

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING

600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043

October 21, 2024 at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on October 21 2024, at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Room.

**I.) Roll Call:** Commissioners Clark, Eilers, Torkelson and Jordan, Director, present.

**II.) Approval of Minutes:** Motion was made by Eilers to approve the minutes from August 19, 2024, with a **correction** noted on page one of August 19 minutes under VI. New Business f). Transportation regarding **EARL (Not Earlville)** Transit to Clinic in Decorah was discussed. \$1,000 has been established in grant monies to transport clients to the Decorah Clinic for appointments, Motion was seconded by Clark; Motion carried unanimously.

**III.) Public Comments:** None.

**IV.) Budget Review.** Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: 08/31/2024. The Veterans Affairs office spent \$3229.03 during the month of August 2024. The current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending 09/30/2024. The Veterans Affairs office spend \$4114.32 during the month of September 2024. Eilers made the motion to approve the budget, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.

**V.) Old Business:**

a). Jordan stated that he was continuing outreach opportunities with Crawford County, Wisconsin. Both counties are looking to offer a less formal meeting for veterans where information can be discussed/distributed. Allamakee County is also open to meetings with veterans in both Allamakee and Clayton Counties.

b). Delaware County is down a Veteran Services Officer due to budget constraints. As part of its transition, the Administrator and part-time staff will serve veterans in that county. To date, Clayton has not seen an increase in Delaware county Veterans seeking assistance.

**VI.) New Business**

Discussion was held regarding the Fall Training of Commissioners which was located at the Freedom Center, Camp Dodge Joint Maneuver Training Center in Johnston, IA. Commissioners Clark and Torkelson attended.

a). Sync.MD was presented as a new option in record collecting by the counties. The cost is \$50.00 per month or \$500.00 per year offered to the Veterans Service Officers in each county. This option may help veterans to stay connected with Veteran Service Officer, Veterans Administration, and community Healthcare Providers. The system offers: profile visibility, health record management, service history confirmation with no more waiting of DD214. It allows for document storage. Benefits of this program include efficiency, security, empowerment, support, and savings. The Commission stated that with VA's recently announcement to transition similar like functions into a single interface platform, that it would appear that the VA's proposed offering would meet the needs of most Veterans.

b). The Voting Outreach Program was discussed. This Program was to assist veterans in voting. Curb-side voting was mentioned with a call ahead to the county offices, absentee ballot requested by October 16, 2024, and assisting veterans by offering transportation to polling places.

c). HIPAA Training was mentioned in how it applies to Veterans. Public Law 104-191 (1996 Law) entitles veterans to privacy and security of their records. The following must comply with HIPPA: Health Care Providers, Insurance Companies, Health Care Insurance Offices, and Business Associates. The Veterans Service Officer protects veterans' records from a breach. The Privacy Act (1974) protects collection, maintenance use and dissemination of personal information.

d). County Budget Planning is to take place in November/December. This is a good time for Veterans Service Officers and their Commissioners to review the Expense Reports. Show your revenues. County Boards will recommend salaries for elected officials. Any new account code needs to be set up at this time. Budget is from July 1 to June 30. January 15 County Departments submit proposed expenditures. Throughout these months, the Departments meet with Supervisors to discuss their proposed budgets. Boards will have to submit to the Auditor their proposed budget to the Document Object Model (DOM). Have conversations with the Board of Supervisors to include (example: food compensation). March 5 Counties and schools have first hearing regarding the proposed Property Tax Notice Hearing in the DOM Online Budget System. No later than March 15 County Auditors will mail Proposed Property Taxes. This cannot be done before March 15. In April the 2<sup>nd</sup> application with full budget must be posted. Wait 10 to 20 days after publication. Hold 2<sup>nd</sup> and final hearing on full budget. April 30, final budgets are adopted. During May, citizens have the right to protest budgets (100 signatures needed). June 15 property tax rates to county Auditor to be used for upcoming taxes. The Board of Supervisors appropriate the amounts necessary for county offices and departments for the upcoming fiscal year. The last claims period for VA Commissioner payback of unspent \$10,000 State Grant due. July, closes out the old fiscal year. Beginning new fiscal year books. County Auditor compiles the tax rates certified by the DOM and creates tax statement. August-October takes a break from budget process. Review Expenditure Reports monthly!

