



Veronica Duncan, LCSW-R

Vet Center Director

*RCS Independent Outstation Coordinator for
San Carlos, Navajo, and Hopi Reservations*

Amelda James, MSW

Veterans Outreach Program Specialist

Vet Center/Readjustment Counseling Services

Keith E. Hamblin

Veteran Outreach Specialist

Tucson Vet Center

September 21, 2022





Mission Statement

We are the people in VA who welcome home war Veterans with honor by providing readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.



RCS - Vet Center History

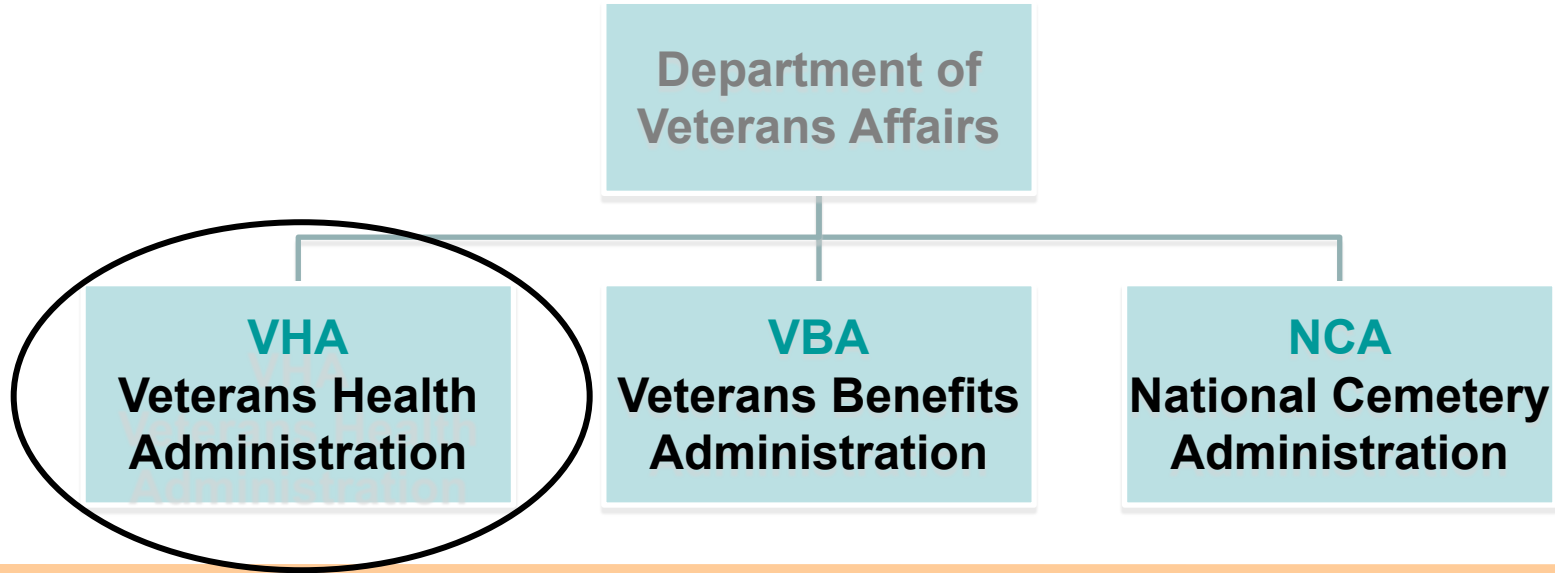
In 1979, the U.S. Congress established the Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS), also known as the Vet Center Program, to provide post-combat readjustment counseling in an alternative setting, easy for Veterans to access.

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible Veterans, active duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components, and their families. Readjustment counseling is offered to make a successful transition from military to civilian life or after a traumatic event experienced in the military.

