

## **AGENDA**

Oversight Hearing of the  
Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee

### **California Department of Veterans Affairs- Status Reports on Implementation of the CVSO Subvention Increase, the Strikeforce, CalVet Connect, and Reaching Incarcerated Veterans.**

Wednesday, February 26, 2014  
2:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Room 447

- I. Introduction and Welcome
- II. CVSO Subvention, Strikeforce, CalVet Connect, Reaching Incarcerated Veterans.
  - Keith Boylan, Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services Division, California Department of Veterans Affairs
  - Chris Bingham, Veteran Service Officer, Santa Rosa County
  - Angela Yamamoto, Operations Manager, Veterans Services Division, California Department of Veterans Affairs
  - John Kraft, Outreach Manager, Veterans Services Division, California Department of Veterans Affairs
- III. Public Comment



# AB 101 Subvention and Joint Claims Initiative Progress Report

February 14, 2014

## Background

The Budget Act of 2013 (AB 110, Chapter 20, Statutes of 2013) included a \$3 million increase in subvention funding to County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) (Item 8955-101-0001 of Section 2.00). Chapter 354, Statutes of 2013 (AB 101), Section 45, amended Item 8955-101-0001 to add provisional language regarding disbursement of the funds. The Budget Act included an additional \$3 million allocation to CalVet for initiation of the Joint Claims Initiative which is a partnership between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) designed to reduce the backlog of pending disability compensation claims.

The increase in funding has already created a significant boost in the CVSO's and CalVet's ability to contact veterans in their communities with the expansion of outreach activities, thereby connecting more veterans with their community-based system of care and local service providers. Additionally, the funds have allowed for the deployment of additional professional veterans service representatives to connect veterans with their compensation and pension benefits available through the USDVA, resulting in an increase of federal dollars drawn down to the state this year and for years to come. This monthly progress report serves as an update on the efforts currently underway, as well as those still being implemented.

## Subvention for County Local Assistance

### Funding Distribution

The counties were required to provide a Certificate of Compliance signed by their County Board of Supervisors which detailed how the funds will be used in support of the CalVet and CVSO Joint Strategic Plan and Best Practices Manual, acknowledgement of the reporting requirements associated with the funding increase, and concurrence by the County Board of Supervisors to maintain current County funding levels. CalVet has completed 98% of the distribution of the one-time funding to the counties. One county will have their Board of Supervisors approve the certificate for distribution in February. Two small counties were unable to accept the funding due to circumstances which hampered their ability to conduct the administrative process satisfactorily for this one-time funding (director retired with no other staff in the office).

### Utilization for Best Practices

The CVSOs are utilizing the best practices described in the CalVet and CVSO Strategic Partnership and Best Practices report to the Legislature and were required to certify which of the best practices they would focus on with the one-time subvention prior to CalVet distributing the funding to them. Counties are using the funding for one of three main themes from the best practices manual, which is aligned with the CalVet Strategic Plan:

- Contacting veterans.
- Connecting veterans to their benefits and services.
- Continuous communication with veterans.

Best practices are being implemented in a variety of ways based on each County's unique size, demographics, existing community-based system of care, and identified service priorities.

### *Adding New CVSO Staffing*

- 74% of participating counties have or are in the process of increasing staffing levels. This includes hiring both professional veteran service representatives and support staffing. Adding support staffing allows veteran service representatives to off load tasks not directly related to claims generation and counseling services.
  - 15 full time and 13 part time veteran service representative positions have been filled.
  - Another 3 full time and 9 part time veteran service representative positions are in the hiring process.
  - Based upon historical data these new veteran service representative positions could bring in approximately \$47 million in new benefits each year they are retained.
  - 26 support positions have been filled or are in the hiring process (combined full time and part time positions)
- Counties have used a number of innovative ways to increase staffing in spite of the one-time nature of these funds which includes:
  - Adding new, temporary positions.
  - Temporary out-of-classification assignments for existing staff.
  - Use of overtime to expand staff availability.
  - Temporarily increasing the time base for existing staff (from part-time to full-time).
  - Leveraging the new funding to “unfreeze” positions lost in the recent fiscal crisis.

