.4 million veterans of the United States Armed Forces. The Florida Department of Health (Department) is committed to providing services and resources for veteran and active-duty health care practitioners and their spouses. It is our continued goal to make Florida the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

★ **PROUDLY SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED** ★

# About the Office of Veteran Licensure Services

The Division of Medical Quality Assurance's Office of Veteran Licensure Services (OVLS) was established by the passage of House Bill 139 following the 2023 legislative session to support veterans, active-duty service members, and their spouses by offering military fee waivers and expedited licensure processes. In partnership with Veterans Florida, OVLS also facilitates a referral program to aid veterans and their spouses with accessing training, education, and employment opportunities within Florida's health care sector. These efforts aim to alleviate the financial burdens and simplify transactions for military families facing relocation.



# Introducing Chase Wells

## Executive Director of OVLS

Sergeant Robert Charles (Chase) Wells IV has been preparing for his new role as the Director of OVLS for a long time. His military career began early in his life, as he transitioned from attending college on a full-ride scholarship to serving our country for six years.

Born in Orlando, Florida, Sergeant Wells grew up in nearby Kissimmee until the age of 11, when his mother took a position as an elementary school principal. He vividly remembers being a junior in high school when the World Trade Center was attacked on September 11, 2001, reflecting that “9/11 heavily influenced the trajectory of [his] life after high school, as [he] felt a call to serve.” While Sergeant Wells went on to earn a Bright Futures Scholarship to Tallahassee State College and excelled academically, his desire to serve remained strong: “My parents were understandably concerned about [me] leaving behind free education, but the call to serve was too great,” he recalled.

Sergeant Wells explored several recruitment options before finding himself in the office of a Florida National Guard recruiter. There, a recruiter outlined the benefits and opportunities of serving, ultimately convincing him to enlist in the Florida Army National Guard in 2006.

Sergeant Wells attributes much of his professional development to his experiences, beginning with boot camp at Fort Benning, GA. “I grew up playing competitive sports—wrestling, football, and baseball—but nothing prepared me for the way a drill sergeant would shape me. I remember hoping I had made the right decision,” he reflected. Sergeant Wells credits Drill Sergeants Fry, Reynolds, and Wise with significantly shaping who he is today. “Their influence on my life was so impactful that I will never forget those guys.” Sergeant Wells credits multiple influences but emphasized that “the Army afforded him the most opportunity at the phase in life he was in at the time of enlistment.”

Sergeant Wells was stationed with the 779th Engineer Battalion as part of the Florida Army National Guard. During his service, he deployed to Mosul, Iraq, from 2009 to 2010. In Iraq, Sergeant Wells served on a protective



services detail, where he provided protective services for a battalion-level colonel and sergeant major as they navigated the battlefield. His role was critical in ensuring their safety during high-risk missions, further solidifying his commitment to service and the skills he developed throughout his military career. “There was a sense of pride in serving that began to develop even before I enlisted, and it grew deeper the longer I served. It was incredibly meaningful to me because the boots I was filling weren’t just my own—I was also walking in the footsteps of those who had served honorably before me,” he reflected. “I felt a duty to honor them by continuing the service and carrying the torch forward.”

Sergeant Wells’ military service concluded in 2012 when he received a new call to serve—supporting his wife who was pregnant with their twins. His passion to serve led him further to attend the police academy and become a sworn police officer where he served for 13 years prior to accepting his current position.

For Sergeant Wells, the lessons he learned in the military continue to influence his everyday life, especially as he volunteers as a youth sports coach: “I try to instill in the young men I coach that being part of a team means you’re no longer just an individual. You’re there to serve the person to your left and right, and they’re relying on you just as much as you’re relying on them to achieve a common goal.”

Sergeant Wells is prepared to bring his vision for OVLS to life, drawing on the lessons he learned in the military while pursuing a master’s degree in organizational leadership at Grand Canyon University. “I’m happy to be here, and I’m proud to serve,” he affirmed.

# The Evolution of MILITARY LICENSURE PATHWAYS ★

*The Department is committed to honoring veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. By implementing special fee waivers, expedited licensing, and referral programs, the Department can better assist service members as they grow in their career, wish to practice while stationed in the state, or settle in Florida at the end of their service.*

## Licensure Renewal Provisions

**1997**

In 1997, a provision was enacted that allows active-duty military members to place their license on military status, which keeps the license in good standing without requiring the service member to renew or pay renewal fees throughout the duration of the service member's active-duty service.

