

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING
CLAYTON COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING/CONFERENCE ROOM 1
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043
April 14, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on April 14, 2025, at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Conference Room #1.

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

II.) Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Clark to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2025 meeting, seconded by Eilers. Motion carried unanimously.

III.) Public Comments: No comments were noted.

IV.) Budget Review: Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: March 31, 2025. The Veterans Affairs office spent \$8,141.33 during the month of March 2025. A total of 41.03% remains in the budget for the year. Jordan has reached out to Delaware County regarding need for additional shuttle drivers. Jordan commented that there are enough funds for volunteers currently serving for Clayton and Delaware Counties, and for incidentals. Eilers made the motion to approve the budget, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.

V.) Old Business:

a). Jordan reported that collaboration with Clayton and Crawford County for this budget year was not going to take place. Crawford County has been non-responsive in this endeavor.

b). Increasing the number of Commissioners on the Commission is still under review. State law establishes that the commission may have 3 or 5 commissioners. It is noted that an odd number of Commissioners make up the Commission for voting purposes. Clayton County is currently comprised of three (3) Commissioners.

VI.) New Business:

a). Torkelson reviewed the notes taken from the virtual Spring Meeting on March 18 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The Commissioner Orientation Manual was discussed. (Jordan said that he would investigate this and update the Commissioners). The Role of the Commission members was discussed. Compensation for meetings is set at \$25.00 per meeting with mileage. VSO completes a federal background check where they gain access to VA data with a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card. The VSO keeps the records in the office confidential. Files need to be put away every night to protect personal and confidential information of veteran clients. Identifying information cannot be released or sent to the Auditor's Office. The Closed Meeting Law 21.5 (a) (k) was discussed. A Closed Meeting must be posted 24 hours in advance of a closed session. The agenda must not be amended every month. Amendment to the agenda must have a valid reason. Minutes must be posted in the office and at the website after approval by the Board of Supervisors. Question was raised as to what should be done if the VSO is gone or position is vacant. The plan must be in place with proper keys to the office, passwords, and files. 28E Agreement is enforced when VSO position is vacant and will be completed by the County Attorney. The county VSO needs to have a job description stating the duties performed. Essential functions in job description need to indicate knowledge, skills and abilities. A performance evaluation for the VSO must be completed every year as well as 16 credit hours completion yearly. VSO must meet with the Board of Supervisors monthly. The Commissioners can accompany the VSO to monthly meetings with the Board of Supervisors. Proposed state law changes will shift responsibility for providing adequate training options for VSO to the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. A concern was raised by the Clayton County Veterans Commission regarding virtual meetings. Attending this meeting was made somewhat difficult. Jordan said that it would be possible for the Commission to meet in the office for virtual meetings where members could participate together.

b). Jordan reported that the district 2 Meeting was held on March 21 with changes being made to the VA Health Application. The changes were to make the application process quicker through the VA Medical Center. The VA Medical Center Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

c). Jordan reported that the Spring Training was to begin today. The Association President is resigning. District Leadership may be revised this week. Training of Veteran advocates will be conducted in Minneapolis. The **National Organization of Veterans Advocates** (NOVA) is a nationwide, nonprofit professional organization whose mission is to educate, communicate, and advocate for the Department of Veterans Affairs nurse professionally, personally, and legislatively. NOVA's membership is primarily attorneys and agents. Jordan opinion of the training was that it was legal focus and that perhaps 40% of the materials would be applicable to the veteran service officer. The VA has and will continue to rely on artificial intelligence to process claims. The Veterans Administration has no clear process on claims where a party is substituted, as there are different forms that can be used to facilitate this objective. Interesting point is that prior to 2015 – modernization model- there was only one application form for disability and pension claims. So, with claims that were initiated prior to this date, an argument can be made that applicant with applying for both benefits and VA should consider which benefit program is most advantageous for applicant.