### *Increase office traffic by expanding service offerings*

- 68% of the participating counties have implemented projects designed to increase traffic through their offices. By providing new services in more locations the CVSO will entice potential new clients to make contact. The increased traffic translates to development of new contacts and new claims. Some of the projects being implemented include:
  - Deployment of ID card systems. 61% of reporting counties have deployed ID card systems. Many retailers provide veteran discounts if the veteran can provide proof of service. This provides a monetary incentive for veterans to contact their CVSO results in veterans being connected to additional benefits and services that they were previously not aware were available.
  - Increase the hours/days branch offices are open providing more flexibility and access to veterans and their families.
  - Deploying workstations that provide veterans easier access to on-line services such as MyHealthyVet or e-Benefits.
  - Establishing partnerships with high public traffic sites such as public libraries.
  - Adding staff visits to incarcerated veterans.
  - Purchasing vehicles to expand capacity to transport veterans to their VA medical appointments.
  - Providing bus passes that allow veterans to access needed services.
  - Providing basic necessity packages to homeless veterans.

*Produce/Distribute Outreach Materials*

- 49% of participating counties have already begun producing and distributing new outreach materials such as brochures, flyers, public service announcements, website upgrades or self-service kiosks to provide veterans easy access to benefit information.
- Additional counties are delaying implementation of their outreach materials procurement efforts pending development of products under the statewide communications contract. These funds can then be used leveraged with the ongoing statewide outreach effort resulting in a greater local impact.

*Other significant efforts*

- Considering the one-time nature of these funds many counties are taking an opportunity to purchase equipment to better support their clients. 51% of participating counties have initiated procurement of office equipment such as computers, laptops, scanners, printers, etc. to make better use of the mobility of our case management software, as well as to better integrate with the USDVA efforts to go to paperless claims processing. Both efforts will provided veterans with faster claims processing.

Implementation Constraints

Implementation of new activity was hampered by a number of circumstances that impacted their ability to report more robust results. These constraints include:

- *Late passage of trailer bill language* – AB 101 which enacted provisional language related to the use of these new funds was not enacted until mid-September. Implementing action at the county level was delayed until the parameters related to accepting these funds were finalized.
- *Budget Action at County level* – Board of Supervisors action was needed to accept the conditions related to use of the funds and to take budget action to make the funds available locally. CVSOs were only able to begin implementation after their budgets had been adjusted locally.
- *One-time nature of the funds* – While one of the stated top priorities of these funds was to expand CVSO staffing, the one-time nature of the funds presents additional challenges. Counties are reluctant to establish new permanent positions without the assurance of ongoing funding. As noted above, many CVSO found innovative ways to temporarily increase staffing; however the impact may be lost without ongoing funds and conversion of those temporary efforts to permanent positions.
- *Insufficient Funding* – Since 2007 there have been a number of reports and analyses that independently draw a direct correlation between the number of professional veteran service representatives and the amount of federal funds drawn down to the state. Using the California model this translates to an increase in CVSO staffing. However, the current distribution methodology is such that 84% of the counties did not get enough funding to support the hiring of a full time veteran service representative.

## Statewide Communications Plan

The remaining \$400,000 was designated for use to fund a communications plan and has been distributed to San Luis Obispo County to lead a statewide campaign. Specifically, this contract will implement marketing efforts to facilitate the CVSOs ability to connect veterans with needed services and benefits. This project must increase awareness among all veterans of the variety of assistance available to them, and how and where to access those benefits. The communication project will increase the visibility and awareness of the services the CVSOs provide, which will in turn establish them as veteran resources within each community. This project should foster continuous communication with those veterans by integrating with other projects such as CalVet Connect.

