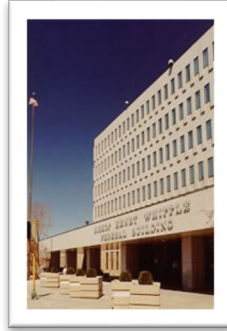




FY20 St. Paul VA Regional Office Site Visit



Date: January 9, 2020

Location: St. Paul Regional Office

Dept. Rehab Committee Members: Chairman Wilson Spence, Gary Munkholm, Bill Brockberg, DSO Wolfsteller & Claims Director Ron Quade. VARO leadership included Director Graves, VSC, PMC and Data Analyst.

RE: The American Legion Rehabilitation committee is tasked with staying engaged in the care and services that are delivered to MN veterans. The committee conducts 12-15 site visits per year with State and Federal VA Agencies and nonprofits serving MN veterans. Reports are published on these respected partners agencies and organizations, so Minnesota's veterans become aware and understand the services they may be entitled to.

St. Paul VA Regional Office Overview:

The St. Paul VA Regional Office administers a variety of benefits and services, including compensation, loan guaranty, pension and vocational rehabilitation and employment for veterans, servicemembers, their families and survivors in MN and Nationally.

Additional Services include:

- Counseling about eligibility for VA benefits
- Information about VA Health Care and memorial benefits
- Outreach to veteran, homeless or at risk for homelessness and older, minority and women veterans
- Public Affairs
- Assistance with applying for specially adapted housing grants
- Administration of VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program for a 9-state region

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Meeting Minutes:

Focused on Overview of VBA's Compensation & Pension Workload

Rating Bundle: Claims for disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, and Veterans' pension benefits, including both original and supplemental claims. Rating Bundle claims normally require a rating decision during processing. VA's goal of eliminating the backlog in 2015 is specific to the Rating Bundle.

Not-Rating: Claims for disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, and Veterans' pension benefits, which can but normally do not require a rating decision (i.e. claim to add dependent to award).

Entitlement: Claims from the Rating Bundle as well as other claims to determine eligibility for VA medical treatment and other VA benefits.

Award Adjustment: Claims that involve modification of benefits based upon additional ancillary factors.

Program Review: Work based on internal controls to audit, review, and ensure benefits and entitlements are properly decided in accordance with laws and regulations.

Other: Work that has no effect on entitlement but may require a rating decision that effects monetary benefits

Burial: Claims associated with burial benefits.

Accrued: Claims related to benefits not paid prior to the death of a Veteran or survivor based upon a claim granted after the applicant's death.

Appeals: Claims based on a beneficiary's disagreement with a VBA decision.

IDES: Claims under control of the joint DoD/VBA Integrated Disability Evaluation System program.

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St. Paul Veterans Service Center (VSC)

- In fiscal year 2019, the St. Paul Veterans Service Center (VSC) adjudicated 38,253 rating claims. Additionally, they issued decisions on 3,626 compensation appeals, and 2,131 Restricted Access Claims Center (RACC) compensation appeals. A total of 6.6% of these decisions were for Minnesota Veterans. St. Paul VSC also completed 108,057 non-rating claims with 8.26% for Minnesota Veterans.

- Work experience for Rating Veterans Service Representative (RVSR) & Veterans Service Representatives (VSR) at St. Paul VA Regional Office consists of 42 months for VSR's and 68 months RVSR's. National training is based on ACT curriculum which stands for "after challenge training" that is time mandated courses focused on specific topics that RVSR's & VSR's must be proficient in. FY mandated training courses are developed for specific topics identified by compensation services based on national quality trends and emerging issues.

- Nationally the standard for rating claims is under 125 days or they're considered backlogged. Currently the National average is 80.6 days for rating claims and 149 days for non-rating claims.

- With the implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) VA is still unsure of what consist of an actual appeal. There is three new review lanes a veteran can choose from like supplemental, higher-level and board of veterans appeal the word appeal can get convoluted.

- The St. Paul VSC has a 97% accuracy rate in compensation rating issue-based quality. The most common errors include systems compliance (S1s) which involves appropriate internal system controls, incorrect exam or medical opinion requests, and the assignment of effective dates.

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St. Paul Veterans Service Center (VSC) Cont.

- Last Fiscal Year the St. Paul Quality Review Team (QRT) launched a systems compliance awareness campaign which resulted in a reduction of S1 errors in the division. Additionally, St. Paul VSC provided impact training on examination requests and effective dates. In-process quality reviews are routinely conducted to assist claims processors in quality improvement through on-the-spot feedback, as well as to prevent errors before they occur. Error trends are continuously monitored, and appropriate training is provided to employees.

St. Paul VA Regional Office Pension Center (VPC)

- St. Paul VA Regional Office operates one of three Pension Centers in the Nation. FY19 they had 43,082 rating Completions, 139,496 Non-Rating Completions of which 3.6% were Minnesota veterans.
- PMC Rating Claims Nationwide have an average days pending of 127.5 days, non-rating claims nationwide have an average days pending: 127.4 days. The Combined PMC Rating and Non-Rating Claims Nationwide Average Days Pending: 127.4 days Inventory: 206,54. Original Survivor Pension Claims Average Days Pending is 130.1 days and the national Inventory is 21,724
- The PMC RVSR's have an average of 10 years of work experience and VSR's have around 5.5 years of experience. The PMC has a 92.6% accuracy rate for authorization actions. The top three error categories are: All systems accurately updated, claimant properly notified, award generated/completed and correct.
- A specific training course on system updates/compliance is provided to Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) and Claims Assistants each year along with training course on income/medical expense counting.
- Approximately 400 in-process reviews (IPR) are completed each month by the Quality Review Team (QRT). An IPR is a non-punitive review designed to correct deficiencies throughout the claims process. If a deficiency is identified, the employee is provided immediate feedback from a QRT member.

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St. Paul VA Regional Office Pension Center (VPC) Cont.'

- The following changes were a result of the implementation of PMC workload into National Work Queue (NWQ) in FY19: Prioritization of workload at the National level and removal of PMC jurisdictions. Majority of inventory held with NWQ versus the Regional Office level. Creation of targets focused on Regional Office Time in Queue (TIQ) versus Average Days Pending. Claims no longer managed at the Regional Office level from establishment to completion.