

Department Service Office Report

The Service Office continues to receive and represent Veterans on a very large scale. The responses from Veterans, Veteran County Service Officers, and word of mouth are working for utilizing our services. . It is truly a remarkable opportunity for the amount of Veterans being served due to the recognition of The American Legion and your Service Office. The expectations of growth in the amount of Veterans being served monthly in the Service Office are amazing at best with an average of three to four hundred new cases for representation each month.

The experience level of the Service Office employees continues to impress the Veterans who are very satisfied they are receiving the best knowledge and confidence in providing the necessary service to communicate their desires and expectations to the VA administration. The feedback has been very positive and rewarding of how professional they were treated which leads to many others coming forward due to the acknowledgement of the services provided.

The VA Administration has a new contract for Non VA Hospital examinations that has been in progress for about a year now. It has had a few problems along the way such as driving to further destinations, exams being conducted in unclean clinics, churches, back of vehicles, and in waiting rooms. All of these have been addressed with the VA Director at the Regional Office and kept current as more incidents are received. The feedback is somewhat discouraging with the lack of respect, dignity and professionalism given to each Veteran. The intent of these contract exams are to provide faster responses and medical knowledge that is supposed to help identify conditions as a result of military service. The problem is we Veteran are unique individuals in that we were trained to do certain tasks and missions. We did not have time to stop and tell about our misfortunes of injuries or psychological impairments. The civilian doctor's perceptions is that if we have not complained on a regular basis since we left the military about our impairments, the original trauma that we experienced must have gotten better. It is sometimes difficult to relate to the civilian world the experience we all performed in our military service. Some had it worse than others but we all served and have something we lost. It is our job in the Service Office to advocate and communicate for those who have a disability that is impacting their daily lives and quality of life.

The challenges of the VA and the National work que are still difficult to grasp as claims are worked all over the world with no consistency from start to finish. A claim can be worked in the eastern regional offices, decided in the western regional offices, and authorized somewhere within the central regional offices. While this is an opportunity for claims to be reviewed and potential decisions be administered much sooner case by case there are still some that have been literally kicked down the road to as many as eighteen regional office due to no one wants

to take the time to read a file. It is much easier to make someone else take the responsibility of taking the time to do their job. The work ethics of certain individuals within the Veteran Affairs is to think it is easier to pass along rather than work the issues because time constraints would impede their work performance that is being evaluated by Veteran Affairs standards.

Every day in the Service Office is interesting to say the least. It can be extremely busy, a lot of great conversations with Veterans, an opportunity to change lives, hope for treatments for conditions incurred during service and having the privilege of thanking them for their service.

Thank you,

Gary Carter

Department Service Officer