FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DIVISION OF MEDICAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

FLORIDA
Veteran Health Heroes



2026

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

Florida HEALTH

JOSEPH A. LADAPO, MD, PhD
STATE SURGEON GENERAL

Florida HEALTH

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

Innovation
We search for creative solutions and manage resources wisely.

Collaboration
We use teamwork to achieve common goals and solve problems.

Accountability
We perform with integrity and respect.

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

Excellence
We promote quality outcomes through learning and continuous performance improvement.

Table of
CONTENTS



Tribute from the Department of Health 4

Letter from the Executive Director 5

About the Office of Veteran Licensure Services 6

FY 2025-26 Military Licensure Data at a Glance 7

Appendix I: Statutorily Required Military Licensure Data .. 8

Figure 1: Education and Training Background of Military Licensees 8

Figure 2: Record of Health Care Licenses Held by Military Practitioners Across States 9

Figure 3: Military Licensure Applications Received 9

Florida Veteran Health Heroes 10

Appendix II: Statewide Resources 14

Thank You 15

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 active-duty service members, veterans, and military spouses. It is our continued goal to make Florida the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

PROUDLY SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

Letter from the
Executive Director



Dear Valued Stakeholders, Partners, and Fellow Floridians,

It is with great pride and deep respect that I extend greetings on behalf of the Office of Veteran Licensure Services (OVLS) within the Department's Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA). As the Executive Director of this vital office within the Department, it is my honor to serve those who have selflessly served us—our nation's active-duty service members, veterans, and military spouses by upholding the efficient, fair, and well-regulated licensure of health care practitioners across our great state.



The past year has been marked by significant achievements that reflect both our mission and our enduring commitment to excellence. Through streamlined licensure processes, expanded outreach initiatives, and meaningful partnerships with organizations such as the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and Veterans Florida, OVLS has continued to reduce barriers for military-trained health practitioners seeking to bring their talents to Florida's health care workforce. These efforts have resulted in measurable cost savings, expedited application reviews, and increased access to high-quality health care for our communities. OVLS has also experienced a 14.3% increase in applications received from military health care practitioners over the last year.

We are particularly proud of the personalized, concierge-style service we offer exclusively to active-duty service members, veterans, and their spouses. Whether through community outreach events, interagency collaboration, or technological innovations, our team works diligently to ensure a smooth, respectful, and efficient licensure experience—honoring the commitment and sacrifice of those who have served in uniform.

As we look ahead, OVLS remains steadfast in our mission to serve those who have protected and served us. Together, with the continued support of our state leaders, agency partners, and the public, we will continue to strengthen Florida's health care system and uphold the integrity of professional licensure.

Thank you for your trust, collaboration, and shared dedication to Florida's military community.

With respect and gratitude,



Robert "Chase" Wells

Chase Wells
Executive Director
Office of Veteran Licensure Services
Division of Medical Quality Assurance
Florida Department of Health

About the Office of

Veteran Licensure Services



OVLS was created following the 2023 Florida Legislative session to support active-duty service members, veterans, and military 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.

OVLS OUTREACH

OVLS was represented at the annual Paychecks for Patriots hiring fair in November 2025 at Tallahassee State College. Paychecks for Patriots aims to provide Florida's veterans, military spouses, and transitioning service members with career opportunities, and OVLS was invited to spotlight its unique licensure pathways and benefits for military health care practitioners. OVLS was also able to provide information and applications for available positions here at the Department.



At a Glance:

FY 2025-26 Military Licensure Data

OVLS DEVELOPMENTS

The Office of Veteran Licensure Services developed a new and improved website this year to provide active-duty service members, veterans, and their spouses clarification on how the office can ease the Florida health care licensure process. Access the new website at: FLHealthSource.gov/OVLS

REGISTERED NURSES

Registered nurses accounted for the most initial licensure applications received this year. This strong representation reflects both the demand for skilled nurses and the continued commitment of military-connected practitioners who transition into civilian health care roles while maintaining their dedication to public service.