Vet Center counselors and outreach staff, many of whom are Veterans themselves, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief and transition after trauma.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



Vet Center Eligibility

Any Veterans and current Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve components, are eligible if any of the following applies:

- Have served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility* (see next slide)
- Experienced a military sexual trauma (regardless of gender or service era)
- Provided mortuary services or direct emergent medical care to treat the casualties of war while serving on active military duty
- Performed as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat theater or area of hostility
- Accessed care at a Vet Center prior to Jan. 2, 2013, as a Vietnam-Era Veteran
- Served on active military duty in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the president, or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in that state
- Are a current or former member of the Coast Guard who participated in a drug interdiction operation, regardless of the location
- Are a current member of the Reserve Components assigned to a military command in a drilling status, including active Reserves, who has a behavioral health condition or psychological trauma related to military service that adversely affects quality of life or adjustment to civilian life. Vet Center services are also provided to family members of Veterans and Service members for military-related issues when they aid in the readjustment of those who have served.
- Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active-duty death



Vet Center Eligibility

*Service in combat theater or area of hostility to include but not limited to:

World War II
(including American Merchant Marines)
Korean War
Vietnam War
Lebanon
Grenada
Desert Storm/ Desert Shield
Bosnia

Kosovo
Operations in the former Yugoslavia area
Global War on Terrorism
Operation Enduring Freedom
Operation Freedom's Sentinel
Operation Iraqi Freedom
Operation New Dawn



Like community-based Vet Centers, Mobile Vet Centers focus on services that help combat Veterans make the often difficult readjustment to civilian life.



Each Mobile Vet Center is equipped with a state of the art satellite communications package that includes fully encrypted tele-health equipment, access to all VA systems (Computerized Patient Record System, MyHealthEVet) and connectivity to emergency response systems.



Services

Readjustment counseling is a wide range of psychosocial services offered to eligible Veterans and their families in the effort to make a successful transition from military to civilian life. They include:

- Individual and group counseling for Veterans and their families
- Family counseling for military related issues
- Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active-duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Outreach and education including PDHRA, community events, etc.
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation and referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues including TBI, depression, etc.
- Virtual & Phone appointments



Phoenix Vet Center

602-640-2981

Mesa Vet Center

480-610-6727

Prescott Vet Center

928-778-3468

West Valley Vet Center

623-398-8854

Tucson Vet Center

520-882-0333

Lake Havasu Vet Center

928-505-0394

Hopi Outstation

928-734-5166

Yuma Vet Center

928-271-8700

San Carlos Outstation

928-200-7739

www.vetcenter.va.gov for locations



- VET CENTER CALL CENTER
- **1-877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)**
- Combat Call Center You Tube Video:

<https://youtu.be/F9BbfkPUJa8>

- VETERAN CRISIS LINE
- **988 (Press 1)**

<https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>



Vet Center Reservation Team – 2022



- San Carlos, AZ – CAP staffed by Veronica Duncan, VCD & Outstation Coordinator
- Hotevilla, AZ – Outstation is staffed by Amelda James, MSW, Veterans Outreach Program Specialist & Armondo Escalanti, MSW, Readjustment Counselor
- Additional Community Access Points (CAPS)
 - NAU – Veteran Success Center, Flagstaff, AZ
 - Navajo Nation VA/Tse Bonito, NM



My name is Veronica Duncan, LCSW-R and I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker working with the Vet Center program since 2009. I am an enrolled member of the San Carlos Apache tribe located in Arizona, and am half Blackfeet Indian from Browning, Montana. I am a U.S. Army veteran, having served from February 1996 to December 2002. I served 12 months in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia as a part of IFOR & SFOR and in support of Operation Joint Endeavour during my time in service. Currently I provide Readjustment Counseling Services in Arizona on multiple reservations to primarily Native American Veterans. I also supervise the Vet Center reservation team.



