

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING

600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043

December 9, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:35 a.m. on December 9, 2024, at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Room.

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

II.) Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Clark to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2024 meeting, seconded by Torkelson. Motion carried unanimously.

III.) Public Comments: None.

IV.) Budget Review: Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: November 30, 2024. The Veterans Affairs office spent \$5,002.80 during the month of November 2024. A total of 72.28% remains in the budget for the year. Clark made the motion to approve the budget, Torkelson seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously.

V.) Old Business:

a). Jordan stated that he was continuing outreach opportunities with Crawford County, Wisconsin.

b). The Shuttle Bus inquiry has been completed/closed, and the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs reiterated that tipping drivers is not acceptable. Notices have been posted in the van. Donations by individuals can be made to the Clayton County Veteran Affairs Office to help with veteran causes.

c). Geralyn Torkelson's term of service ends December 31, 2024. She has completed an application for the Commission and returned it to Jennifer Garms, Clayton County Auditor, who in turn will give it to the Board of Supervisors for their approval. The Commission is seeking to have five commissioners on the Commission instead of three. Most counties in Iowa have five commissioners. It is the intent of the Commission to seek the Board of Supervisors' approval of this request.

VI.) New Business:

a). The November Statistical Report was distributed. 31 total calls were received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 24 total office visits from Veterans were completed, 4 home visits were completed, 0 outreach events were conducted, and 1 training event occurred.

b). Suggestions were discussed regarding increasing public awareness of the Clayton County Veterans Affairs Office.

c). Prepare for Secure Sign-in Changes. The VA is enhancing how Veteran access personal health information with a new sign-on process that will go live in January 2025. Username and Password used to access My HealthVet will be replaced by a more secure multi-factor authentication system. To continue accessing health records, appointment details, medication refills and secure messaging with medical providers, Veterans should set up new accounts with ID.me or login.gov as soon as possible. This is a nationwide change to ensure protection of your data. Note that only Username and Password will not work after January 31, 2025. The following webpages are needed in step-by-step instructions for creating a new account. How to create a Login.gov account for VA, or How to create an ID.me account for VA. Please see the Virtual Health Resource Center ("VHRC") at the front entrance of the Iowa City VA Medical Center or contact the office at 319-339-0581 ext. 631909.

d). New Rule Makes Access to Military Base Easier for Eligible Veterans. The Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs updated rules to streamline the process for individuals to access military bases. Effective November 1, the new access process will now be a single credential entry. Veterans may use their VA issued Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) or REAL ID compliant driver's license or identification card to register at the military base visitor's center. Once enrolled, the veteran or caregiver can use the same credentials for future visits without having to re-register. The initial registration process requires presenting the necessary ID, undergoing a criminal record and terrorism check verifying eligibility for on-base benefits. Veterans seeking medical care at an installation without commissaries or exchanges must provide proof of healthcare appointment. Veterans should note that access for these reasons may require additional documentation. Veterans who do not have a VHIC card may present their VA service-connected disability letter and caregivers must bring their VA issued caregiver patronage letter. Enrollment is valid for one to three years or one year after that last visit—this is governed by each installation's policies.

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting: Next meeting will be on January 13, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

IX. Adjournment: Clark made the motion to adjourn, Torkelson seconded the motion; Motion unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