$617,115 ANNUAL COST SAVINGS ACHIEVED

The accumulation of military health care practitioners, representing 87 different professions, have collectively saved $617,115 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.

U.S. ARMY

This branch emerged as the most represented branch of prior military service among licensure applications received through Florida's military pathways. This strong presence reflects the Army's continued influence in shaping skilled practitioners who transition into civilian health care roles with discipline, leadership, and a commitment to service.

Appendix I:
Statutorily Required Military Licensure Data

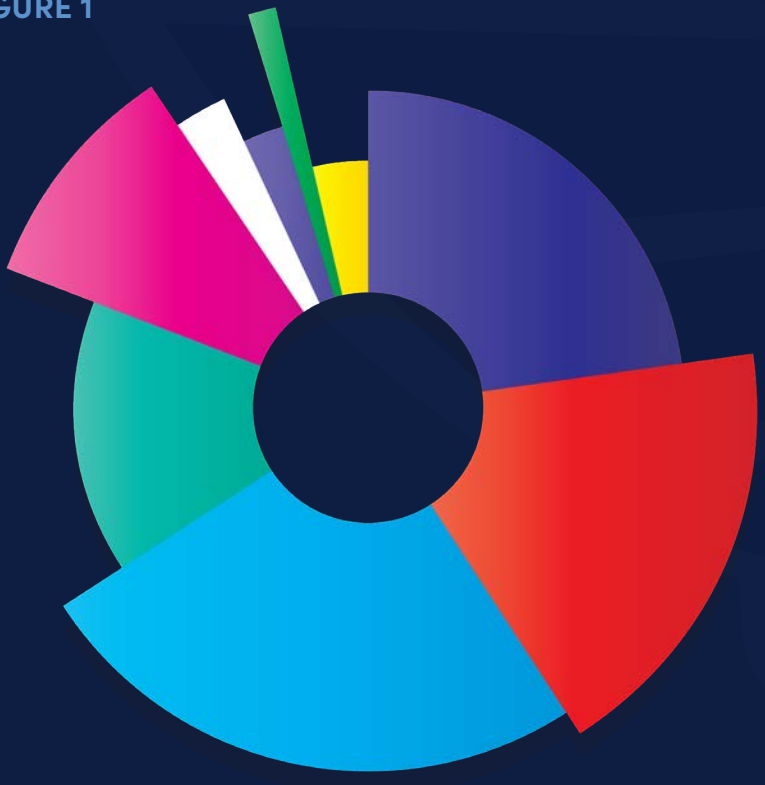
Per section 456.0242, Florida Statutes, OVLS is required to submit a report by Veterans Day each year which categorizes each individual served as an active-duty member, a veteran, or a military spouse and must include specific data.

Education and Training Background of Military Licensees

Figure 1 records the educational and training backgrounds of each individual seeking licensure. During FY 2025-26, a significant number of military practitioners sought licensure through the Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response (VALOR) , VALOR Spouse, Active-Duty Spouse, Fee Waiver, and Temporary Military Platform pathways.

Among the 6,572 total applicants, certificates (15.6%) were the most common qualification, followed closely by master's degrees (14.2%) and associate degrees (11.3%). Bachelor's degrees (9.4%) and doctoral degrees (6%) followed as the next most prevalent, altogether highlighting the multifaceted educational backgrounds of our military applicants.