The plan is to accomplish the above strategies through various avenues such as the creation of public service announcements to show in the lobbies of CVSOs and other offices such as mental health, social services, and medical services agencies. The plan includes developing mass marketing efforts such as movie theater ads and bus advertisements. The funding will also be used to focus on how to increase awareness of how to locate and connect with their CVSO's benefits and services by veterans and their families from various emerging veteran demographic groups such as women, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender, and veterans impacted by federal Don't Ask Don't Tell policies.

- In accordance with the budget language, CalVet sent the communications plan proposal to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) for review 30 days prior to distribution of funding to the county. On December 5, 2013, CalVet distributed the \$400,000 in funding to San Luis Obispo County who administered their county's contracting process for securing a vendor. The contracting process has ended, and McNally Temple Associates, Inc. was selected. They are expected to start work in February/March 2014.

## Joint Claims Initiative Update

The Budget Act of 2013 included 36 limited-term positions for “strike force” team members to help California veterans and their families receive their benefits more quickly and help reduce the backlog of claims that have kept some veterans waiting for nearly two years. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) on September 18, 2013 to solidify this project. The Review Team of veteran claims representatives begin with claims that have been pending the longest and work their way forward. The Support Team at each location reviews new incoming claims to make them fully developed and ready for USDVA rating.

## Hiring and Onboarding Update

- As of January 30, 2014, 23 out of the 36 positions have been filled (64%). The team members are placed and managed at each of the three CalVet District Offices, which are co-located at the USDVA Regional Offices in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Oakland.

## Our Challenges

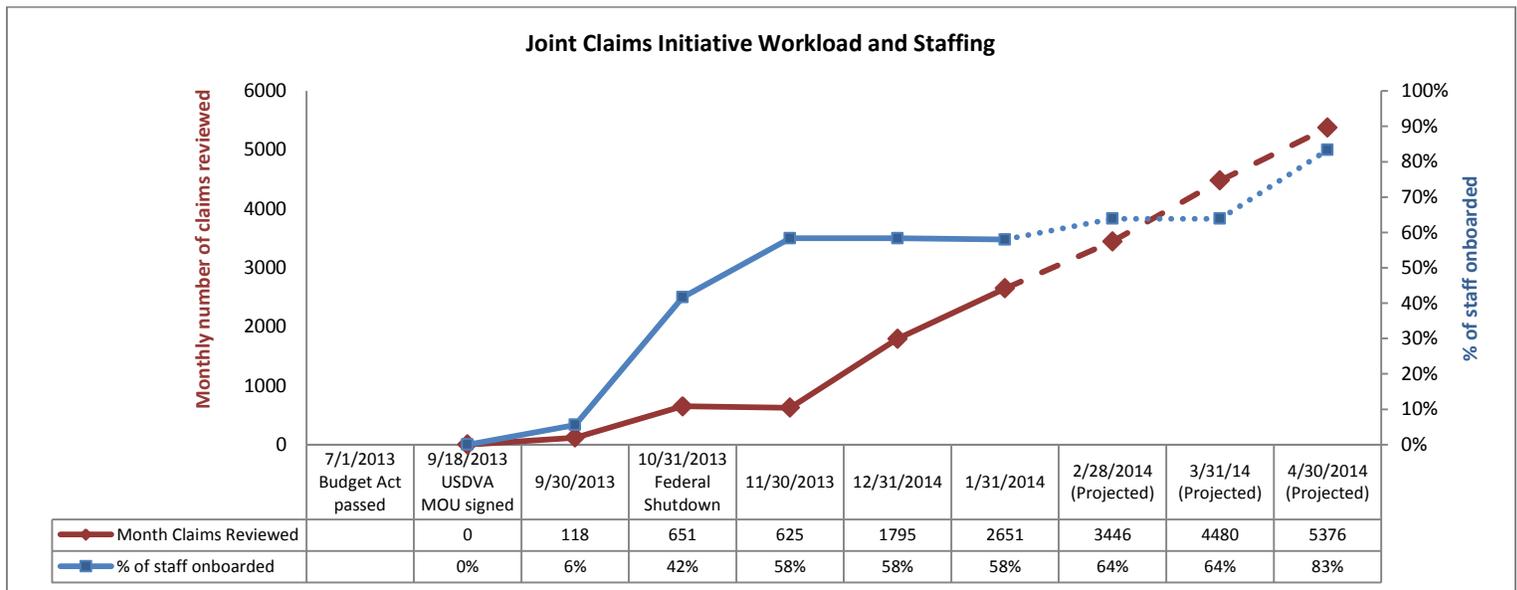
CalVet has faced various challenges in implementing this program due to the nuances of the state civil service exam and hiring process along with the lengthy onboarding process to have access to the USDVA database and proper training. The exam and hiring process requires approximately 30-45 days from application to the first day on the job. This is further challenged by CalVet’s internal resources because our department also opened two new Veterans Homes in the month of October. CalVet has mitigated as much of this delay as possible by actively following up on candidates and pushing the required paperwork through CalHR and our internal Human Resources Division on a daily basis.

