

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT of MISSOURI
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and Department Service Officers Program Overview

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee is a six member committee appointed for the following:

The purpose of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee is to formulate and recommend to the Department Executive Committee of The American Legion, Department of Missouri, policies, plans and programs as they concern veterans of World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars, in their physical and vocational rehabilitation, their education, their social and economic readjustment, their entitlement to compensation and pension and the support of their dependents and survivors.

The VA&R Committee coordinates the activities of the Department of Missouri in veterans' services to these war veterans and their dependents in claims for benefits administered by both Federal and State Programs.

VA Voluntary Service

The VA&R committee is tasked with managing our Department VA Voluntary Service Program (VAVS). We have Legion VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives at each VA Medical Facility in Missouri. They represent the Legion volunteers and recruit Legion volunteers.

Operation Comfort Warriors

Operation Comfort Warriors is assigned to the Department VA&R. Three committee members administer the Departments OCW fund raising and disbursing. The Operation Comfort Warriors is a program dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded, injured or ill military personnel by providing them with comfort items not usually supplied by the government.

Department Service Officers

According to The American Legion National VA&R, the term “Department Service officer or DSO” includes all American Legion professional service officer employees of a Department of State Veterans agency. The DSO is normally located at the VA regional office (RO). In some states there is no more than one (1) RO and there will be one or more DSO’s. DSO’s have specialized training and experience that contribute to a thorough knowledge of VA regulations and instructions. They are familiar with the broad spectrum of VA programs and operations. The DSO is also an accredited representative, responsible for providing assistance and representation in any claim for VA benefits.

Accredited Representatives primarily advise and counsel veterans and their dependents on benefits available through the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Memorial Affairs (VMA), VA Medical Centers (VHA) and their appeal rights (BVA).

In our Department, we have ten (10) employee positions under our DSO program at the six (6) VA locations in our State. The Department Service Officer is located at the VA Regional Office. VA provides the Department Service Officers space inside their facilities because we assist the VA with their mission to assist veterans with the VA process. The Department Service Officer closest to an area is the best point of contact for the District and Post service officers. Request for DSO to attend a local event are to be directed through Department Headquarters. All claims submitted through the VA Regional Office (RO) in St Louis.

- 1 Full Time DS (Office and Program Management/Claims and Appeals/Outreach)
- 1 32 hr/wk Secretary Reception/ Data Input
- 1 38 hr/wk ADSO (RO/Claim)
- 1 24 hr/wk ADSO (RO/Appeals)
- 1 38 hr/wk SDSO(John Cochran/Jefferson Barracks)
- 1 35 hr/wk ADSO (Columbia)
- 1 38 hr/wk ADSO (Kansas City)
- 1 30 hr/wk ADSO (Poplar Bluff)1
- 1 16 hr/wk ADSO (Mt Vernon Outpatient Treatment Clinic)
- 0 16 hr/wk Admin Support (Admin/Phones)

The DSO provide claims and appeals representation to veterans and their families at VA Medical Centers, Hospitals, Outpatient Treatment Clinics (VHA), at VA’s

Regional office (VBA), and before The Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). This includes assisting claimants with initiating and developing an appropriate claim for VA Benefits (VHA, VBA, or VMA), and assisting with initiating and processing of an appeal of a VA decision from VHA, VMA, or VBA (i.e. denials, under-evaluations, or incorrect effective dates). The DSO conducts interviews with claimants and their families to assist in filling out proper forms for submission to the VA Regional office. We answer questions and supply information regarding the benefits application process and status of claims filed. We accompany veterans and their families to informal and formal hearings, where we provide representation and advocacy.

The DSO provides general advocacy and community education on veterans' benefits for veterans and their families. We confer with VA leadership (i.e. directors, department chiefs, managers and supervisors) regarding veterans issues. The DSO represents veterans at Regional Offices and Hospitals in meetings and on Committees. The DSO makes contact with veteran patients on the wards at the Medical Centers. The DSO takes part in coordinated efforts of community outreach.

The DSO participate in continuing education provide by The American Legion National VA&R, VA, MVC and others to enhance our advocacy skills; to better understand VA regulations, manuals, rating schedules and laws pertaining to veterans benefits and to better facilitate the claimant though the VA Process.

Prepared by: _____

Reviewed/Approved by: _____

Adopted: _____