d). To reach out to younger veterans and their families, the Elkader Theater was contacted by the VSO. Jordan inquired what the cost of gift cards would be for family friendly-type movies. This information will be published in the local newspapers. Motion was made by Clark and seconded by Eilers to approve funding for summer outreach initiative movie outing. Motion carried unanimously. Motion was made to approve funding for advertising to support summer outreach event was made by Eilers and seconded by Clark; motion carried unanimously.

e). American Legion Meeting in Garnavillo on April 24, an event to support van drivers and commission members was announced by Jordan.

f). Jordan distributed the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund and Assistance Request form along with the Clayton County Commission of Veterans Affairs Emergency Assistance Policy and Guidelines Effective September 17, 2018, for discussion by commissioners. General Relief Assistance does not cover emergency repairs to home. Emergency situation to be discussed at future meeting as it applies to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund and Assistance Request form.

e). The March Statistical Report was distributed. 38 Total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 15 total office visits from Veterans, 0 home visits, 0 outreach events, and 3 training events.

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting: Next meeting will be on May 12, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

IX. Adjournment: Eilers made the motion to adjourn, Clark seconded the motion; Motion unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

April Report

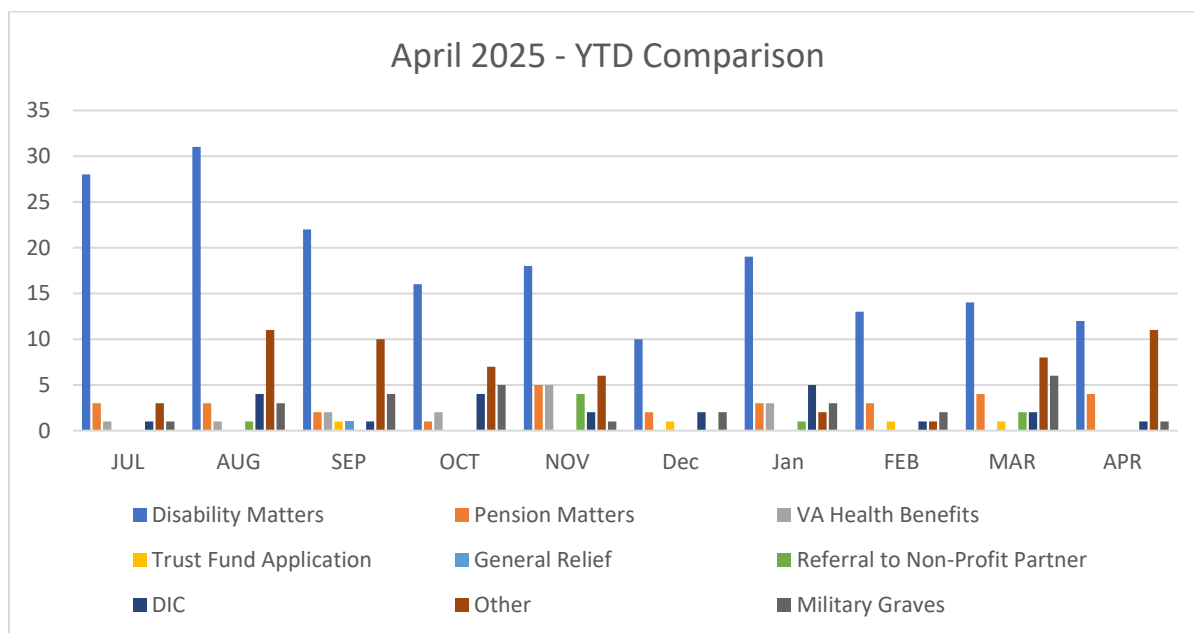
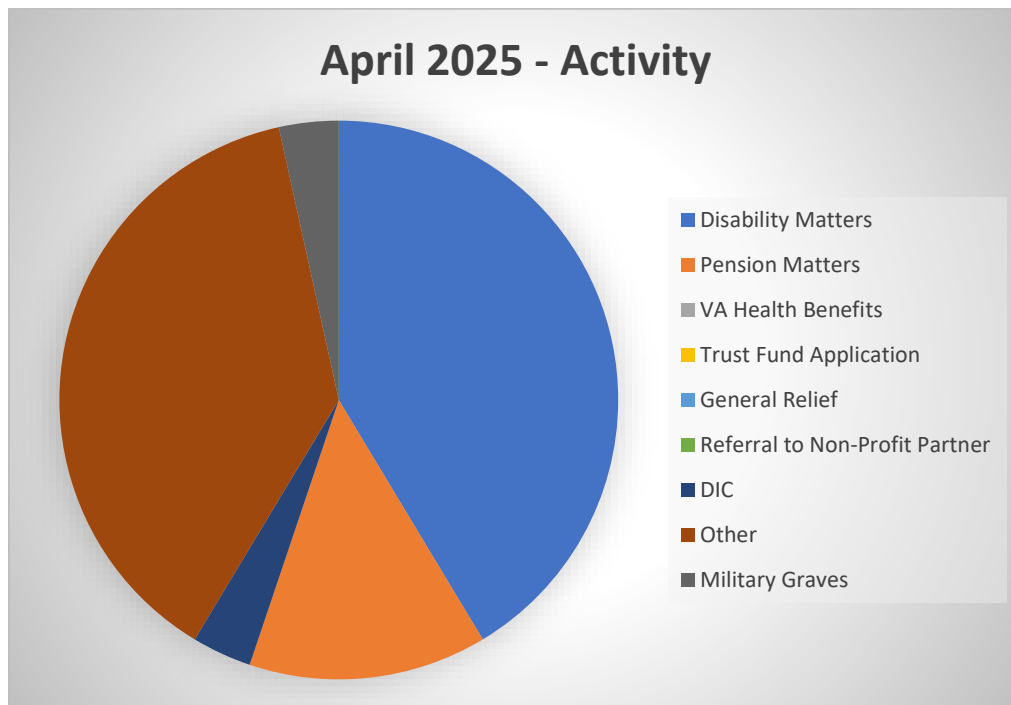
26 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