Regarding onboarding, it takes approximately 60-90 days after hire to complete the required background checks, accreditation, USDVA approvals, and training. Gaining access to the VA’s Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) database is a 45-60 day process for each strike team member. This onboarding process is reflected in the static 58% of staff onboarded from November to January in Figure 1.

Strike team members in San Diego and Oakland only have electronic claims to review, so not having quick access to VBMS has prevented access to claims. The shutdown of the federal government from October 1-16 further hampered efforts to onboard new strike team members because the USDVA staff who grants them access to the databases were furloughed, and all USDVA Veteran Service Representative training was put on hold. Although the shutdown delayed onboarding, it is back on track and we do not expect any further impacts. CalVet expects to be primarily staffed by early 2014, and fully functioning with the strike teams by Spring 2014.

Other challenges pertaining to productivity is working in collaboration with the USDVA Regional Offices to obtain backlogged claims. The three offices are in various stages of becoming completely sufficient on VBMS or still using paper claims, and with the federal shutdown and mandatory overtime ending, there has not been a consistent flow of backlogged claims from all offices. CalVet and the Regional Office Directors have been working together to improve the process that claims are made available to the strike teams.

Figure 1



Note: Staffing is effected by the State examination and hiring process; we will be conducting the state examination in all three locations for the Support Team classification in mid-March to establish a list that should fill the remaining positions for the Support Team.

### Performance Metrics

The efforts of the CalVet/USDVA Joint Claims Initiative to help alleviate the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) veterans claims backlog are beginning to make a real difference. As of February 13, 2014, with 21 members of the 36 approved staff hired and on-boarded, the Strike Teams at the CalVet District Offices in Oakland, Los Angeles and San Diego have collectively reviewed **7,198 claims** since September of 2013.

The compensation awarded through these efforts is **\$2,012,99 in lump sum payments** (meaning retroactive payments based on the time the claim has been sitting at the USDVA). Monthly award payments totaling \$187,324 have been awarded. Annualized, that is **\$2,247,883 in payments going to California veterans every year for the rest of their lives.**

The award amounts are based on only those which have been reviewed by the Strike Teams and Adjudicated/Rated by the USDVA by February 13, 2014; consider that only a small percentage of the 7,198 claims reviewed have been rated. CalVet expects the numbers to rise exponentially as the CalVet/USDVA Joint Claims Initiative effort continues.

- As of February 13, 2014, total number of cases reviewed by Review and Support Teams: 7,198.

