



VETERAN SERVICES

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

This investigation was not complaint driven. It was noted the Veteran Services office had not been looked at since 2002.

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury heard a presentation by the present head of the office, Mr. Eric Larson. This presentation was most informative and at the same time alarming. This was particularly true for those members of the jury who are veterans.

FINDINGS

1. The office is staffed by two (2) full time people with one (1) part time fill in. At the time of preparation of this report, one full time employee was out on disability. This creates a heavy case load as the office does accept walk in clients. Hiring of additional personnel is difficult at this time due to both budget constraints and the complexities of the data base systems coupled with the security requirements to safeguard personal data. Additionally, training and certification to access these systems is a long, time consuming period taking approximately nine months from start to finish.
2. As with every service organization, there are customers who are dissatisfied with the service. However, the vast majority of customers seem to be very pleased with the services received. The services provided include, but are not limited to, determining possible eligibility for benefits, helping fill out forms for claims, and helping fill out forms for appeals if claims are denied.
3. There appears to be a general lack of public awareness of not just the services Veteran Services Office offers, but even the existence of such an office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Finding 1, it is recommended at least one (1), if not two (2), additional people be hired as soon as budget constraints allow. This will serve multiple purposes. First, it will lower the case load for the fully qualified personnel as the new people will be able to handle the simpler day to day office work. Second, there will be time to get the new personnel fully trained and certified to cover all aspects of the operation during vacations or other absences.
2. As no one can mandate satisfaction, there is no formal recommendation for Finding 2.
3. As stated in Finding 3, every effort should be made to make for the use of Public Service announcements in the local media including the internet to make the general public, as well as veterans, more aware of the services provided by the Veteran Services office. With increased awareness, more veterans and their families can and will be helped. This help will, in some small way, thank the veterans and their families for the sacrifices made during their service.

NOTE: Seals of the Armed Services taken from Public Domain Sources