

# OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- Staffing
  - Three Veteran Service Clerks
  - Three Veteran Service Officers (one position vacant)
  - One Cemetery Foreman, one Maintenance Mechanic
  - One State Approving Authority (Limited Service, 100% Federal reimbursable from Dept. of Veterans Affairs)
  - One Director
- Three Main Lines of Operation
  - Veteran Service Officers – Work with veterans to help them file benefit claims and appeals
  - Repository for Discharges (DD-Form 214) – Certify eligibility for State Benefits:
    - Property Tax Exemption – 50% or greater disability rating. \$10,000 - \$40,000 reduction in valuation – Town dependent
    - Driver’s License and Registration
    - Hunting/Fishing License – Free for 60% or greater disability rating
    - Veterans Assistance Fund – up to \$500 in emergency aid
    - Vermont Medals – Service Medal & Distinguished Service (combat area) Medals
    - Interment at the cemetery – Located in Randolph Center
  - Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery
- Administrative Support
  - Governor’s Veterans Advisory Council
  - Cemetery Advisory Board
  - Vermont Veterans Fund Board
- Board Membership
  - Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
  - Traumatic Brain Injury Board

## **BENEFIT APPLICATION PROCESSING**

- The Service Officers continue to do outreach to St Albans, Newport, St Johnsbury, Hyde Park, Middlebury, Rutland, Springfield, Bennington, Brattleboro and South Burlington. Home and nursing home visits continue to be conducted on an as needed basis. Washington and Orange County residents generally come to Montpelier.
- Over the past four years the number of claims in development, processing, adjudication, or appeal has risen from 1,000 to just over 1,400. Vermont’s veteran population continues to age, with more than 50% being age 65 or older. Vietnam era veterans are the bulk of our clientele, but we continue to serve WW II and Korean War veterans. Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan veterans continue to grow in numbers.

2015: Number of New Claims Filed 341 Appeals Filed 82 \$5,649,096.00	2017: Number of New Claims Filed: 501 Appeals Filed: 97 \$6,013,939.00
2016: Number of New Claims Filed 488 Appeals Filed 90 \$7,120,296.00	2018: Number of New Claims Filed: 591 Appeals Filed: 66 (Jan-Sep) \$4,649,627.00

## VAMC RELATIONS

- The office has a good working relationship with the Medical Center and the Regional Benefits Office.
- I attend the following meetings:
  - Monthly Veteran Service Organization meeting
  - Quarterly Mini – MAC (sub-Regional Management Advisory Council)
- An Acting Director is in place as they try and fill the vacant Directors position
- Close working relationship with the Veterans Benefits Administration regional office to track and provide information of claims

## VETERANS HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

- Vermont Homeless Veterans Action Committee
  - Homeless Services Coordinator, SSVF at UVM, Steve Lunna
    - OVA, SSVF, Veterans Inc., Veterans Place, VVO, BOS CoC, Chittenden County CoC, Pathways, Easter Seals
  - Meet bi-weekly to review and update the priority list
  - Coordination with AHS, Vermont Council on Homelessness – meet monthly
- GPD – Grant per diem program (24 Months)
- VASH – Veterans Assistance for Supportive Housing (typically 2 yrs. then converts to Section 8) transportable to other states.
- Reaching Functional Zero – Having processes in place
  - United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)
    - Benchmarks
    - Case Management continues

## **VETERANS HOMELESSNESS UPDATE**

- Current Status
  - 83 Under Case Management
  - 71 Housed
  - 12 Under Review/Not Engaged
- Jan 2019 PIT Count: Awaiting results
- Nationally
  - 1% of the population served in military
  - 20% of the homeless population veterans
    - 47% are Vietnam veterans (age 65 or older)
  - Average period of homelessness is 60 days

## **YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM**

- The Yellow Ribbon Program requires pre and post deployment education and counseling for service members and their families.
- 30 and 60 day pre and post deployment session are held and, as an example, include the following session:
  - What to expect before, during, and after a deployment
  - Time management
  - Stress and anger management
  - Reintegration into civilian life
  - Finance and credit fraud – what to look for
  - Mental health issues and how, where to seek help
- During deployments, a Unit representative and the Military Family Community Network keep in touch with families and hold events to update them.