35A.5 Duties of the department.

The department shall do all of the following:

1. Maintain and disseminate information to veterans and the public regarding facilities, benefits, and services available to veterans and their families and assist veterans and their families in obtaining such benefits and services.

2. Maintain information and data concerning the military service records of Iowa veterans.

3. Assist county veteran affairs commissions established pursuant to **chapter 35B**. The department shall provide to county commissions suggested uniform benefits and administrative procedures for carrying out the functions and duties of the county commissions.

4. Permanently maintain the records including certified records of bonus applications for awards paid.

5. *a.* Coordinate with United States department of veterans affairs hospitals, health care facilities, and clinics in this state and the department of public health to provide assistance to veterans and their families to reduce the incidence of alcohol and chemical dependency and suicide among veterans and to make mental health counseling available to veterans.

b. The assistance program shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) Public education and awareness programs for veterans, health care professionals, and the public, relative to the needs of veterans.

(2) Referral services to identify appropriate counseling and treatment programs for veterans in need of services.

c. Any assistance program established pursuant to **this subsection** shall be implemented in a manner that does not duplicate other services readily available to veterans.

6. Conduct one service school each year for county commissioners and one service school for executive directors and administrators. The service school for executive directors and administrators shall provide at least sixteen continuing education units.

7. Assist the United States department of veterans affairs, the Iowa veterans home, funeral directors, and federally chartered veterans service organizations in providing information concerning veterans service records and veterans affairs data.

8. Maintain alphabetically a permanent registry of the graves of all persons who served in the military or naval forces of the United States in time of war and whose mortal remains rest in Iowa.

9. After consultation with the commission, provide certification training to executive directors and administrators of county commissions of veteran affairs pursuant to **section 35B.6**. Training provided under **this subsection** shall include accreditation by the national association of county veteran service officers. Training provided by the department shall be certified by the national association of county veteran service officers and, in addition, shall ensure that each executive director and administrator is proficient in the use of electronic mail, general computer use, and use of the internet to access information regarding facilities, benefits, and services available to veterans and their families. The department may adopt rules in accordance with **chapter 17A** to provide for training of county veteran affairs executive directors and administrators.

10. Establish and operate a state veterans cemetery and make application to the government of the United States or any subdivision, agency, or instrumentality thereof, for funds for the purpose of establishing such a cemetery.

a. The department may enter into agreements with any subdivision of the state for assistance in operating the cemetery.

b. The state shall own the land on which the cemetery is located.

c. The department shall have the authority to accept federal grant funds, funding from state subdivisions, donations from private sources, and federal "plot allowance" payments.

d. The department through the director shall have the authority to accept suitable cemetery land, in accordance with federal veterans cemetery grant guidelines, from the federal government, state government, state subdivisions, private sources, and any other source wishing to transfer land for use as a veterans cemetery.

e. The department may lease or use property received pursuant to **this subsection** for any

purpose so long as such leasing or use does not interfere with the use of the property for cemetery purposes and is not contrary to federal or state guidelines.

f. All funds received pursuant to **this subsection**, including lease payments or funds generated from any activity engaged in on any property accepted pursuant to **this subsection**, shall be deposited into an account dedicated to the establishment, operation, and maintenance of a veterans cemetery and these funds shall be expended only for those purposes.

g. Notwithstanding **section 8.33**, any moneys in the account for a state veterans cemetery shall not revert and, notwithstanding **section 12C.7, subsection 2**, interest or earnings on moneys deposited in the fund shall be credited to the account.

11. Authorize the sale, trade, or transfer of veterans commemorative property pursuant to **chapter 37A**.

12. Adopt rules pursuant to **chapter 17A** and establish policy for the management and operation of the department. Prior to adopting rules, the department shall submit proposed rules to the commission for review and approval pursuant to the requirements of **section 35A.3**.

13. Provide information requested by the commission concerning the management and operation of the department and the programs administered by the department.

14. Annually, by August 31, prepare and submit a report to the governor and the general assembly relating to county commissions of veteran affairs. Copies of the report shall also be provided to each county board of supervisors and to each county commission of veteran affairs by electronic means. Pursuant to **section 35B.11**, the department may request any information necessary to prepare the report from each county commission of veteran affairs. The report shall include all of the following:

a. Information related to compliance with the training requirements under **section 35B.6** during the previous calendar year.

b. The weekly operating schedule of each county commission of veteran affairs office maintained under **section 35B.6**.

c. The number of hours of veterans' services provided by each county commission of veteran affairs executive director or administrator during the previous calendar year.

d. Population of each county, including the number of veterans residing in each county.

e. The total amount of compensation, disability benefits, or pensions received by the residents of each county under laws administered by the United States department of veterans affairs.

f. An analysis of the information contained in paragraphs *"a"* through *"e"*, including an analysis of such information for previous years.

15. Upon receipt of certificate of release or discharge from active duty, create a roster of information that includes the name of the military member, the member's address of record, and the member's county of residence listed on the certificate. The department shall, within thirty days of receipt of the certificate of release or discharge from active duty, provide a copy of the roster to the county commission of veteran affairs in each county listed on the roster.

16. In coordination with the department of public defense, advise service members prior to, and after returning from, deployment on active duty service outside the United States of issues related to the filing of tax returns and the payment of taxes due and encourage a service member who has not filed a return or who owes taxes to contact the department of revenue prior to deployment.

17. Carry out the policies of the department.

2005 Acts, ch 115, §13, 40; 2006 Acts, ch 1107, §1; 2006 Acts, ch 1185, §65; 2007 Acts, ch 202, §4, 5; 2008 Acts, ch 1031, §20; 2008 Acts, ch 1130, §1, 10; 2009 Acts, ch 26, §4; 2009 Acts, ch 122, §1; 2010 Acts, ch 1102, §1; 2011 Acts, ch 45, §1; 2011 Acts, ch 74, §3; 2012 Acts, ch 1059, §2 – 4; 2013 Acts, ch 29, §39

Referred to in **§35A.17**, **§35B.6**