Yá'át'ééh (greetings, in my Navajo language). My name is Amelda James, the Veteran Outreach Program Specialist, with the Hopi Outstation office. I am a member of the Navajo tribe, one of the Native American Indigenous tribes from Northern Arizona. I do speak fluently in Navajo, which is much needed for older Navajo veterans. I am an Army combat veteran, who has served 3 years with the 6 Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, to include the Operation Desert Shield/Storm, and I have also served over 3 years with the Arizona and New Mexico National Guard. I was hired on at the VA to serve my fellow veterans in August of 2020. Our work here in Northern Arizona allows is to do outreach to Northern Arizona and across the Navajo and Hopi reservations which consist of 110 Navajo chapter houses (community offices) to include the bordering towns/communities. Our other staff member in New Mexico also does outreach to New Mexicans and additional Native American tribes. We appreciate serving our fellow heroes. 😊

Collaborations

- **Tribal:** Navajo Nation Veterans Affairs, Chapter Veteran Offices; San Carlos Apache Veteran's Association [@SCATveterans](#) ; Hopi Tribal Veterans Office; Various Tribal veterans' organizations & departments across AZ & NM, Tribal Health Care (638)
- **State:** Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (AZDVS) <https://dvs.az.gov/>, New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services <https://www.nmdvs.org/>
- **Federal:** Veterans Health Administration (VHA) - medical centers, National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Congressional Offices, Indian Health Service (IHS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- **Non-Profit:** O'Odham Veterans Celebration (OVC) – includes both tribal & non-tribal affiliates; American Legions, VFW's, Vet Tix, food banks, various religious organizations, etc.

What Works

- Strong sense of community
- Physical/Consistent presence on the reservations = trust building
- Established networking with stakeholders
- Knowing the resources
- Education to veterans, family, community
- Connecting Veterans to appropriate referral sources
- Follow up, follow up, follow up
- The “Warm Handoff”
- Thinking outside the box, Creativity

Cultural Competence

- Affiliation/membership with Tribal community.
- Proficient in the Language. Translation and barriers to communication. Orientation via family connections.
- Understanding the Clan system.
- Extensive knowledge of Tribal traditions, ceremonies, customs, norms, values, mores.
- Knowledge of Tribal Government systems, i.e. Chapters (Navajo), Districts (San Carlos), Villages (Hopi).
- Extensive knowledge of the Socioeconomic status of reservations: demographics, poverty levels, employment rates, substance abuse prevalence, tribal economy.
- Use of appropriate Alternative therapy approaches, combining Western clinical/medical modalities
- Understanding Historical Trauma
- Practicing Cultural Humility

Challenges

- Large service area: Arizona & New Mexico combined have 44 tribes. Utah & Colorado combined has 10 tribes.
- Geographic isolation.
- Rural resources can be limited.
- Limited number of professional colleagues.
- Accessibility to Vet Center/VA services – distance and transportation limitations. No public transportation services.
- Technology capabilities: computer literacy, internet/wifi services affordability, mobile phone service can be limited/affordability issues.
- Basic needs