13 total office visits from Veterans.

2 home visits

1 outreach events

2 training events



VA & State Updates:

VA Ends Gender Dysphoria Treatments

In compliance with President Trump's recent executive order, the US Department of Veterans Affairs will begin phasing out medical treatment related to gender dysphoria. The executive order establishes a policy recognizing only two sexes – male and female. The VA will adjust its health care offerings to align with the directive, which includes ending specific treatments for veterans diagnosed with or displaying signs of gender dysphoria. VA Secretary Collins confirmed that all financial resources previously allocated to these treatments will be reallocated to support veterans with severe physical injuries. Additionally, the VA will no longer offer cross-sex hormone therapy or other gender-related medical interventions except under two conditions:

- The veteran is already receiving cross-sex hormone treatment through the VA, or
- The veteran was receiving such care through the military as the time of separation and is eligible for ongoing VA healthcare.

Those not meeting the criteria will no longer be eligible to initiate or receive gender dysphoria related treatments through the VA. Other gender-affirming interventions will no longer be provided.

VA Mental Health Summary

VA is committed to providing comprehensive and compassionate care to support the emotional and psychological well-being of veterans. The VA offers a range of mental health services and benefits to help veterans manage conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance use disorders and suicidal thoughts.

Most Veterans who served in active military were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable are eligible for VA health care, including mental health services. Certain mental services are available to veterans who are not enrolled in VA health care, particularly those at risk of homelessness, suicide, or for those in crisis.

Mental health treatments provided by the VA include peer support and virtual counselling. Outpatient counseling is available through VA medical centers and clinics. Inpatient and residential treatment is available for veterans requiring intensive mental health care.

Suicide prevention remains a top priority. The Veteran Crisis Line is available 24/7 by calling 988; texting 838255 or chatting online. Suicide prevention coordinators are embedded at every VA medical center to help veterans connected with mental health services.