Review Team metrics: (with 13 out of 24 (54%) Review Team members fully onboarded and reviewing claims):

Performance Metric	As of 2/13/14
Total number of cases reviewed.	2,639
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cases reviewed, found to be ready-to-rate as-is, and submitted. (R02)</li> </ul>	749
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cases reviewed, developed further, and submitted as ready-to-rate. (R03 made into R02)</li> </ul>	167
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cases where additional evidence was obtained; however, more is needed to make the claim ready-to-rate (work in progress).*(R03)</li> </ul>	761
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cases reviewed and unable to make ready-to-rate. No evidence or information was able to be obtained to make the claim ready for a decision. Note: CalVet is working with the VA Regional Offices to reduce this number and review more claims where the initial development by the VA is complete and assist where possible. (R01)</li> </ul>	962

Support Team metrics (with 8 out of 12 (67%) Support Team members fully onboarded and reviewing claims):

Performance Metric	As of 2/13/14
Total number of cases reviewed.	4,559
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Fully Developed Claims reviewed and submitted as-is as FDC.</li> </ul>	1,813
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Fully Developed Claims reviewed, developed further, and submitted as FDC.</li> </ul>	319
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Fully Developed Claims requiring additional work, but anticipate submission as Fully Developed Claim (work in progress).*</li> </ul>	438
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of regular claims discovered and filed as FDC.</li> </ul>	73
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of regular claims reviewed, submitted as-is.</li> </ul>	1,705
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of regular claims reviewed, needing further development sent to Review Team</li> </ul>	211

\* Depending on the complexity of a claim, work in progress may entail vast amounts of follow up in order to develop the claim and make ready to rate. This development involves phone calls to providers and the veteran and waiting for response and evidence.



# **AB 101 LOCAL ASSISTANCE GRANT INCREASE PROGRESS REPORT**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2014**

## **County Veterans Service Office Utilization of New Funding**

### ***Background***

The Budget Act of 2013 included a one-time increase of \$3 million to fund new services in county veteran service office operations. Trailer bill action (Chapter 354, Statutes of 2013 (AB 101), Section 45, amended the item to add provisional language regarding disbursement of the funds. Of the \$3 million appropriated, \$400,000 was allocated to implementing a statewide communications project and \$2.6 million was allocated for distribution to county veterans service offices for local projects.

### ***Statewide Communications Project***

As proposed by the California Association of County Veteran Services Officers (CACVSO) and enacted by AB 101 a significant portion of the funding was allocated to implement a statewide communications plan to improve outreach to veterans. This project is designed to significantly impact attainment of the strategic goals, and implementation of best practices, identified in the report “CalVet and County Veterans Service Officers Strategic Partnership and Best Practices.”

Connecting veterans to the services and benefits they need is first dependent on the ability to establish that initial contact as they return home and attempt to transition back into the community. Specifically this contract will implement marketing efforts to make that initial contact with veterans and their families that will in turn facilitate the CVSOs ability to connect veterans with needed services and benefits. This project will increase awareness among all veterans of the variety of assistance available to them, and how and where to access those benefits. This project is structured to foster continuous communication with those veterans by integrating with other projects such as CalVet Connect.

Specifically this project seeks to implement the following best practices:

1. Increase public presence and public awareness of veterans. Rebrand and re-message who veterans are and the strengths veterans bring to the community. Debunk myths regarding veterans and the benefits and services that may or may not be available.
  - Ensure that we are asking “Have you served in the military?” instead of “Are you a veteran?”
  - Create Public Service Announcements (PSA) to show in the lobbies of the CVSO and other offices such as mental health, social services, and medical services agencies across all levels of government (federal, state and local).
  - Increase the frequency of press releases regarding veteran benefit information.
  - Develop mass marketing efforts such as movie theater ads, PSAs, bus advertisements, etc.
2. Focus on how to improve contacting veterans and their families from various emerging veteran demographic groups such as women, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender, and veterans impacted by federal Don't Ask Don't Tell policies.

### **Results to Date**

In accordance with the budget language, CalVet sent the communications plan proposal to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee for review 30 days prior to distribution of funding to the county. On December 5, 2013, CalVet distributed the \$400,000 in funding to San Luis Obispo County as lead agency for the effort. San Luis Obispo conducted a competitive procurement process and has awarded the contract to McNally Temple Associates, Inc. They have commenced work and CACVSO anticipates seeing initial deliverables in late March.