Outreach



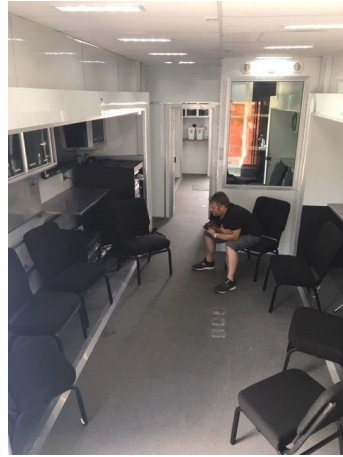
Outreach



Outreach

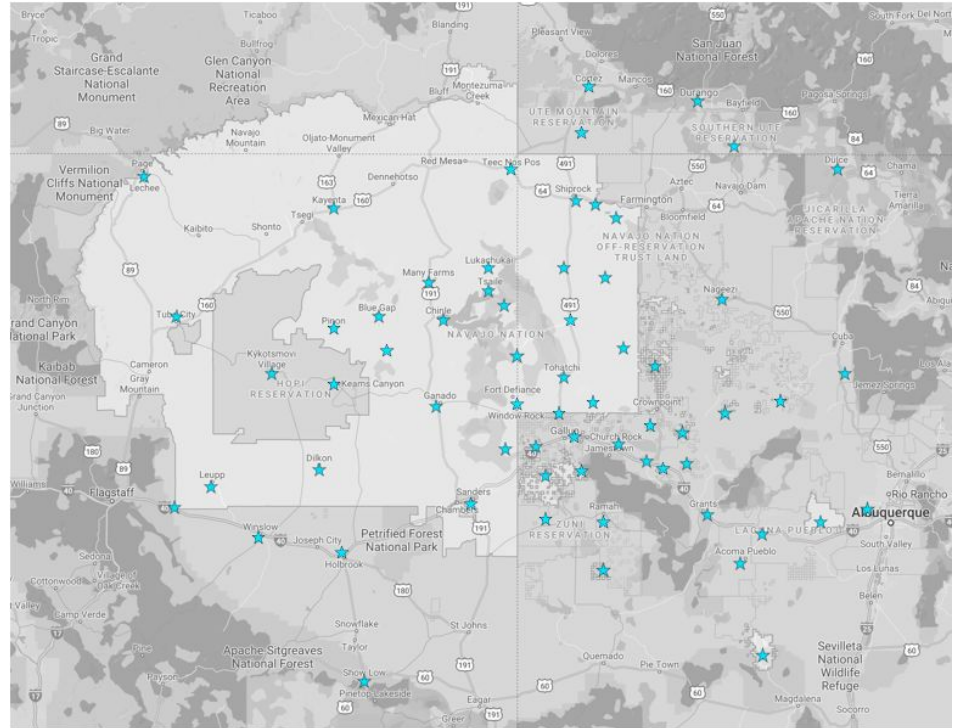


Coming Soon!!
Vet Center
Mobile Clinic
Tse Bonito, NM



Navajo Nation

- Largest Reservation in the US
- Enrolled members: approx. 399K
- Population living on reservation: 165,158
- Acres of land: 27,425 sq. mi.
- Veteran count: unknown
- Blue stars = Outreach locations