**2011**

## Active-Duty Spouses Fee Waiver

Spouses of active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces may be eligible to receive a professional license to practice their health care profession in Florida, allowing the opportunity to work in their respective profession while their spouse is assigned to a duty station in Florida. To reduce the barrier of entry into a profession, the state eliminated its use of issuing temporary licenses for active-duty spouses in 2022 and shifted to issuing full professional licenses.

**VALOR****2014**

Military pathways expanded significantly in 2014, including expedited licenses for recently discharged, or soon-to-be discharged, active-duty service members through the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response (VALOR) System. Application fees, initial licensure fees, and unlicensed activity fees are removed through this pathway, and spouses of active-duty service members may also be eligible for expedited licensing.



## Veteran and Spouse Fee Waiver

2014

*In 2014, additional fee waivers were applied to military veterans and their spouses when a veteran was honorably discharged within six months from the time the application for licensure was submitted. Qualifying military veterans and their spouses may receive a fee waiver of fees associated with the initial licensing process for most health care professions.*

2014

## Temporary Certificate

*A Temporary Certificate to Practice in an Area of Critical Need was also established in 2014 for active-duty commissioned medical officers and military veterans who served at least 10 years (for allopathic and osteopathic physicians). There is no application fee for physicians seeking this certificate.*

## Military Platform

2016

*In 2016, a temporary certificate was established, allowing for active-duty military health care practitioners to practice on a military platform. A military platform is defined as a military training agreement with a nonmilitary health care provider. It is designed to develop and support medical, surgical, or other health care treatment opportunities in a nonmilitary setting, allowing military health care practitioners to develop and maintain the technical proficiency needed to meet the current and future health care needs of the United States Armed Forces. The license is valid for six months but is renewable with proof of continuing military orders for an active-duty assignment and evidence of continuation as a military platform participant.*



# AT A GLANCE: FY 2023-24 MILITARY LICENSURE DATA



## 5,288 Applications Received

In FY 2023-24, the majority of the 5,288 applications received came from veterans, with 82% submitted through the VALOR program. Fee waiver applications accounted for 13% of the total, while a smaller share came from military spouses (5%) and temporary platform applications (0.1%). This distribution highlights the overwhelming participation of veterans in the application process compared to other groups.



## 1.38 Average Days to Issue a License to a Qualified Military Health Care Practitioner

On average, MQA issued licenses to qualified military applicants in just 1.38 days. This swift turnaround reflects the Department's dedication to ensuring that those who have served our country can quickly transition into Florida's health care workforce, helping to meet the state's needs while honoring the service of military practitioners.



## \$2.7 Million Achieved in Cost Savings

A total of 23,722 military health care practitioners, representing 87 different professions, have collectively saved \$2.7 million in licensing fees thanks to MQA's expedited and reduced-cost licensure services. By offering these benefits to military members and their families, MQA has not only simplified the licensure process but also delivered substantial financial relief. This initiative underscores MQA's dedication to supporting military practitioners as they integrate into Florida's health care workforce, ensuring they can continue their essential work with minimal delays and costs.



## 13 Referrals Made

The majority of vocational referrals made for military health care practitioners were primarily for assistance with job applications (62%), followed by help with interview preparation (31%) and resume support (8%). Most of these referrals originated from applicants seeking fee waivers (62%) and participants in the VALOR program (23%). Notably, the highest number of referrals came from military applicants in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology (38%) and clinical laboratory personnel (23%). In contrast, referrals were equally distributed among military allopathic and osteopathic medicine practitioners (15%), with fewer referrals made for military nursing practitioners (8%).



# FLORIDA VETERAN HEALTH HEROES

The willingness of America's veterans to sacrifice for our country and its freedoms has earned them our lasting gratitude. Upon returning from military service, they continue contributing to our communities as licensed health care practitioners offering health and well-being services.

They double as first responders, physical therapists, nurses, lab technicians, psychologists, dentists, and more. Their dedication to service is a trait that helps build up our agencies and teams. As they work tirelessly to bring about changes to improve the health of Floridians, they achieve inspiring things. We call them Florida Veteran Health Heroes; despite taking off their uniforms, they have never stopped serving.

## Captain (Ret.) Deirdre Krause

Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC



Dr. Deirdre Krause has lived a life dedicated to service, marked by her unwavering commitment to nursing and her transformative experiences in the United States Navy. From her early days as a gifted nurse to her leadership roles in health care and academia, Dr. Krause's journey is a testament to the power of passion, resilience, and compassion.

