

## Health Care

### Health Policy Unit

During the week of July 15, 2013, Verna Jones, Director of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division is assisting veterans with health care benefits and claims during the 104th Annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Orlando, Florida.

On Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Jacob Gadd, Deputy Director for Health Care and Edward Lilley, National Field Service Representative met with Dr. Janet Kemp, the VA's National Mental Health Program Director for Suicide Prevention and Community Engagement to discuss what will be included in The American Legion's Suicide Prevention Web Center. The Web Center will include data and statistics of veteran suicides, risk factors, new research, stories of suicide rescues, and resources of veterans, families, and the community.

On Thursday, July 18, 2013, Roscoe Butler, Assistant Director, VA&R Health Policy Unit attended a meeting with Kevin Mahoney, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Participant Directed Services (NRCPDS). Mr. Mahoney discussed a recent evaluation of The Veteran-Directed Home and Community-Based Services (VD-HCBS) program and VA's plans for implementation.

On Thursday, July 18, 2013, Warren Goldstein, Senior National Field Service Representative in the VA&R Health Policy Unit attended a meeting with Dr. Uchenna S. Uchendu, Chief Officer for the newly established Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration Office of Health Equity to discuss their 2013 and 2014 office goals and priorities, status of the program's progress toward achieving these goals and the program office's resources (budget, staffing, equipment, etc.). The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the advancement of health equity and reduction of health disparities. The office reports to the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health and influences work throughout Veteran health Administration (VHA) since health equity is a cross-cutting issue which demands the attention of every facet of VHA.

On Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Jacob Gadd, Deputy Director for Health Care and Edward Lilley, National Field Service Representative attended a live demonstration on VA's Mobile Applications at the VA central office. With its new VA Mobile Health strategy, the VA aims to revolutionize health care for veterans, caregivers, and VA care teams. The demonstration involved the Family Caregiver Pilot which was launched to multiple veterans in May of 2013. The pilot provides loaner iPads to nearly 1,000 Caregivers already enrolled in VA's Family Caregiver Program for seriously injured post-9/11 Veterans. The iPads come loaded with nine Apps created to help Caregivers and the veterans they assist. The 12-month pilot features technology that allows veterans and caregivers secure access to health care information, the ability to track personal health-related information, and functionality to share this personal health

information with their VA health care teams. The Mobile Applications included a Summary of Care App (active medications, vitals, lab results), Health Advocate App (allows the veteran to give his or her caregiver access to their information), Prescription Refill App, and a Scheduling App. The Veteran Appointment Request Web App is another recently launched pilot. It provides more than 600 Veterans at the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center and Palo Alto, CA VA Health Care System with the opportunity to request primary care and mental health appointments from their mobile devices or desktop. The App also provides veterans the ability to select three different dates/times for appointments, choose their providers and request in-person, telephone or video conference appointments. More Apps benefiting veterans and caregivers will be tested in future pilot programs. VA will conduct research studies of the pilots to determine the impact of the Apps on veterans and their caregivers, as well as how the Apps are used. This research will then inform next steps in VA's roll out of Apps to all veterans and caregivers nationwide. For more information about the VA Mobile Health initiative, visit [mobilehealth.va.gov](http://mobilehealth.va.gov).

### **Claims**

On Saturday, July 13, 2013, Lori Perkio, Deputy Director of Claims was the key note speaker for The American Legion Department of Virginia, Department Convention held in Herndon, VA. The topics discussed were Women Veterans health care and the Fully Developed Claims (FDC) program.

On Wednesday, July 17, 2013, Lori Perkio, Deputy Director of Claims participated in a VA sponsored webinar for the Fully Developed Claims (FDC) program. The FDC program has been supported by The American Legion as it is currently the quickest way for veterans to process their disability compensation and pension claims. This webinar about the FDC program will give attendees a basic understanding of how to apply for the program and resources they can use to refer Veterans to VA and make sure veterans get the disability compensation and pension benefits they earned, in the quickest way possible. FDC's are processed more quickly by VA than traditional claims which benefits Veterans and helps reduce the claims backlog.

### **MEB/PEB**

During the week of July 19, 2013, Brian Buckler MEB/PEB Representative at Joint Base Lewis/McChord conducted **22** interviews, assisted in the completion of **1** Combat Ready Special Compensation (CRSC) application and provided MEB/PEB contact information to **23** service members at the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers (PEBLO) briefing on July 16, 2012.

Gerardo Avila, MEB/PEB Representative at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Ft. Belvoir, VA and Ft Meade, MD assisted **4** military personnel, and conducted an MEB/PEB briefing at the Ft. Meade Soldiers Family Assistance Center (SFAC) and completed **1** informal written brief. Gerardo also conducted a briefing for **20** soldiers at the Ft. Meade, MD Warrior Transition Unit (WTU).

### Board of Veterans Appeals Unit

During the week ending of July 12, 2013, the Board of Veterans' Appeals reached dispositions on **126** American Legion represented appeals. Of those dispositions, **73.8%** of the denials were overturned with outcomes favorable to the veteran. In **24** cases, the Board granted benefits outright after considering The American Legion's arguments. In **69** 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, **30 (23.8%)** were outright denials.

Also during this period, the BVA Appeals Unit reviewed, prepared written Informal Hearing Presentations (IHP), and/or orally argued **119** veteran's appeals. These claims included originals, remands, as well as specialty cases (Advance on Docket, Independent Medical Opinions, Court Remands, etc.). The BVA unit handled numerous telephone inquiries and provided consultations with veterans, VSO's, and Congressional Offices. The administrative team completed **212** phone inquires during this period. The appeal representatives provided assistance for three (**3**) walk-in veterans for their respective VA Central Office Hearings. The BVA provides support to the AMC on an ongoing basis.

The unit participated in NVLSP training with Ron Abrams and his team.

### Insurance, Pension and Debt Management

The VA&R VA Insurance unit reviewed and processed **158** applications for new insurance coverage, of which **11** were for Supplemental insurance for totally disabled veterans in the Service-Disabled insurance program, along with **86** disability and settlement claims on other veteran's VA policies. Further case development included **73** other insurance inquiries or transactions, **32** phone calls with veterans, family members and VSOs, and **98** veteran insured's were contacted by mail on their policies, insurance options and action deadlines. There were also **35** direct contacts with VA personnel in regards to correcting or having additional actions taken on veteran's accounts.

The Philadelphia VA&R Pension unit had **9** new claim for Veterans or Death pensions, along with receiving, reviewing and preparing **169** case actions for support of on-going pension benefits. Casework included performing **36** audits of Rating reviews, with **118** Pension inquiries and transactions, **28** phone contacts with veterans and other claimants, **2** Appeals and **11** personal contacts.

The VA&R Pension office in St. Paul processed **123** new claims for Veteran's pensions and Death pensions, and presented supporting casework material on **91** claims already in progress, while also processing **123** inquiries and pension transactions and **236** rating review audits. Phone contacts with claimants and VSOs amounted to **108** calls and there were **6** appeals handled for the week ending July 17, 2013.

### Benefits Delivery at Discharge

The Western BDD Office reviewed **28** BDD claims with **125** 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 **10** phone calls from veterans and Department Service Officers throughout the country requesting the status of a claim or had questions concerning a rating. The office provided an update for the status of the claim or provided options concerning the rating. Additionally, one veteran visited the office with general VA benefit questions. The office received and reviewed **97** pieces of VA correspondence

**Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division**  
**Verna Jones, Director**