e). Open Meetings/Public Records/ Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB): ambiguity in the construction or application in this chapter should be resolved. This is subject to the open meetings law, Chapter 21. Public notice must be 24 hours prior to the meeting with date, time, place, tentative agenda. This agenda cannot be changed. News organizations are to be notified with list of agenda and board packet. The agenda must be physically posted inside of window. Give People notice! New Business – take in information but do not deliberate at meeting. Transparency – Do not talk about things in meeting. Minutes are public record and approved at next meeting. Members of the public have no right to participate in the discussion of an item unless they are on the agenda under Chapter 21. Chapter 21.7 allows a governmental body to make and enforce reasonable rules for the conduct of its meeting to ensure those meetings are orderly and free from interference by spectators. One person talking to the commissioner does not constitute a meeting. No decisions can be made if not in the meeting. Closed Session requires procedure/actions – must give notice what 21.5 you are using. A motion and second 21.5 going into closed session. Role call vote needs to be taken. Every Board needs option to have members in person in the meeting such as in speaker mode.

f). Hiring Process – Chapter 35B County Commissioner’s duties: Human Resources/Veteran Service Officer meet code requirements. VSO shall take an oath of office and shall organize members.



VSO is approved by Board of Supervisors. Changes that need to be aware of:

1. Governing office – people out in County and refer to Veteran Service Officer (VSO).
2. Ear of the veteran to change policy for governing.
3. Chart the progress of commission – how to reach and serve veterans.
4. Need to be abreast of changes to Iowa Code.
5. Need qualified director obtaining monies to fund office. **(Highly suggested 40 hours per week for VSO).**
6. Creating of budget – line item adjustments get the best out of the Board of Supervisors.

7. Don't need to know of day-to-day operations.
8. Iowa is ranked 31 in number of veterans in state, ranked 47 in receipt of federal dollars allocated.
9. Talk to veterans.
10. Establish Internal Control. Spell out job expectations (i.e. PIV requirement).
11. Update policies as needed and they are written down.
12. Hire best person for the job in Performance details, Evaluation to make recommendations for veterans.
13. Meet and greet veterans in the community. (Outreach)
14. Have confidence in candidate to be:
  - Sensitive to veterans
  - Understanding veterans
  - Non-Judgmental
  - Leave personal outside
  - Financial and public administration
  - Converse with veterans
  - Management skills
  - Auditing
  - Negotiate with Board of Supervisors and State Politicians
  - Advocate for comparable wages for VSO
  - Understand veterans coming back from service

Neither VSO and Commissioners need to do alone – work together in serving our veterans.

g). Allocation Spending Guidance – House File 2663 \$3,000 additional monies for training

1. Review Travel Policy
2. Go to Training
3. Submit a reimbursement form to Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs within 30 days after training

National Training expenses consist of:

Registration Fees

Air Fare

Baggage Check

Airport Parking

Meals

Transportation – Taxi, or Uber

Next training is held from January 13 through January 17 in Florida

Contact: Melissa Miller by email

Iowa Vets Trust Fund

Missy Miller, Administrator

[Melissa.miller2@iowa.gov](mailto:Melissa.miller2@iowa.gov)

Phone: 515-727-3443

h). Discussion centered around having one VSO position at 40 hours a week with position not including General Relief position. **(Tabled until more information is obtained to get Board of Supervisor approval of having VSO position without office of General Relief.)** This would free up more time for outreach activities and services to veterans. Many of the other counties of the state have full-time VSO positions.

i). Discussion was conducted on the Final Salute. Working together as a community to ensure that no one goes unclaimed. The ultimate goal is to reunite each unclaimed urn with family - if that is not an option the second is to secure a final resting place at the Iowa Veterans' Cemetery in Des Moines.

j). The August Statistical Report was distributed. 27 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 22 total office visits from Veterans, 4 home visits, 0 outreach events, and 1 training event. The September Statistical Report was distributed. 51 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 28 total office visits from Veterans, 0 home visits, 0 outreach events, and 0 training events.