Initially considering a profession in teaching, Dr. Krause soon found her path in nursing by attending Hunter College for her bachelor's degree and New York University for her master's degree in nursing education. After her masters, she dove into various roles within the health care field. One memorable experience occurred during her time at the Veterans Affairs hospital, where she specialized in caring for Vietnam War veterans affected by Agent Orange exposure. It was during this experience that Dr. Krause made a professional pivot and began her doctoral degree at the University of Miami while also using her master's education to develop the new nursing program at Palm Beach Atlantic University.

After joining the Navy Reserve in 1986, she embraced opportunities for professional development and service. Her training encompassed a wide range of skills, from setting up field hospitals to advanced trauma care. Her first mobilization for the Global War on Terror was with Operation Iraqi Freedom which provided firsthand experience in military health care and preparedness.

Dr. Krause's dedication to health care innovation didn't stop there. During her tenure as the medical director for the mobilization and processing site in Gulfport, Mississippi, she played a pivotal role in screening and caring for Navy personnel before and after deployments. Her leadership ensured that every service member received comprehensive medical evaluations and appropriate care, contributing to the overall readiness and well-being of the force. During this time, Dr. Krause also served as a Blue and Gold Officer for the Naval Academy by interviewing candidates and guiding qualified recruits into the naval academy.

In the early 2000s, Dr. Krause utilized her mentoring skills to serve as an officer for the Sea Cadet Corps. During this role, she provided leadership training to young cadets interested in military service. One of her favorite achievements from this time is training two women who subsequently got into the Naval and Coast Guard Academies.

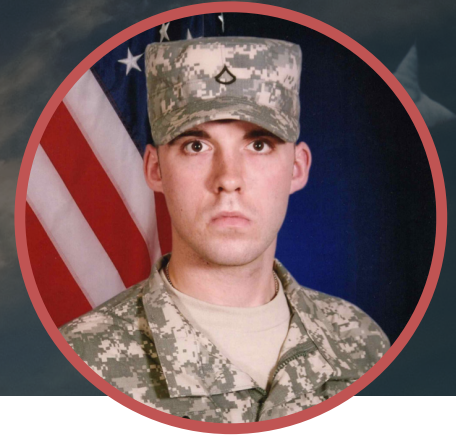
Another highlight of Dr. Krause's naval career was her deployment aboard the United States Naval Ship Comfort during Operation Continuing Promise. Tasked with providing humanitarian aid to Central and South America, she and her team set up clinics, conducted screenings, and performed surgeries for underserved communities. This experience underscored the profound impact that health care practitioners can have on vulnerable populations, reaffirming Dr. Krause's commitment to service and compassion.

Transitioning from active duty to civilian life, after 30 years in the U.S. Navy, Dr. Krause embarked on a new chapter of service in 2016, blending her expertise in nursing with her passion for education and community outreach. As a volunteer with Catholic Charities' Faith Community Nursing Program, she continues to make a difference in the lives of those in need, providing care and support in her community.

Today, Dr. Krause remains actively involved in health care initiatives, serving as a consultant for educational programs and emergency management planning. She also maintains a commitment to her memberships in the Florida Nurses Association and the American Nurses Association. Her tireless dedication to advancing nursing practice and improving health care outcomes reflects a lifelong commitment to service and excellence. In addition to her nursing skills, Dr. Krause's character built on the values of integrity, honor, and commitment, which she attributes to her time in the military, only further classify her as one of Florida's valued Veteran Health Heroes.

## Joshua Weeks

R.N.



Joshua Weeks serves as a testament to dedication and adaptability, transitioning from military service to a fulfilling career in emergency medicine. Joshua's early career aspirations led him to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice at St. Leo University. However, his life took a significant turn when he felt a calling to serve his country.

Joshua joined the Florida Army National Guard in 2011. During his time, he participated in training and drilling activities to equip him with a variety of skills in areas such as first aid, shooting, and water insertion of zodiac boats from helicopters. He was deployed to the Horn of Africa from 2015 to 2016, where he played a crucial role in securing airfields and bases in Djibouti. As a specialist in the infantry, he served as a radio, telephone, and light machine gun operator, and received sniper training. His experiences in the military shaped his perspective on service and instilled in him a deep sense of responsibility, discipline, and comradery. It was during this time that Joshua's interest in health care was ignited by speaking to medics, practicing combat life saver techniques, and assisting with pararescue casualty trainings.

