

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

WEEKLY UPDATE

Week Ending — 09/27/2024

Health Policy Team (HPT) Operations

Meetings:

- September 23-26: HPT conducted a System Worth Saving (SWS) site visit at the Fort Harrison Montana Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center. A Town Hall was hosted at Legion Post 2 in Helena, Montana to hear veteran feedback on their VA healthcare. Additionally, the HPT met with VA leadership and staff to capture best practices and challenges.
- September 23: Deputy Director for Health Policy (DDHP) attended One Million Reasons event to celebrate to historic milestone of the VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP) reaching over a million participants. This has created the world's largest data set connected to healthcare.
- September 24: HPT met with Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) to discuss the current status of the National Standards of Practice (NSP). The meeting highlighted AAOs concerns of allowing Optometrist to do laser surgery.
- September 24: Andrew (Emerging Therapies Roundtable)
- September 24: DDHP attended The Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF) Caregiver Convening. This annual event is the premier conference for those who support military and veteran caregivers in America. The event provided personal testimonies and highlighted current issues facing the Caregiver community.
- September 24-25: HPT hosted gold star families for their fly-in to Washington DC during gold star family remembrance week. These families visited lawmakers to advocate for four bills which The American Legion also supports through our legislative efforts.
- September 25: HPT attended the Joint EDF and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors ceremony honoring lawmakers and advocates who improve the VA Caregiver program through legislation.
- September 25: HPT attended the VSO Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting. The meeting provided an update on VHA Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy, The SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant, Social Prescribing, and the ability to transform care through human connection
- September 26: DDHP and Deputy Director for Benefits and Claims (DDBC) met with representatives of the Office of the Vice President Laura E. O'Neill and Tahina L.

Montoya to discuss VA&R programs and our top priorities and issues facing the veteran community.

- September 27: DDHP attended the US-Ukraine Veteran Exchange / PTSD Programs. The meeting cover topics including effective treatment and therapy approaches, peer support, family and community involvement, long-term reintegration, innovative partnerships and collaborations, program funding and sustainability. Keynote Speaker Ms. Nataliia Kalmykova – Minister for Veterans’ Affairs of Ukraine was also in attendance.

Legislative Bill Reviews:

- **H.R. X – Emergency Community Care Notification Time Adjustment Act of 2024**
 - To change the deadline to submit an application for emergency care from within 72 hours from the time of admission to 72 hours from the time of discharge.

Position: **Support**

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

Claims & Appeals Team Operations

Accreditations

- Applications Received from TAL Departments	17
- Certifications Submitted by TAL Washington Office	17
- Certifications Approved by VA's Office of General Counsel	15

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

- AMA Appeals Pending (125+ Days)	0
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) Prepared	270
- Memos Generated	4
- Phone Inquiries	131
- Internal Quality Reviews	3
- Individual Training	6 hours
- Team Training	14 hours
- Hearings	0
- Board Dispositions	59
o Appeals Granted	19 (32.2%)
o Remanded	32 (54.2%)
o Denied	4 (6.8%)
o Other	4 (6.8%)
- Total Retroactive Awards Won for Veterans	\$864,705

National Veterans Service Office

- Phone Calls	118
- Emails	16
- Referrals	43
- Discharge Upgrades	2
- Written Correspondence	0
- Claims Submitted	9
- Evidence Submitted	0
- POA Submitted	6
- Training Hours	0

Pension & Debt Management

- New Claims	17
- Supporting Submissions	4
- Sensitive Claims	0
- Rating Reviews/Audits	81
- Contacts	127
- Debt Notices Received	742
- Insurance Questions	1
- Waivers Granted	12
- Pension Notification Letters Processed	0
- Debt Waiver Granted	\$294,582

Benefits Policy Team (BPT) Operations

Meetings:

- September 20: Deputy Director for Benefits and Claims (DDBC) met with staffer from Senator Tillis' (R-NC) office to discuss the new Ensuring Justice for Camp Lejeune Victims Act.
- September 23: BPT virtually attended a House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) Check-in Meeting with VSOs to discuss upcoming hearings this week before House goes into recess.
- September 23: BPT virtually attended Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) meeting on VA letters and mails issue.
- September 24: BPT coordinated with the Department of Virginia concerning upcoming fall DSO Symposium event to be held in Leesburg, Virginia.
- September 24: BPT virtually attended the HVAC Oversight hearing entitled, "Everyday Heroes: Supporting the Veteran Caregiver Community" to learn more about VHA's rule-making plans concerning PCAFC eligibility.
- September 24: BPT virtually attended VBA's Outreach Transition and Economic Development (OTED) Monthly Partnership Meeting to provide VA feedback of its **Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) Program** with Regional Directors serving both CONUS and OCONUS.
- September 24: DDBC attended the Big 8 meeting with the VA Under Secretary for Benefits, VA Medical Disability & Examination Office, and other VSO counterparts about C&P exam issues.
- September 24: DDBC met with Bergmann & Moore, LLC to discuss the upcoming DSO Symposium.
- September 26: DDBC and Deputy Director for Health Policy attended a meeting with White House Senior Advisor for Public Engagement and Senior Advisor for Public Engagement for the Vice President of the United States.
- September 26: DDBC had a meeting with all participants attending the DSO Symposium and addressed any concerns or logistic issues they might have with our training partner, Bergmann and Moore.

Legislative Activities

HR. xx- Loved Ones Interment Act- To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the SECVA to furnish headstones and markers for certain veterans for whom urns were previously furnished when such veterans are interred with other eligible individuals and for other purposes. - **Recommended Support**

Approved a quote for National Commander on Ensuring Justice for Camp Lejeune Victims Act: *“On behalf of our 1.6 million dues-paying members, The American Legion is proud to support the Ensuring Justice for Camp Lejeune Victims Act of 2024. This bill enhances previous Camp Lejeune water legislation by expanding judicial jurisdiction to any of the five states of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit — Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina — rather than just in North Carolina’s federal courts. In addition, this bill codifies caps on attorney’s fees for administrative claims and for lawsuits filed in court based on Department of Justice recommendations. We applaud Senator Tillis and Senator Blumenthal for their leadership in expanding court access and protecting our veterans and their families from predatory actors.”*

Mario Marquez

Acting Director

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division

(202) 263-5740

End of VA&R weekly update – 09/27/2024