December Report

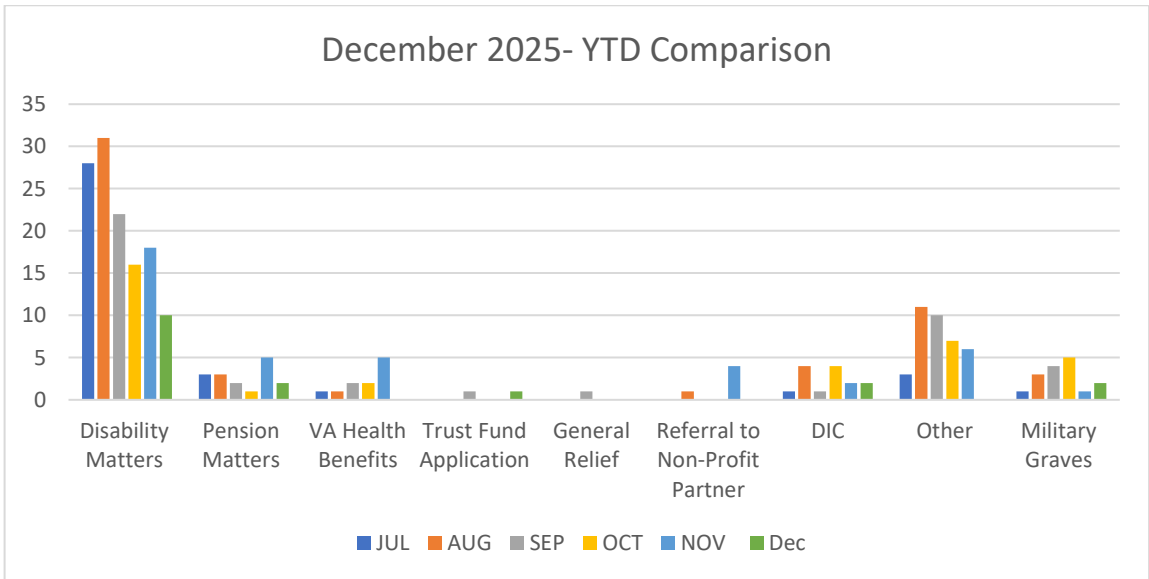
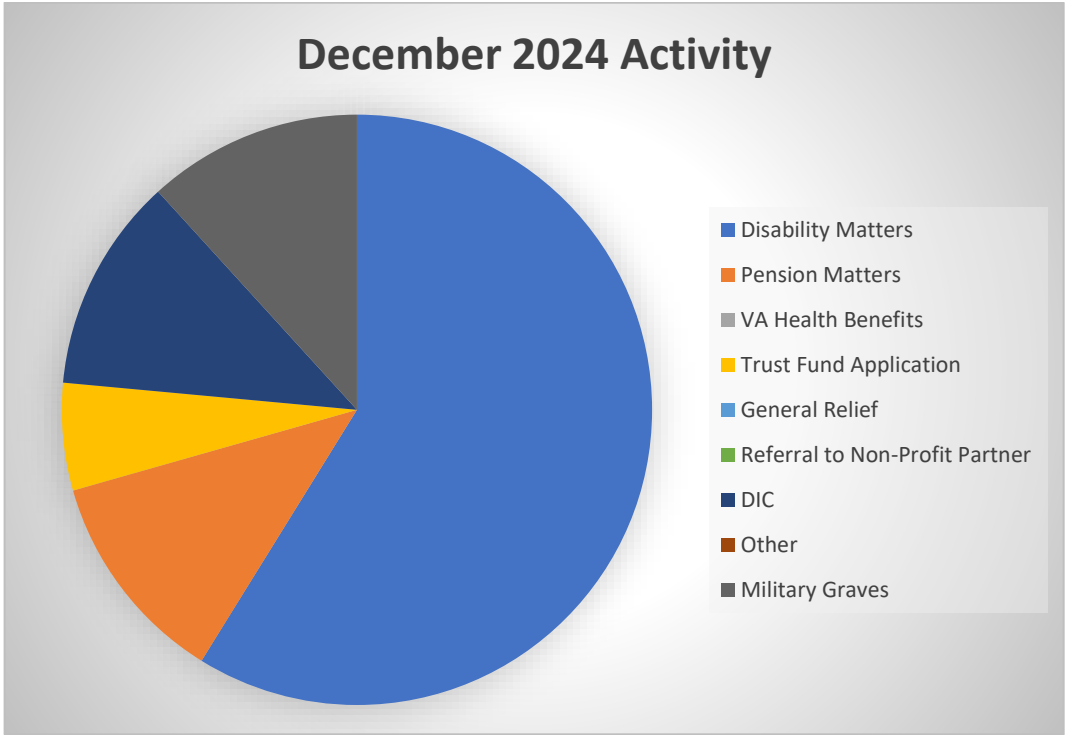
40 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

12 total office visits from Veterans.