After completing his military service in 2017, Joshua decided to continue his journey in service to others, this time in the health care sector. He enrolled in Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training and subsequently pursued a nursing degree at Tallahassee State College. Despite initial challenges, Joshua's military background equipped him with the resilience and determination needed to excel in his studies and clinical practice.

At Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare (TMH), Joshua found his niche in the fast-paced environment of the Emergency Room (ER). Drawing from his

experiences as an infantryman and his combat life saver skills, he demonstrated a remarkable ability to remain calm under pressure and make critical decisions swiftly. His dedication to patient care and his proficiency in handling diverse medical emergencies quickly made him an invaluable member of the health care team.

Outside of his professional life, Joshua finds joy and relaxation in spending time with his wife and children, as well as pursuing outdoor activities like fishing, hunting, building, and camping. His commitment to family and community mirrors his dedication to service.

Joshua's journey from the National Guard to the ER is not just a career transition but a testament to his unwavering commitment to helping others. His ability to seamlessly integrate military discipline with compassionate health care makes him a role model in both fields. Whether he's training to save lives during times of conflict or in an ER setting, Joshua embodies the values of service, resilience, and leadership. As he continues to grow in his health care career, Joshua remains focused on impacting his community, driven by a passion for brightening people's days and a deep-seated belief in the importance of service above oneself.

## Captain (Ret.) Valerie Morrison

DBA, MSM, BSN, NEA-BC, SHRM-SCP



Dr. Valerie Morrison, a distinguished health care professional and military veteran, has dedicated over three decades to serving her country and communities through nursing and leadership roles. Born and raised in Florida, Dr. Morrison embarked on her journey in health care at the University of North Florida, where she earned her nursing degree and began to cultivate her passion for patient care and service.

Upon graduation, Dr. Morrison heeded the call to serve her nation—following in her father's footsteps. She commissioned as an ensign in the United States Navy. During her tenure, Dr. Morrison encountered numerous challenges that tested her skills and resolve. One such memorable experience occurred during her early years as a lieutenant on the night shift at a hematology ward. She vividly recalls an incident involving a patient who suffered a seizure due to complications from lung cancer metastasizing to his brain. Despite being relatively early in her nursing career, Dr. Morrison courageously took charge, calling for assistance and providing critical care to the patient. This experience taught her valuable lessons in patient advocacy and the importance of doing the right thing, even in challenging circumstances.

Over the course of her 30-year military career, she exemplified excellence in health care and leadership, rising through the ranks to hold various key positions. One notable assignment was her role as Chief Nurse at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where she led with compassion and dedication, overseeing the care of veterans, active-duty personnel, and wounded warriors.

Dr. Morrison's exemplary service in the Navy earned her numerous accolades, including a Defense Meritorious Service Medal, multiple Navy

Commendation and Navy Achievement medals, the Humanitarian Medal, and the National Defense Medal. Her leadership and dedication were instrumental in advancing health care practices within the military, ensuring the well-being of countless service members and their families.

Transitioning to civilian life, Dr. Morrison brought her wealth of experience and expertise to the University of North Florida, where she currently serves as the Director of Student Health Services. In this role, she oversees medical compliance, the student health clinic, and outreach programs, fostering a culture of wellness and care within the university community.

Outside of her professional endeavors, Dr. Morrison finds joy in spending time with her family, including her husband of 23 years and her two children. She is an avid supporter of her son's wrestling endeavors and enjoys staying active through workouts on her Peloton bike. Dr. Morrison also dedicates her time to various volunteer organizations, where she leverages her leadership skills to advocate for positive change in health care.

In the words of Dr. Morrison, "anybody who shows up on a daily basis to provide compassionate care and serve others in their most vulnerable state is a health care hero." With her unwavering dedication, compassionate approach to patient care, and commitment to service, Dr. Valerie Morrison truly embodies the spirit of a health care hero, leaving an indelible mark on those she serves and the profession she represents.