FIGURE 1



Most Common Qualifications

- Associate degrees: 743
- Bachelor's degrees: 618
- Certificates: 1,030
- Doctoral degrees: 396
- High school diplomas: 96
- Masters degrees: 936
- No degree: 143
- Post doctorate: 96
- Post graduate: 46

1

Average Number of Business Days, or Two Calendar Days, to Issue a License to a Qualified Applicant

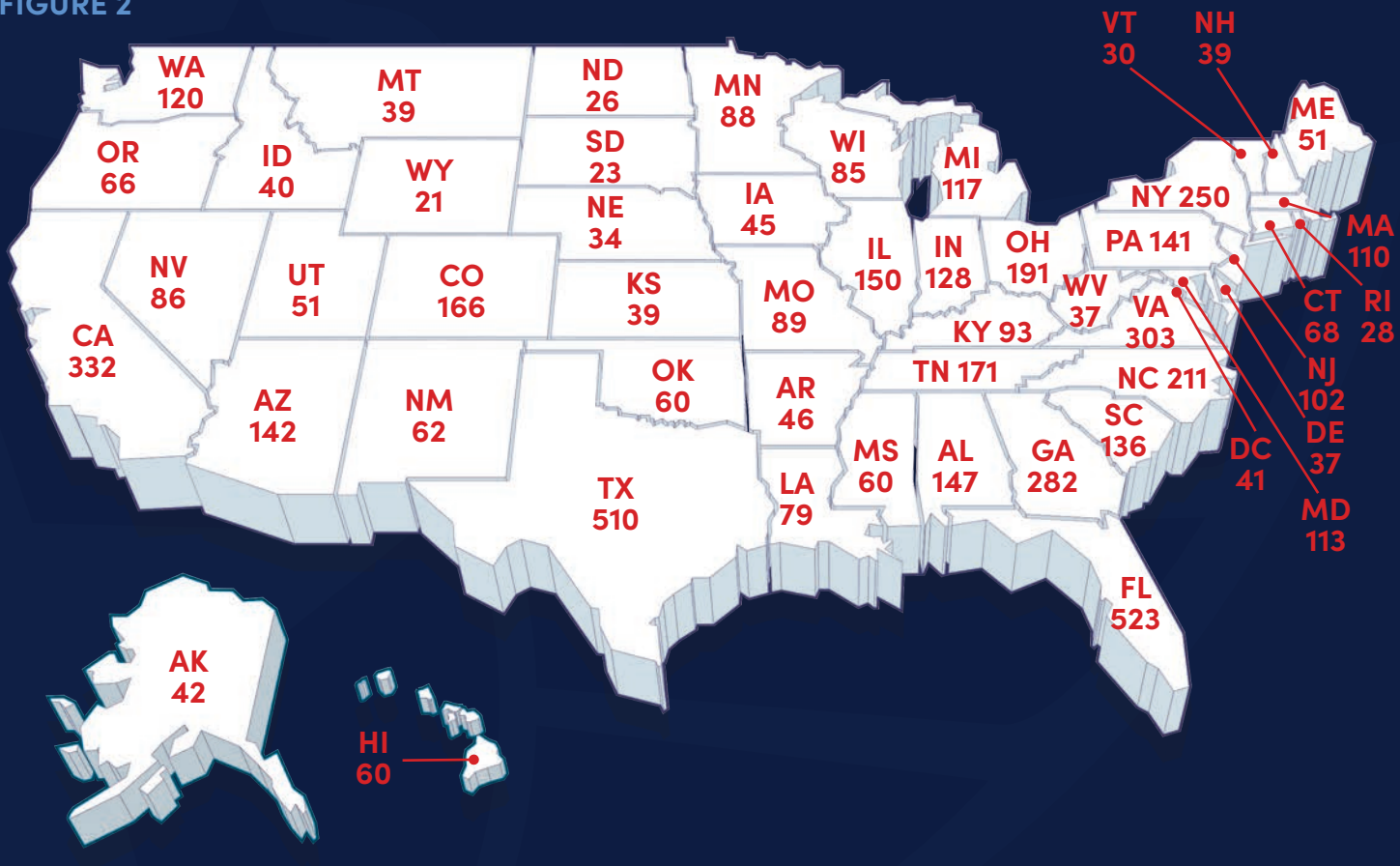
117

Referrals Made to Veterans Florida for Vocational Assistance

Record of Health Care Licenses Held by Military Practitioners Across States

The following map includes each health care license an individual holds in another state, irrespective of the current status of such license.

