

NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Health Policy Unit

From Monday, July 14 through Friday, July 18th, VA&R staff along with Verna Jones, Director of VA&R conducted a Veteran Crisis Command Center (VCCC) in Fort Collins, Colorado. The staff held a veterans town hall meeting on Monday, July 14th at 7pm at American Legion Post #4 in Fort Collins. The staff also conducted a VCCC on Tuesday, July 15th through Friday, July 18th. National VA&R staff were joined by local legionnaires, local VA staff and community organization volunteers were made available to provide veterans and their families assistance with filing benefit claims, scheduling VA healthcare appointments, grief counseling, and enrolling in VA health care.

From Monday, July 14 through Friday, July 18th, VA&R staff along with Verna Jones, Director of VA&R conducted a Veteran Crisis Command Center (VCCC) in St. Louis, Missouri. The staff held a veterans town hall meeting on Monday, July 14th at 7pm at the Soldiers Memorial Military Museum in St. Louis. The staff also conducted a VCCC on Tuesday, July 15th through Friday, July 18th at the St. Louis University School of Law Clinic. National VA&R staff were joined by local legionnaires, local VA staff and community organization volunteers were made available to provide veterans and their families assistance with filing benefit claims, scheduling VA healthcare appointments, grief counseling, and enrolling in VA health care.

From Monday, July 14 through Friday, July 18th, Roscoe Butler, Deputy Director of Health Care attended The American Legion Department of Maryland convention in Ocean City, Maryland.

On Tuesday, July 15, 2014, Warren Goldstein, Assistant Director for TBI and PTSD programs attended a Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Health Administration /Veteran Service Organization (VHA/VSO) meeting with officials from the VA Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Health Administration's purchase of a new medical appointment scheduling system (MASS). MASS will replace the aging medical scheduling system that is currently being used throughout the VA healthcare system.

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014, VA&R staff attended a symposium at the at the Reserve Officers Association (ROA) titled "*Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Military and Veterans: Challenges and Solutions*". The symposium had several speakers examined the mental health challenges that the active duty and veteran communities are faced with.

On Thursday, July 17, 2014, Warren Goldstein, Assistant Director for TBI and PTSD programs attended a Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Health Administration /Veteran Service Organization (VHA/VSO) briefing with Phillip Matkovsky, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary Health for Administrative Operations (10NA), Veterans Health Administration , Jamie Manker, Chief Financial Officer , Veterans Benefits Administration, and Jim Sullivan Director, Office of Asset Enterprise Management (044) to discuss the Department's request from Congress for an additional \$17.6 billion for Fiscal Years (FY) 2015-2017 in order to meet the needs of veterans.

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Claims Unit

For the week of July 18, 2014, Assistant Director for Claims Steven Henry, responded to **5** written inquiries, **15** phone inquiries and **10** email inquiries, attended a meeting at VA in regards to environmental exposures, and assisted **3** veterans with claims.

Military Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB)

For the week of July 9, 2014, Brian Buckler MEB/PEB Coordinator, Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM): conducted **32** interviews, submitted **1** PEB Appeal to the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) of JBLM, submitted **1** VA Reconsideration Request for increased rating percentages to the DES Rating Activity Site (DRAS) of JBLM, and **1** 21-8940 Veteran's Application for Increased Compensation Based on Unemployability, provided MEB/PEB contact information to **9** service members at the SFAC's WDVA/SSA Brief on July 14, 2014 and **22** service members at the PEBLO IDES Brief on July 15, 2014.

For the week of July 18, 2014, Gerardo Avilla, MEB/PEB Coordinator for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), Bethesda, Maryland, Ft. Meade. Maryland, Ft. Belvoir, Virginia submitted **1** fully developed claim (VA 21-526EZ. Attended the Reserve Officer Association symposium on mental health and provided assistance to **11** Service Members and **27** family members by answering questions on the IDES process, VA claims and compensation.

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Board of Veterans Appeals Unit

During the week ending July 11, 2014, the Board of Veterans' Appeals reached dispositions on **171** American Legion represented appeals. Of those dispositions **73.6 %** of the denials were overturned with outcomes favorable to the veteran. In **44** cases, the Board granted benefits outright after considering The American Legion's arguments. In **82** cases, The American Legion was able to point out errors in the development of the veteran's claims which mandated corrective action under the law. Of the total number of dispositions, **44 (25.7 %)** were outright denials.

Also during this period, the American Legion Appeals Unit reviewed, prepared written Informal Hearing Presentations (IHP), and/or orally argued **152** veteran's appeals. These claims included originals, remands, as well as specialty cases (Advance on Docket, Independent Medical Opinions, Court Remands, etc.). The unit handled telephone inquiries and provided consultations with veterans, VSO's, and Congressional Offices. The administrative team fielded **221** phone inquiries during this period. The appeal representatives conducted three (**3**) Central Office Hearings.

Insurance, Pension and Debt Management

For the week of July 16, 2014, The VA&R VA Insurance unit reviewed and processed 154 applications for new insurance coverage, of which 6 were for Supplemental insurance for totally disabled veterans in the Service-Disabled insurance program, along with 77 disability and settlement claims on other veteran's VA policies. Further case development included 34 phone calls with veterans, family members and VSOs, 70 further insurance inquiries or transactions, and 67 veteran insured's were contacted by mail on their policies, insurance options and action deadlines. There were also 36 direct contacts with VA personnel in regards to correcting or having additional actions taken on veteran's accounts.

The Philadelphia VA&R Pension unit processed **8** new claims for Veterans or Death pensions, along with reviewing and preparing **54** case actions for support of on-going pension benefits. Casework included processing **80** additional transactions and case inquiries to VA , performing **72** audits of Rating reviews and **30** phone contacts with claimants and VSOs. There were **3** personal interview contacts.

The VA&R Pension offices in St. Paul and Milwaukee processed **130** new claims for Veteran's pensions and Death pensions, and presented supporting casework material on **117** claims already in progress, while also processing **162** inquiries and pension transactions, and **137** rating review

audits. Phone contacts with claimants and VSOs amounted to **94** calls handled for the week ending July 16, 2014.

Benefits Delivered at Discharge

The Western BDD Office reviewed **29** BDD claims with **212** issues. Each claim required reviewing the rating, C&P examination, and service treatment records. Additional research was required on some cases. The BDD office also received **13** phone calls from Veterans and Department Service Officers throughout the country requesting the status of the claim or had questions concerning a rating. The office provided an update to the status of the claim or provided options concerning the rating. The office received and reviewed **68** pieces of VA correspondence.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division
Verna L. Jones, Director
Week Ending 7/18/2014