**How to Report a Veteran's Death to the VA.** When a Veteran passes away, family members should report that death to the VA as soon as possible to stop current benefit payments. If the death is not promptly reported, the survivors or executors of the Veteran's estate may be required to repay overpayments made to the deceased Veteran. Family members may contact the VA by phone at 800-827-1000 and select option 5. Agents are available Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. EST. A family member may also report a Veteran's death in person by visiting a VA regional office. In person reporting will require the family to demonstrate their relationship to the Veteran and provide supporting documents that can help the VA verify Veteran's identity (i.e. death certification, discharge certificate). Another option would be to mail notice, along with supporting materials to: Department of Veterans Affairs, Claims Intake Center, P.O. Box 4444, Janesville, WI 53547-4444.

**VA Takes Steps to Expand Access to Benefits – Veterans and Their Survivors Who Served in K2 (KarshiKhanabad base in Uzbekistan).** The VA announced steps to expand access to VA benefits for veterans, as well as their survivors, who served at Karshi-Khanabad base in Uzbekistan after September 11, 2001. The plan would extend benefits to those with an undiagnosed illness and medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illness – conditions would be considered presumptive. The conditions are usually commonly referred to a Gulf War illness and the cause of the conditions are not fully understood but is believed to be related to environmental exposures, chemical agents (i.e. jet fuel, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, dust asbestos roofing tile and lead-based paint) and possibly stress. The VA continues to work with the Department of Defense to conduct research to identify any additional exposures. When such a claim is filed, the VA will take into consideration this list of contaminants and where the Veteran was potentially exposed during their deployment. Additionally, Veterans who served in K2 and meet basic eligibility requirements will also be eligible to enroll in VA Healthcare.

**Improving Access to Mental Health Care for Veterans in Crisis.** The VA is introducing programs to assist with Veterans in crisis. Both programs work with local law enforcement to ensure that veterans experiencing mental health crisis get the help that they need. Veterans Mobile Evaluation Team (VMET) goal is to prevent veteran suicides and boost participation in mental health care. The VMET team is comprised of VA clinicians and local law enforcement who respond to calls involving veterans in crisis. The VMET unit is engaged by local police to connect the Veteran with the right VA services and support.

**Veteran Response Teams (VRT)** is a program that trains local police officers – who are veterans themselves – on how to assist fellow Veterans in crisis. The idea is that veterans are helping fellow veterans given that they share military experience. This is a tool that can assist with de-escalating a situation and working to ensure that the veteran in crisis gets the support they need. VRT Programs are currently available in Philadelphia, Wilmington, Coatesville, Lyons and Birmingham VA facilities.

This Fall, the VA is hosting virtual symposiums to help more VA facilities learn how to implement VMET and/or VRT programs.

Veteran Crisis Line is a 24/7 confidential support line for veterans. A veteran does not need to be enrolled in VA services to use the crisis line. Veterans can simply dial 988 and press 1.

## **VII. Review and approval of Claims.**

Claims were not reviewed or approved by the Commissioners. The VSO will approve claims and submit them for payment as additional claims were received today for the Fall Training of Commissioners. He wanted all claims to be included in this month's expenses.

**VIII. Confirmation of Next Meeting.** Next meeting will be on November 18, 2024 at 7:30 a.m.

**IX. Adjourn.** Eilers made the motion to adjourn, Clark seconded the motion; Motion unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