FIGURE 2



Military Licensure Applications Received

This section includes the number of initial licensure applications received. In FY 2025-26, MQA received 6,572 applications from military health care practitioners.

FIGURE 3

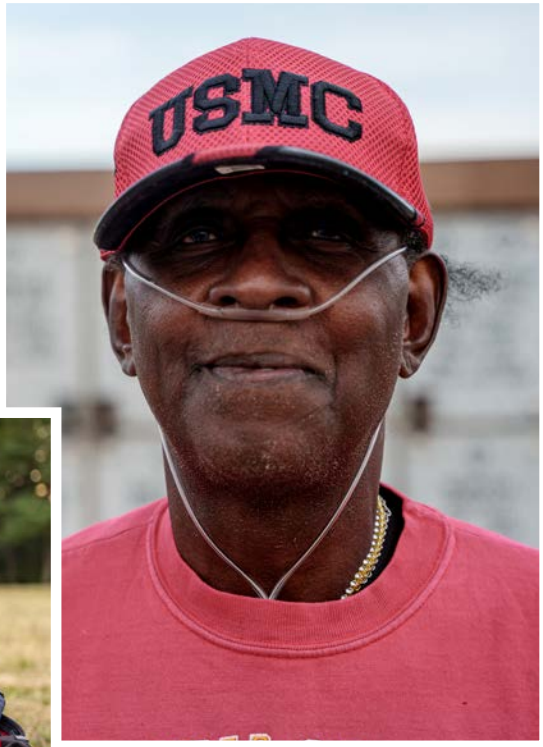


Florida Veteran
HEALTH HEROES

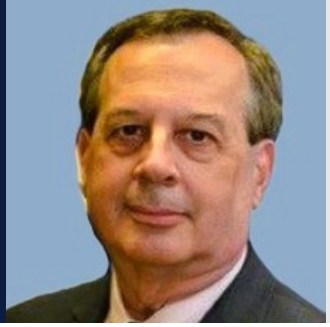
The willingness of America's veterans to sacrifice for our country and our freedoms has earned them our lasting gratitude. Upon returning from military service, they continue contributing to our communities as licensed health care practitioners offering health and well-being services. They double as 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 successes. We call them Veteran Health Heroes; despite taking off their uniforms, they have never stopped serving.







COLONEL HOWARD BAUM

Colonel Howard Baum (Retired) is a true testament of humanitarianism, highlighted by his nearly three decades of service in the Army and continued career as a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC). He has dedicated his life to not only giving back to the general public, but to the military community as well.

Born in Bitburg, Germany, Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Howard Baum and his family often relocated due to his father's service in the Air Force. After having traveled to Italy, the Philippines, Washington D.C., Maryland, and other cities alike during his formative years, Colonel Baum began his academic career pursuing a bachelor's in psychology at Texas Tech University, where he joined the Army ROTC and soon thereafter joined the Army as a second lieutenant.

During his time in the Army, he served across the world. From a three-year tour in Seoul, Korea, serving as an executive officer for two years for a battalion in Aberdeen, MD, leaving for Desert Storm, working at the Pentagon for three years, and multiple deployments and combat operations in the Middle East, he was selected for full Colonel back at U.S. Central Command at MacDill AFB.

Colonel Baum reflects on his first few days in the service as what ROTC prepared him for; his only qualm being not wanting to go to Fort Riley, KS. He recalls how close he was to getting out of that station, how he was promised a different location, and eventually ended up where? You guessed it, Fort Riley, KS. This turned out to be a great assignment, however, where he was a platoon leader in the mechanized infantry battalion, moved over to the intelligence battalion, and where he eventually met his wife.