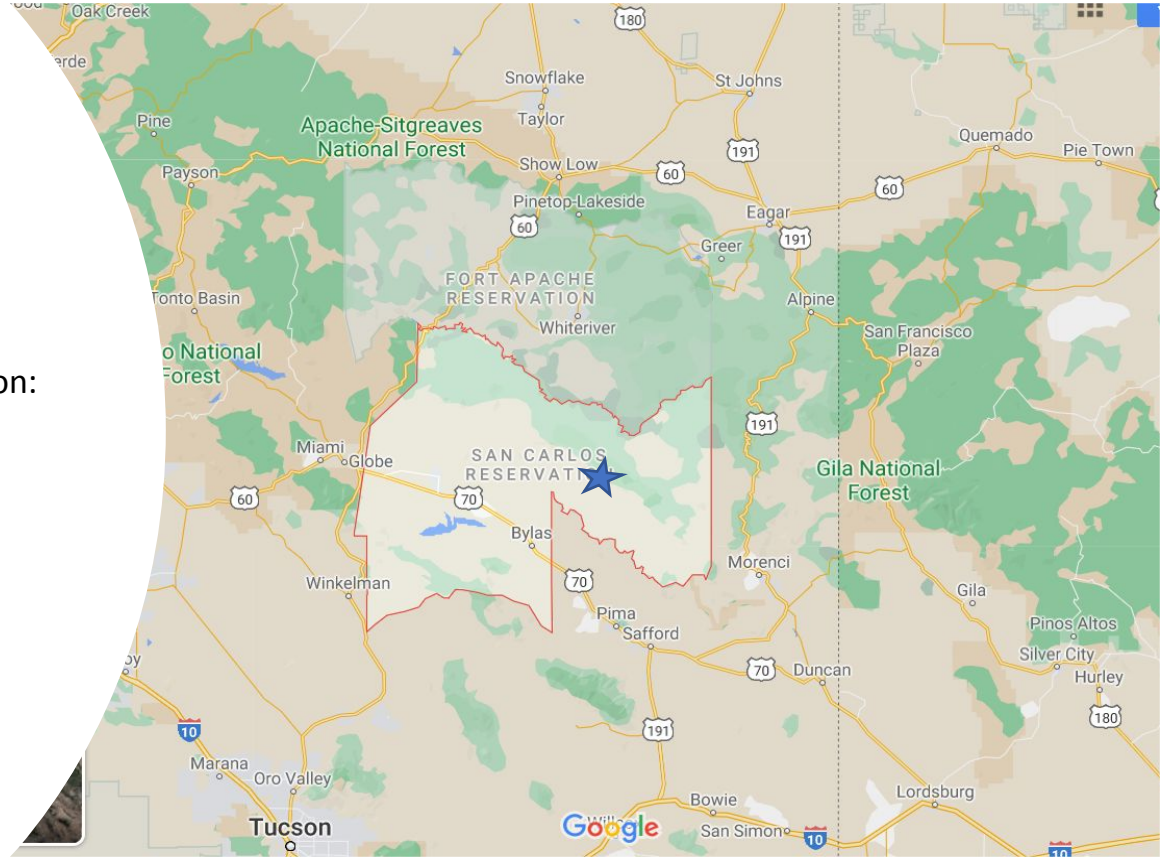


Hopi Reservation

- Enrolled members: approx. 19k
- Population living on reservation: approx. 12k
- Acres of Land approx. 2439 sq. mi.
- Veterans – approx. 400

San Carlos Apache Reservation

- Enrolled members: approx. 17k
- Population living on the reservation: approx. 10k
- Acres of land: 1,834,781
- Veterans: approx. 500



VA Grant-Funded Cemeteries (State, Territory and Tribal Veterans Cemeteries) in Arizona

Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Camp Navajo

14317 Veterans Drive, Camp Navajo
Bellemont, AZ 86015
Phone: 928-214-3474
Fax: 928-214-3479
Judy Dillman, Cemetery Administrator

Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Marana

15950 N Luckett Road
Marana, AZ 85653
Phone: 520-638-4869
Fax: 520-300-8403
Nicole Contreras, Cemetery Administrator

Monte Calvario Veterans Cemetery

5149 W. Omokol
Tucson, AZ 85757
Phone: 520-879-6317
Fax: 520-879-6308
Leticia M. Baltazar, Cemetery Manager

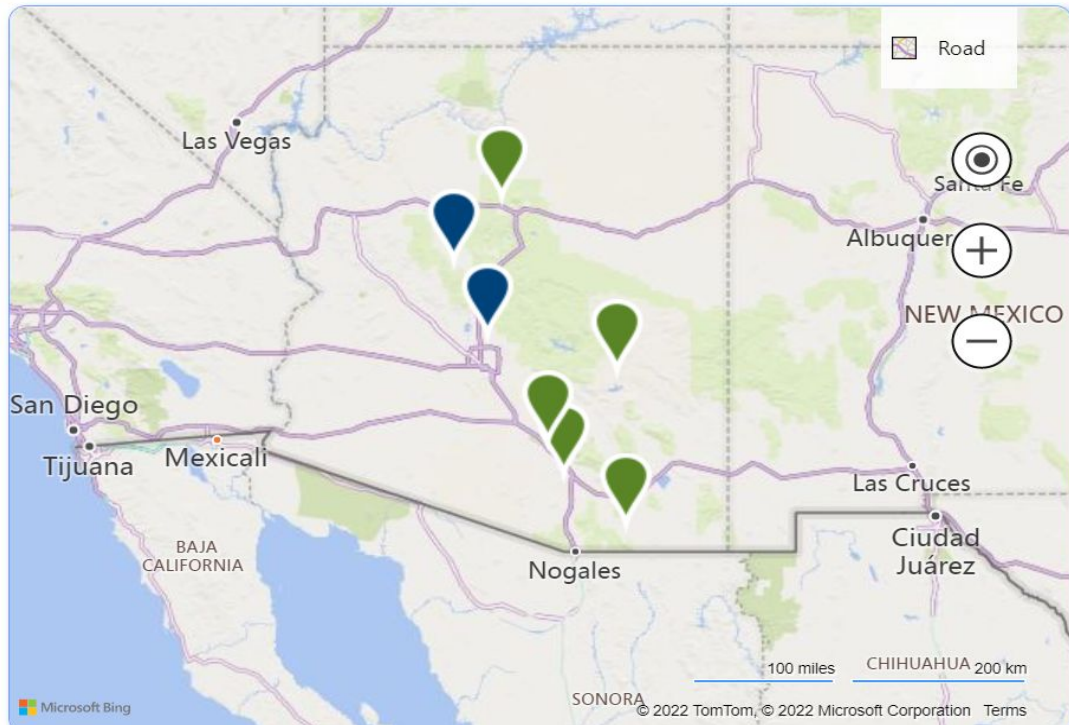
San Carlos Apache Tribal Veterans Cemetery

42700 W US Highway 70
San Carlos, AZ 85550
Phone: 928-475-2361
Terry Rambler, Chairman, San Carlos Apache Tribe

Southern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery

1300 Buffalo Soldier Trail
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
Phone: 520-458-7144
Fax: 520-458-7147
Joe Larson, Director

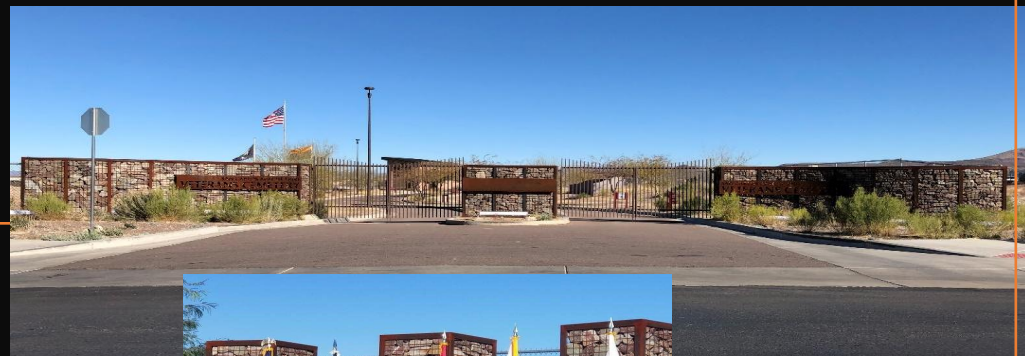
Map of Cemeteries in Arizona



San Carlos Apache Tribal Veterans Cemetery

1 Medicine Way, San Carlos, AZ

- Established through the Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Cemetery Grants Program
- Original dedication 2016
- Rededicated in 2019
- First interment in 2019
- 10 internments to date





Contact Info:

Vet Center Reservation Team

Veronica Duncan, LCSW-R, Vet Center Director
VA Mobile: (928) 200-7739 Veronica.Duncan@VA.gov

**Amelda James, MSW, Veterans Outreach Program
Specialist, VA Mobile: (928) 632-6502**
Amelda.James@VA.gov

Armondo Escalanti, MSW, Readjustment Counselor
VA Mobile: (928) 237-8436 Armondo.Escalanti@VA.gov

Keith E. Hamblin, Veteran Outreach Specialist,
Tucson Vet Center Keith.hamblin@va.gov





Thank You

