

# **VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION**

## **WEEKLY UPDATE**

Week Ending — 04/19/2024

### ***Division Operations***

#### **Meetings**

April 17: The VA&R Division Director was interviewed by the Broadcast Retirement Network about veteran suicide. The interview will air on April 25. A link to the interview will be sent out in the next weekly update.

April 18: The VA& R and Legislative Division Directors met with representatives from the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology about the issue of certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNA) providing anesthesia care to veterans with or without a physician on overwatch.

## *Health Policy Team Operations*

### **Meetings:**

- April 15: The Health Policy Team (HPT) met with the VA Innovation team to discuss assisting with the MIT/VA Innovation Hackathon event in Tampa Fl, May 17-19, 2024.
- April 16: HPT attended the Women Veteran Service Organization (VSO) Working Group meeting to discuss relevant issues, upcoming meetings, and organizational updates.
- April 17: Washington D.C. Health Policy team met with other VSO as a part of the Toxic Exposure In the American Military coalition to discuss expansion of benefits to geographic service areas at higher risk of toxic exposure.
- April 18: HPT met with Dr. Kurt Heitman from Southern Eye Associates regarding possible updates to the optometry resolution.
- April 18: HPT virtually attended the Quarterly EHRM VSO Townhall and were given updated metrics and process for rollout at Lovell Federal Health Care Center.

### **Legislative Bill Reviews/Letters of Support:**

- **H.R. XX – The Saving our Veterans Lives Act of 2024 – Recommend Support**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program to furnish to certain veterans' items intended for the secure storage of firearms, and for other purposes.

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No. 11: Lethal Means and Suicide Prevention](#)

- **S. 3256 - Improving Veterans' Experience Act of 2023 – Recommend Support**
  - To make the Veterans Experience Office as a permanent entity within the VA

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No. 377 Support for Veteran Quality of Life](#)

- **H.R. 705 – The Veterans 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Protection Act Letter of Support- Recommend Support**

- To amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from transmitting certain information to the Department of Justice for use by the national instant criminal background check system.

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No.16: Second Amendment](#)

- **2024 Veterans Treatment Courts Letter of Support – Recommend Support**

- Expresses support for the continuation and expansion of veterans treatment courts.

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No. 145: Veterans Treatment Courts](#)

## *Claims & Appeals Team Operations*

### **Accreditations**

- Applications received from TAL Departments 16
- Certifications submitted by TAL Washington Office 16
- Certifications approved by VA's Office of General Counsel 15

### **The American Legion Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit**

- AMA appeals pending (125+ days) 15
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) prepared 194
- Memos generated 2
- Phone inquiries 180
- Internal quality reviews 8
- Individual training 6 hours
- Team training 17 hours
- Hearings 1
- Board dispositions 117
  - o Appeals granted 38 (32.5%)
  - o Remanded 56 (47.9%)
  - o Denied 20 (17.1%)
  - o Other 3 (2.6%)
- Largest awards won for veteran \$116,000

### **Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist**

- Compensation & Pension Claims 83
- Other Issues 2
- Contacts 85

### **Pension & Debt Management**

- New Claims 21
- Supporting Submissions 28
- Sensitive Claims 7
- Rating Reviews/Audits 73
- Contacts 198
- Debt Notices Received 300
- Insurance Questions 0
- Waivers Granted 13
- Pension Notification Letters Processed 109
- Largest debt waived for veteran \$173,273

## ***Benefits Policy Team Operations***

### **Meetings**

- April 11: Deputy Director of Benefits & Claims attended Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Quarterly Veterans Service Organization (VSO) meeting, discussing current BVA caseloads.
- April 15: Benefits team conducted internal inhouse continuity training for the new service officers hired in Washington D.C.
- April 15: Benefits team participated in bimonthly VSO meeting on VBA Claims, Appeals, and Legislative Issues. VSOs discussed upcoming mark-up hearing for the House Veteran Affairs' Subcommittee Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs (DAMA).
- April 16: Washington D.C. Benefits Policy teams met with Washington D.C./Indianapolis/Minnesota Claims team in response to a VBA survey query after a recent House Veteran Affairs' Subcommittee Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs (DAMA) hearing entitled, "Lost in Translation: How VA's Disability Claims and Appeals Letters Should be Simplified."

### **Tiffany Ellett**

Director

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End of VA&R weekly update – 04/19/2024