# October Report

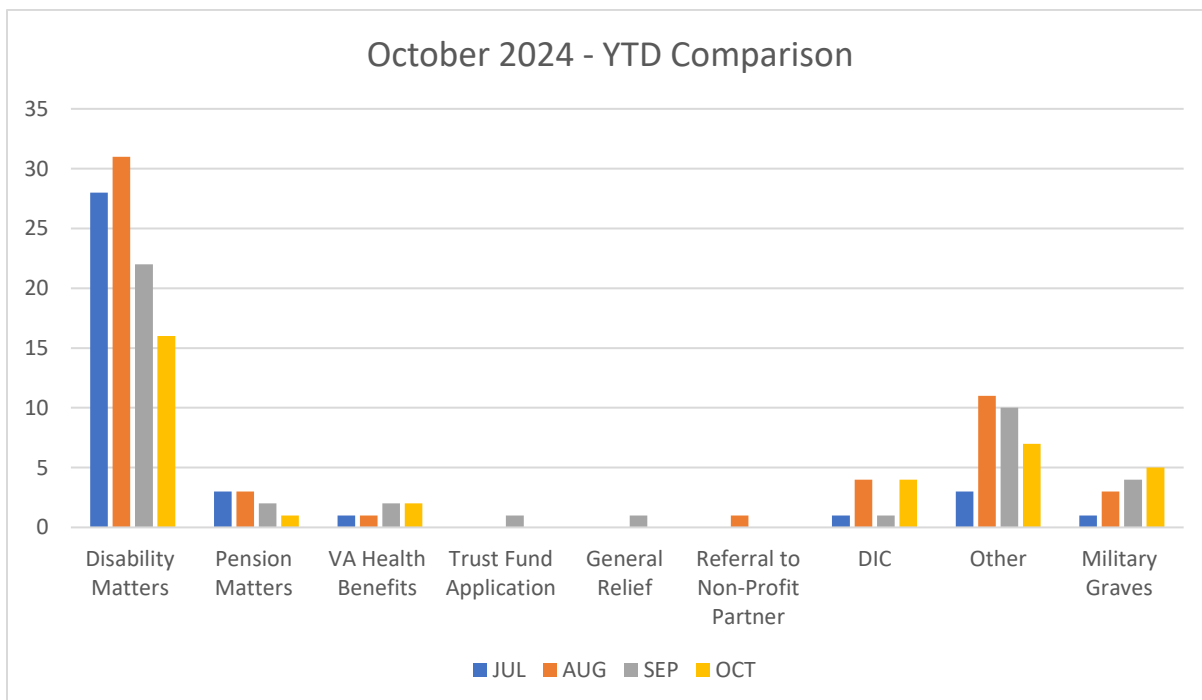
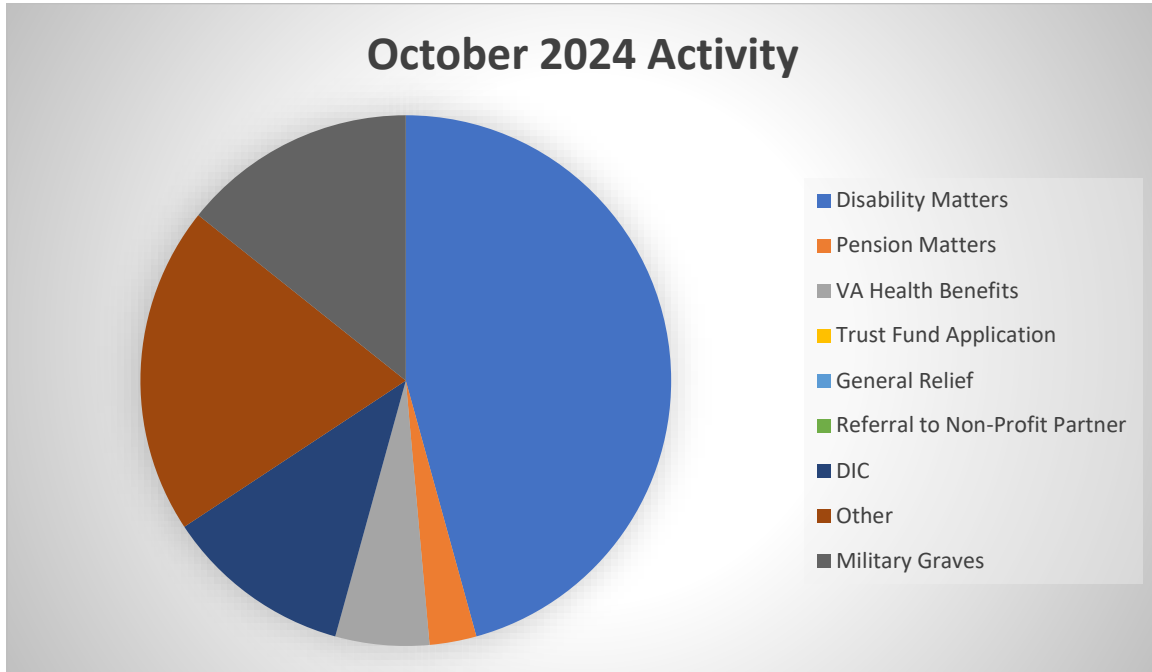
**38** total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