4 home visits

0 outreach events

2 training events



January Report

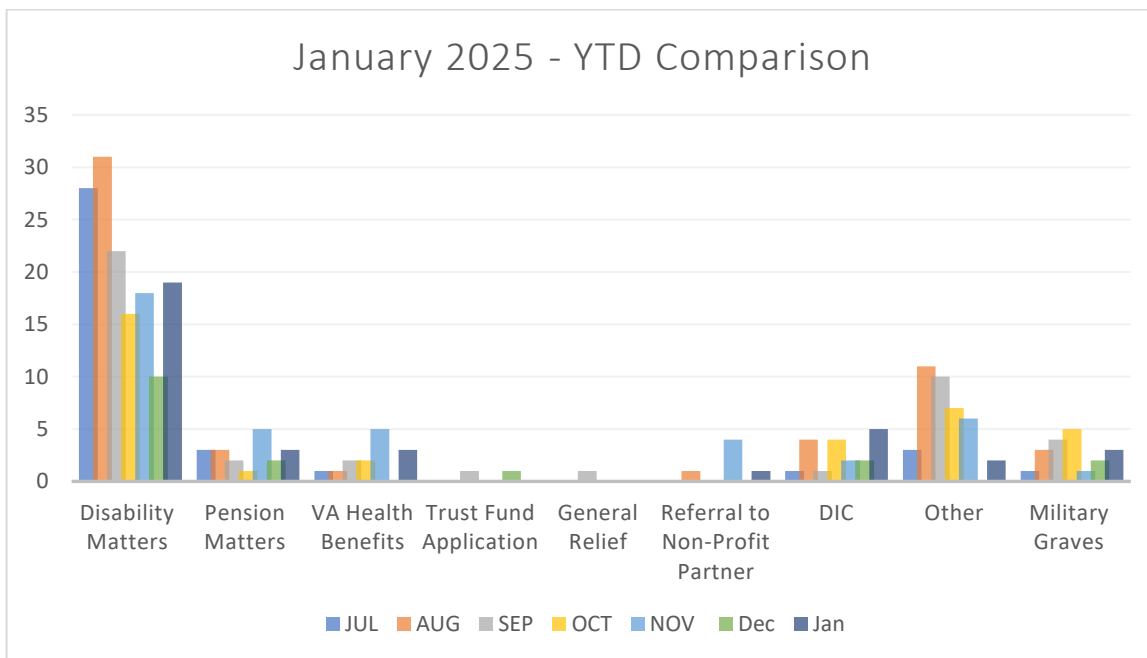
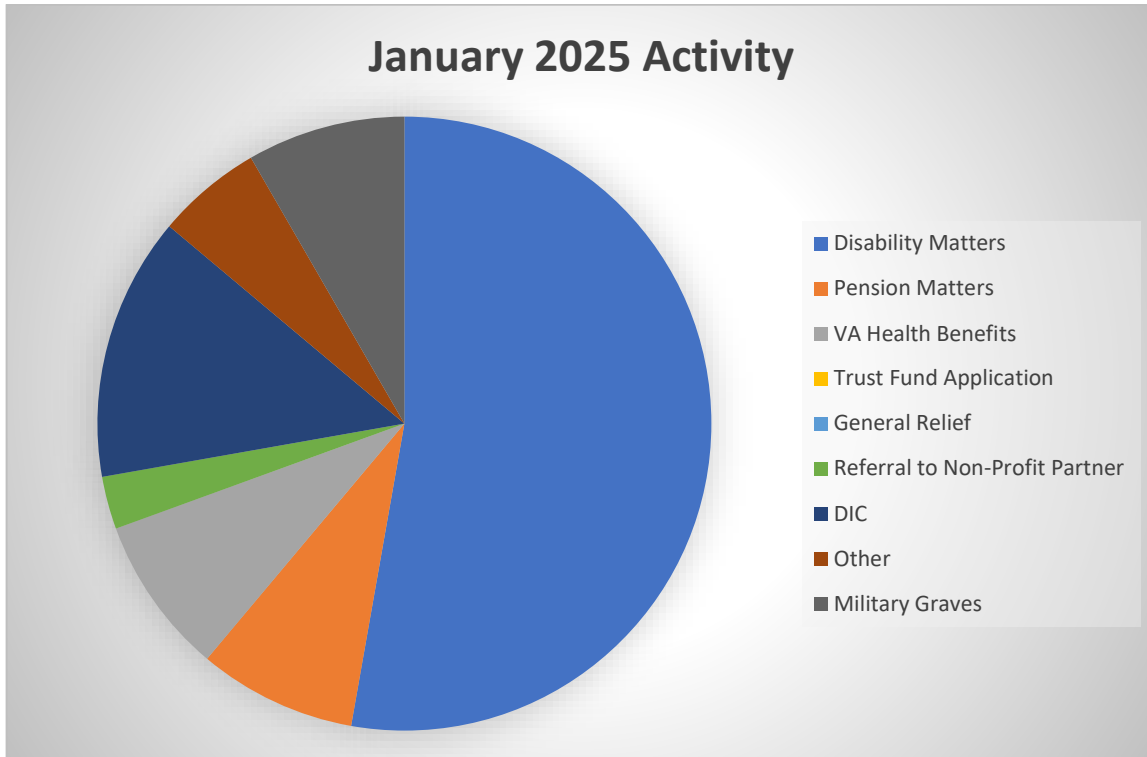
34 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

17 total office visits from Veterans.

2 home visits

0 outreach events

1 training event



VA & State Updates:

- Publication of VA benefit rates for calendar year 2025.
- IDVA issued semi-annual per diem rates for Iowa Veterans Homes that will become effective March 1, 2025.

VA adds several cancers as presumptive conditions for service connection

On January 8, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced the following cancer conditions as presumptive for service connection:

- acute and chronic leukemias
- multiple myelomas
- myelodysplastic syndromes
- myelofibrosis
- urinary bladder
- ureter
- related genitourinary cancer

These conditions are specific to Gulf War Veterans and Post 9/11 Veterans deployed or serving in certain theaters of operation.

Federal Hiring Freeze Exemption

Following the President's executive order, the VA issued a memorandum clarifying the particulars of the hiring freeze. VA positions that are exempt from the freeze are mostly clinician positions, as these were deemed positions that are critical to Veteran care. Employment offers that were extended with a start date of February 8, 2025, will be honored.

Reference Materials:

https://department.va.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/12678309_memo-hiring-freeze-guidance-signed.pdf

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fdepartment.va.gov%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2025%2F01%2F12678309-tab-a-list-of-hiring-freeze-exempted-occupations.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>