Colonel Baum recalls his most memorable experiences in the military: *"You learn very quickly in combat that there are definitely no atheists in a fox hole. When you're in a combat zone and learn a priest is flying in on a helicopter to visit your fire base to do a Catholic mass service, everyone goes... even in the most desolate places, God keeps you in mind and has you in His hands. He sends someone like a priest to comfort you."*

After retiring in 2005 as a Colonel of Military Intelligence, Colonel Baum transitioned into working as a defense contractor supporting U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM). He previously obtained a master's in systems management at USCENTCOM, and decided after eight years of contract support, to pursue a master's in mental health counseling at Argosy University.

Upon completing his degree and internship at Metropolitan Ministries as an LMHC, Colonel Baum transitioned to private practice and presently works at Nativity Catholic Church in Brandon, FL, providing marriage counseling, grief and bereavement services, as well as trauma therapy. He also volunteers with the Tampa Bay Regional Critical Incident Team to help first responders process their stress and trauma in team debriefings, where he currently serves as the team mental health coordinator as well as the interim clinical services director.

In his free time, Colonel Baum volunteers with his parish food pantry and the Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality, which comprises 26 congregations throughout Hillsborough County. They come together to work on issues of justice and fairness, organizing long-term systemic and positive change for low income and disadvantaged members of the communities. He is also proudly involved with the Knights of Columbus, works closely with veterans at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, FL, and was recently reappointed by Governor DeSantis as a consumer board member on the Florida Board of Chiropractic Medicine.

Colonel Baum believes his military experience set him up for success in his current role, attributing it to his sense of patience and ability to listen to people and aid them in self-examination of their personalities and goals. Colonel Baum's greatest rewards are seeing people happy and becoming all they can be, free of anxiety and depression. We thank him for his passion and commitment to the greater well-being and proudly distinguish him as a respected Veteran Health Hero.



JOSHUA NEWBY

Joshua Newby, born in Detroit, Michigan, and raised in Georgia, served 20 years in the United States Army as a combat and flight medic, respectively. His active-duty journey, transition into civilian life, and commitment to health care and his education are truly commendable.

Joshua, unsure of what his future may hold as a young adult, was enrolled at a technical college for fire/EMT training prior to enlisting. The unfortunate events of 9/11 were the catalyst for Joshua, giving him that push to enlist in the Army where he felt he could do good. Reflecting on his first few days in the service, Joshua recalls there being an overwhelming amount of people as 9/11 motivated many others to enlist and remembers what got him through that time was the commitment he made.

Joshua continued to serve 20 years in the Army, spending his time deployed in support of combat operations and witnessed firsthand the impact timely, skilled medical care can have in the most challenging environments. Outside of his deployments, he was working as a flight medic in medevacs, supporting local 911 and hospital systems, and providing support during natural disasters like earthquakes and floods. The specific training he received as a combat medic surpassed what a civilian emergency medical technician would need to know and was focused on gathering data to report back at the end of a war.

When asked about the most memorable experiences during his service, Joshua recalls the bonds he made with the other trainees during their training. His best friend, Paul, is someone he keeps in contact with today, who served at his first duty station and in Iraq with him. Joshua also enjoyed how much he was able to travel, places like most countries in Central America, Europe, and many countries in Asia. He was able to fly air medevac to parts of Alaska that are only accessible via aircraft where he was able to see small villages and described it as places you only see on National Geographic.

Upon retirement, Joshua recalled the foreign feeling of taking time for himself and the feeling that he was breaking some rule. The time to himself included traveling overseas, moving to Denver, CO, and furthering his education. Joshua's journey from military medicine to civilian health care has been a continuation of the same mission: serve others, strengthen communities, and provide "the best care anywhere." He earned a Master of Public Health from Liberty University and is in the midst of completing a doctoral dissertation from the same university, focusing on improving support systems for first responders and conducting qualitative analyses on barriers to holistic health and wellness in first responders. His military experience instilled in him a sense of resiliency that motivates him to show up and advocate for his patients.