**17** total office visits from Veterans.

**1** home visits

**0** outreach events

**1** training event



**VA & State Updates:**

**VA Expands Tele-Emergency Care Nationwide**

The VA has announced the nationwide availability of its virtual emergency care option for Veterans enrolled in VA health care. This option provides Veterans with access to emergency care services without having to leave their homes-eliminating the need for travel to urgent care or emergency departments. Veterans enrolled in VA Health can utilize this option by calling VA Health Connect at 1 800 877-6976. The Veteran will speak with a triage nurse who, if appropriate, will refer the Veteran to a tele-emergency care provider who can evaluate their situation over the phone or by video conference and recommend follow-up care. NOTE that Veterans should continue to use 911 for life threatening emergencies and the triage nurse will call 911 and remain on the line with the Veteran until help arrives for situations that require this level of attention. This service is particularly advantageous for Veterans living in rural areas or individuals with limited mobility or transportation.

**Iowa Works**

For the month of November IowaWorks is offering several virtual workshops to assist Veterans, service members and their spouses with reemployment efforts. The session includes training that focuses on drafting resumes, conducting job searches and preparing for interviews. Individuals may register by calling IowaWorks American Job Centers by phone at (563) 382-0457 or email [DubuqueIowaWORKS@iwd.iowa.org](mailto:DubuqueIowaWORKS@iwd.iowa.org) . Individuals are encouraged to register for training at least two weeks prior to the event date.

<b>NOVEMBER VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS</b>				
IowaWORKS is excited to offer these employment workshops! Classes will be held virtually on Zoom with the opportunity to attend at our IowaWORKS American Job Center or from the comfort of your own home.				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
				<b>1</b> 9am - 10am - Completing Your Weekly Certification
<b>4</b> 9am - 11am - Essential Tools for Job Seekers  1:30pm - 4pm - Develop A Career Plan & Research Industry Trends	<b>5</b> 9am - 11am - Create a Great Resume  1:30pm - 3:30pm - Conduct a Job Search	<b>6</b> 9:30am - 11:30am - Maintain a Positive Attitude  1:30pm - 3pm - Virtual Job Club - Job Fairs	<b>7</b> 9am - 11am - Spanish Interview & Negotiate  1:30pm - 3pm - Bring Your A-Game - Part 1	<b>8</b> 9am - 10am - Completing Your Weekly Certification  10:30am - 11:30am - Mock Interview Workshop
<b>11</b> <b>Holiday</b>	<b>12</b> 9am - 10:30am - EMERGE  1:30pm - 2:30pm - Military Members Power Hour - Resume	<b>13</b> 9:30am - 11:30am - Advanced Resume  1:30pm - 3pm - Virtual Job Club - Who Would You Hire?	<b>14</b> 9am - 11:30am - Interview 101  1:30pm - 3:30pm - Bring Your A-Game - Part 2	<b>15</b> 9am - 10am - Completing Your Weekly Certification
<b>18</b> 9am - 11am - Essential Tools for Job Seekers  2pm - 3pm - Smart Planning for your Money - Money Personalities	<b>19</b> 9am - 11am - Create a Great Resume  1:30pm - 3:30pm - Conduct a Job Search	<b>20</b> 9:30am - 11:30am - Maintain a Positive Attitude  1:30pm - 3pm - Virtual Job Club - Business Panel	<b>21</b> 9am - 10am - Mock Interview Workshop  10:30am - 11:30am - Registered Apprenticeship  1:30pm - 3pm - State of Iowa Job Applications	<b>22</b> 9am - 10am - Completing Your Weekly Certification
<b>25</b> 9am - 11am - Essential Tools for Job Seekers  2pm - 4pm - Navigating Ageism in Your Job Search	<b>26</b> 9am - 11am - Spanish Essential Tools for Job Seekers	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> <b>Holiday</b>	<b>29</b> <b>Holiday</b>

Individuals with disabilities may request accommodations by emailing [access@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:access@iwd.iowa.gov). Request must be received two weeks prior to event dates.

**[iowaworks.gov](http://iowaworks.gov)**