

Fiscal Highlights

Funding for Utah's Veterans' Nursing Homes - Steven M. Allred

The State operates four veterans nursing homes located in Salt Lake City, Ogden, Payson, and Ivins. All four are rated "five stars" by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Utah is the only state in the nation with all of its veterans nursing homes earning five stars.

The nursing homes have a capacity of approximately 415 people, and currently have an occupancy rate of 98 percent. The Salt Lake nursing home has a waiting list of 200 people; the Ogden home has a waiting list of 150 people.

Veterans nursing homes are available to Utah veterans with U.S. military service during peacetime or wartime. Wartime veterans have top priority. A veterans spouse may also qualify for admittance to a Utah nursing home, providing the marriage to the veteran occurred at least one year before the application. Current residents are 90 percent veterans and 10 percent veterans family.

In state-owned veterans homes like Utahs, the VA pays for nearly half the cost of care for the resident. The resident pays the other half. In certain instances of service connected disabilities, the VA will pay 100% of the cost. Care is available to all veterans and eligible dependents. Individuals may make private contributions as well.

Utah has set up the Utah Veterans' Nursing Home Fund (an expendable special revenue fund) administered by the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs (DVMA) for the benefit of the four Utah veterans' nursing homes and their residents. This fund does not receive appropriations from state funds. The vast majority of revenues into this fund come from VA per diem and prescription payments, and are passed through this fund directly to each nursing home. Donations to the nursing homes are also held in this account and are tracked to ensure they go to the intended home.

As an expendable special revenue fund, the fund is not subject to legislative appropriation. However, it is on budget and reviewed by the Legislature. Actual FY 2015 federal revenue for this fund was \$20 million and contributions from private sources totaled approximately \$150,000. The closing fund balance was \$3.7 million. The purpose of the fund balance is to serve as a contingency for unanticipated large capital costs (such as a new roof, major repairs, etc.) or to maintain continuity of operations.

Of the federal per-diem revenue collected, 90 percent is passed through to the nursing home contractor. The remaining ten percent is used for operations and maintenance and capital expenditures. The four nursing home officers are also paid through the fund.