Today, Joshua finds himself in Panama City, FL, working with private emergency medical services and completing his education, as well as being contracted through Acuity International as a flight medic. In his free time, Joshua describes himself as a big foodie and enjoys a good brewery.

Although a Veteran Health Hero is not the way Joshua would characterize himself, we thank him for his service, tireless dedication to the pursuit of knowledge, and the health of the public. To us, that is the utmost definition of a Veteran Health Hero.



MARC ANDERSON

Marc Anderson, DDS, born in San Antonio, Texas and raised in Orlando, Florida, has served over a decade in the United States military in the Air Force and Army National Guard. His active-duty journey and transition into health care is a true demonstration of tenacity and devotion to his country and his work.

Having grown up in a military environment, Dr. Anderson's enlistment in the Air Force in 1989 was backed by encouragement from his father. Dr. Anderson reflects on his first few days in the service as something he expected it to be: lack of sleep and lots of yelling, the most overwhelming part being the amount of information he was expected to retain.

During Dr. Anderson's time in the Air Force, he served as a weapons controller, where he worked in a mission critical environment that required constant focus, teamwork, and the ability to make quick decisions under pressure. While working with the Airborne Warning and Control System team, he was able to visit Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Panama, among other countries where he enjoyed experiencing other cultures. Another team Dr. Anderson was able to be a part of during his service was the All-Armed Forces volleyball team, a sport he presently enjoys playing in his off-time.

Upon leaving the Air Force in the summer of 1997, Dr. Anderson remembers being excited to start a new chapter after having made the decision to go to college. He began college at El Camino Community College in Torrence, CA, finishing his bachelor's at the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Anderson further pursued his education by receiving his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the University of Southern California.

After finishing his training, Dr. Anderson moved to Florida and established a dental practice in West Palm Beach. Since 2005, he has been providing care to his community while building and leading a busy private practice. Although he had transitioned into civilian life, the desire to serve in uniform never fully left him. In 2018 he returned to military service as a dentist in the Florida Army National Guard, where he serves as a General Dentist Officer (63 Alpha). Dr. Anderson's primary role as a dentist in the Army National Guard is to identify any type of oral disease that could prevent soldiers from being deployed.

Dr. Anderson credits his experience in the Armed Forces for his work ethic and maximum effort toward his goals. Practicing in Florida has become a large part of his success, as he enjoys how welcoming Florida is to business owners and its ability to facilitate his growth as a business owner running a private practice.

Dr. Anderson was recently appointed to the Florida Board of Dentistry by Governor DeSantis. This has allowed him to be an integral part of any complaints or discipline cases, as well as being active in regulating the practice of dentistry in Florida.

Dr. Anderson's unwavering commitment to the military and health care in our state is extremely evident in his professional career, and his passion does not go unappreciated. We thank him for being one of our Veteran Health Heroes.

Appendix II: **Statewide Resources**

Florida is home to more than 1.4 million veterans of the U.S. 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
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve: ESGR.mil
- Florida State Veterans Homes Recruitment: FloridaVets.org/Were-Looking-For-You

BENEFITS

- eBenefits, Gateway to Benefit Information: 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

AGENCIES

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: VA.gov
- Florida Department of Military Affairs: DMA.MyFlorida.com
- Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs: FloridaVets.org

VETERAN RESOURCES

- Office of Veteran Licensure Services: FLHealthSource.gov/OVLS
- Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Military Veterans Assistance Program: MyFloridaLegal.com/ Consumer-Protection/MVAP
- Veterans Florida: VeteransFlorida.org





THANK YOU

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



Are you a military health care practitioner who is interested in being featured in next year's publication?

Please contact OVLS at 850-245-4670.


Florida
HEALTH
THE OFFICE OF
VETERAN LICENSURE SERVICES