

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

WEEKLY UPDATE

Week Ending — 10/20/2023

Division Level Operations

Meetings:

- October 16: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Division Director served as the host of The American Legion and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) joint webinar to kick-off the first National Buddy Check week. 277 individuals registered, while 130 attended. Speakers were Autrey James, Chairman of the VA&R Commission, John Boerstler, VA Chief Veterans Experience Officer, and Dr. Matthew Miller, VA Executive Director for the Office of Suicide Prevention.
- October 16-23: VA&R Director continues to participate as a subject matter expert on VA's VeTALKX Buddy Week Q&A Chat on RallyPoint. RallyPoint is a discussion forum for veterans.
- October 17: VA&R Director participated in the Four Corners/Veteran Service Organizations Conversation on Community Care/Mental Health Legislation. Four Corners is the Congressional representation from House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. Three major bills are being considered. The VA&R division is diligently working to determine the best way forward in supporting veterans' healthcare.
- October 18: VA&R Director participated in the monthly Equity in Innovation Working Group to contribute a VSO perspective to innovations in healthcare and the processes behind them.
- October 18: VA&R Director and Deputy Director for Benefits & Claims met with the Department of Minnesota Service Officers to discuss their processes and current cases they are working on.
- October 19: American Legion Government Affairs Executive Director and VA&R Director met with the Concussion Legacy Foundation to discuss further collaboration and current status of VA focus on Traumatic Brain Injuries and Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

Upcoming Events:

- November 11: Veterans Day
- November: American Legion Buddy Check week surrounding Veterans Day

Health Policy Team Operations

Meetings

- October 16: Health Policy Team (HPT) virtually attended the National Buddy Check Week Kick- Off with The American Legion and Veterans Affairs. Members of the health policy team contacted 10 military buddies this week in recognition of buddy check week.
- October 17: HPT virtually attended the Quarterly Electronic Health Record Management (EHRM) meeting that discussed the execution of the new EHRM in Chicago at the Lovell joint DOD/VA medical Center.
- October 17: HPT virtually attended the monthly Team coalition meeting to finalize 2023-24 legislative priorities and provide updates to PFAS Act, ACES Act, and Toxic Exposure Fund Improvement Act. In addition, Special Operations Association of America requested the coalitions help and support in dealing with the DON's Camp Lejeune Toxic Water claim payments.
- October 17: HPT virtually attended the Four Corners VSO meeting regarding Community Care and Mental Health Legislation updates from the VA.
- October 18: HPT virtually attended the VA's Health Services Research & Development webinar on Acupuncture and Acupressure for Chronic Pain. Discussed an acupressure app that is currently undergoing clinical trials for the treatment of chronic pain.
- October 18: HPT met with Stephen Machuga the president of Stack Up Gaming. Stack Up runs a large Discord and outreach organization to help veterans while playing games offering veterans a network of support. Stephen expressed interest in working with the Legion in the future, possibly by getting a grant from the Be the One campaign. The health policy team will meet with Stephen on October 24th.

Legislative Bill Reviews

- None

Something you should know...

Three pieces of legislation focusing on Community Care for veterans:

S.1315 - Veterans' Health Empowerment, Access, Leadership, and Transparency for our Heroes (HEALTH) Act of 2023

S.2649 - Making Community Care Work for Veterans Act of 2023

H.R.3520 - Veteran Care Improvement Act of 2023

Benefits Team Operations

Meetings

- October 10: Deputy Director of Claims & Benefits (DDCB) met with National Organization of Veterans' Advocates (NOVA) to discuss mutually concerned issues.
- October 11: DDCB attended monthly VSO-VBA meeting.
- October 11: DDBC met with HVAC Subcommittee on DAMA Staff Director Jenny Tang along with Legislative Division staff.
- October 12: DDBC attended a round table with Democratic members of DAMA along with other VSOs.
- October 13: Pension Management Center (PMC) representative participated in the monthly VSO meeting in Philadelphia.
- October 13: DDBC met with BVA VSO Liaison to discuss current BVA issues.
- October 16: Veterans Benefits Policy (VBP) team fielded inquiry by ALA President concerning high PCAFC denial rates.
- October 19: DDBC had a meeting with Bergmann & Moore representative to discuss training issues.

Legislative Bill Reviews

- None

Claims & Appeals Team Operations

Accreditations

- Applications received from TAL Departments 21
- Certifications submitted by TAL Washington Office 21
- Certifications approved by VA's Office of General Counsel 13

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

- AMA appeals pending (125+ days) 0
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) prepared 170
- Memos generated 5
- Phone inquiries 294
- Internal quality reviews 5
- Individual training 0 hours
- Team training 1 hours
- Hearings 0
- Highest Award won for veteran \$450,000 (estimate)
- Board dispositions 125
 - o Appeals granted 45 (36.0%)
 - o Remanded 56 (44.8%)
 - o Denied 19 (15.2%)
 - o Other 5 (4.0%)

Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist

- Compensation & Pension Claims 201
- Other Issues 17
- Contacts 218

Pension & Debt Management

- New Claims 26
- Supporting Submissions 79
- Sensitive Claims 4
- Rating Reviews/Audits 42
- Contacts 129
- Debt Notices Received 0
- Insurance Questions 0
- Waivers Granted 6
- Pension Notification Letters Processed 60

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End of VA&R weekly update – 10/20/2023