# ★ THANK YOU ★



*Thank you veterans, active-duty service members,  
and spouses for your unwavering commitment to  
serve your country and its people!*



# 2025 Military Calendar

<p><b>January</b></p> <p>New Year's Day: Jan. 1            Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday:            Jan. 20</p>	<p><b>February</b></p> <p>Four Chaplains Day: Feb. 3            United Service Organizations Birthday:            Feb. 4            National Salute to Veteran Patients:            Feb. 10 - 16            President's Day: Feb. 17            Coast Guard Reserve Birthday:            Feb. 19</p>	<p><b>March</b></p> <p>Navy Reserve Birthday: March 2            Hug a GI Day: March 4            Seabee Birthday: March 5            K-9 Veterans Day: March 13            Rosie The Riveter Day: March 21            Medal of Honor Day: March 25            National Vietnam War Veterans Day:            March 29</p>
<p><b>April</b></p> <p>Gold Star Spouses Day: April 5            National Former POW Recognition Day:            April 9            Air Force Reserve Birthday: April 14            Army Reserve Birthday: April 23            National Military Brats Day: April 30</p>	<p><b>May</b></p> <p>Silver Star Service Banner Day: May 1            Military Spouse Appreciation Day: May 9            Armed Forces Week: May 12 - May 19            Children of Fallen Patriots Day: May 12            Peace Officers Memorial Day: May 15            Armed Forces Day: May 17            Maritime Day: May 22            Memorial Day: May 26</p>	<p><b>June</b></p> <p>D-Day: June 6            Women Veterans Day: June 12            Army Birthday: June 14            U.S. Flag Day: June 14            National Flag Week: June 10 - 16            Coast Guard Auxiliary Birthday:            June 23</p>
<p><b>July</b></p> <p>Independence Day: July 4            National Hire A Veteran Day: July 25            National Korean War Veterans            Armistice Day: July 27            Army Chaplain Corps Anniversary:            July 29</p>	<p><b>August</b></p> <p>Air Force Day: Aug. 1            Coast Guard Day: Aug. 4            Purple Heart Day: Aug. 7            U.S. Department of Defense            Birthday: Aug. 10            National Airborne Day: Aug. 16            Marine Corps Reserve Birthday: Aug. 29</p>	<p><b>September</b></p> <p>Labor Day: Sept. 1            V-J Day (Victory over Japan): Sept. 2            Patriot Day: Sept. 11            Air Force (USAF) Birthday: Sept. 18            Office of the Sec. of            Defense Birthday: Sept. 18            Air National Guard Birthday: Sept. 18            National POW/MIA Recognition-            Day: Sept. 19 VFW Day: Sept. 29</p>
<p><b>October</b></p> <p>U.S. Navy (USN) Birthday: Oct. 13            Day of the Deployed: Oct. 26            Navy Day: Oct. 27</p>	<p><b>November</b></p> <p>Marine Corps Day/Birthday: Nov. 10            Veterans Day: Nov. 11            Armistice/Remembrance Day:            Nov. 11</p>	<p><b>December</b></p> <p>Civil Air Patrol (USAF Auxiliary)            Birthday: Dec. 1            National Pearl Harbor Remembrance            Day: Dec. 7            U.S. National Guard Birthday: Dec. 13</p>

## STATEWIDE RESOURCES

Florida is home to more than 1.4 million veterans of the United States Armed Forces. As one of the nation's most military-friendly states, Florida's agencies and partners offer various resources and opportunities to help veterans, active-duty service members, and their spouses find meaningful employment and continue contributing to their communities when returning to civilian life.

### Employment and Business

- Employ Florida Vets: [veteran.employflorida.com](http://veteran.employflorida.com)
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve: [esgr.mil](http://esgr.mil)
- Florida State Veterans' Homes Recruitment: [FloridaVets.org/were-looking-for-you](http://FloridaVets.org/were-looking-for-you)

### Benefits

- eBenefits, Gateway to Benefit information: [eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/learn](http://eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/learn) Post 9/11 GI Bill and Veteran
- Veteran Education Benefits: [va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11](http://va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11)

### Agencies

- United States Department of Veterans Affairs: [va.gov](http://va.gov)
- Florida Department of Military Affairs: [dma.myflorida.com](http://dma.myflorida.com)

### Veteran Resources

- Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Military Veterans Assistance Program: [MyFloridaLegal.com/consumer-protection/mvap](http://MyFloridaLegal.com/consumer-protection/mvap)
- Veterans Florida: [VeteransFlorida.org](http://VeteransFlorida.org)



VIEW OUR PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

## Questions? Contact Us

We encourage those seeking more information about health care licensing for veterans, active-duty service members, and their spouses to visit the website, [FLHealthSource.gov/OVLS](http://FLHealthSource.gov/OVLS), as a one stop shop that provides additional resources including answers to frequently asked questions and application requirements.

Questions about an applicant's military license status, the military licensure pathways, or OVLS? Chat with MQA's Virtual Agent, ELI.



CHAT NOW



[FLHealthSource.gov/OVLS](http://FLHealthSource.gov/OVLS)



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