### **County Subvention**

As proposed by the CACVSO and as enacted in AB101 the new funds allocated directly to the counties would be used to implement best practices described in the CalVet and CVSO Strategic Partnership and Best Practices report to the Legislature. Counties are using the funding for one of three main themes from the best practices manual:

- Contacting veterans.
- Connecting veterans to their benefits and services.
- Continuous communication with veterans.

Counties are free to implement a variety of best practices, based on their local needs and most effective method of increasing outreach and services to veterans and their families in the context of their existing practices. CACVSO recommended and state adopted a plan to encourage counties to implement projects that focus on:

- *Adding New CVSO Staffing* - Many CVSO's are already at capacity for handling workload; additional staff allow offices to expand claims handling, expand presence at outreach events and to expand presence at veteran centric sites.
- *Increase office traffic by expanding service offerings* –Counties are using some of this funding towards one-time equipment needs for establishing new services that will attract veterans to the CVSO office thus providing CVSO with ability to increase their veteran contacts.
- *Produce/Distribute Outreach Materials* – Utilizing some of this funding for one-time costs for production of new, locally targeted outreach materials for distribution within the county. Provides benefit education and referral information for those locations and times where CVSO staff are not available to provide counseling services.

### **Results to Date**

Ninety-six percent of the counties with established CVSOs were able to certify they would be able to meet the requirements necessary to obtain the new funding (two small counties were unable to participate as the CVSO is a one person operation and the position is currently vacant). The counties are using the funds for the following purposes:

#### *Adding New CVSO Staffing*

- 74% of participating counties have or are in the process of increasing staffing levels. This includes both veteran service representative availability and

support staffing. Adding support staffing allows veteran service representatives to off load tasks not directly related to claims generation and counseling services.

- 15 full time and 13 part time veteran service representative positions have been filled.
- Another 3 full time and 9 part time veteran service representative positions are in the hiring process.
- Based upon historical data these new veteran service representative positions could bring in approximately \$47 million in new benefits each year they are retained.
- 26 support positions have been filled or are in the hiring process (combined full time and part time positions)
- Counties have used a number of innovative ways to increase staffing in spite of the specter of the one-time nature of these funds including:
  - Adding new, temporary positions.
  - Temporary out-of-classification assignments for existing staff.
  - Use of overtime to expand staff availability.
  - Temporarily increasing the time base for existing staff (from part time to full time).
  - Leveraging the new funding to “unfreeze” positions lost in the recent fiscal crisis.

*Increase office traffic by expanding service offerings*

- 68% of the participating counties have implemented projects designed to increase traffic through their offices. By providing new services in more locations the CVSO will entice potential new clients to make contact. The increased traffic translates to development of new contacts and new claims. Some of the projects being implemented include:
  - Deployment of ID card systems. Many retailers provide veteran discounts if the veteran can provide proof of service. This provides a monetary incentive for veterans to contact their CVSO. 61% of reporting counties have deployed ID card systems.
  - Increase the hours/days branch offices are open providing more flexibility and access to veterans and their families.
  - Deploying workstations that provide veterans easier access to on-line services such as MyHealthyVet or e-Benefits.
  - Establishing partnerships with high public traffic sites such as public libraries.
  - Adding staff visits to incarcerated veterans.
  - Purchasing vehicles to expand capacity to transport veterans to their VA medical appointments.
  - Providing bus passes that allow veterans to access needed services.
  - Providing basic necessity packages to homeless veterans.

*Produce/Distribute Outreach Materials*

- 49% of participating counties have already begun producing and distributing new outreach materials such as brochures, flyers, public service

announcements, website upgrades or self-service kiosks to provide veterans easy access to benefit information.

- Additional counties are delaying implementation of their outreach materials procurement efforts pending development of products under the statewide communications contract. These funds can then be used synergistically with that statewide effort for greater local impact.

#### *Other significant efforts*

- Considering the one-time nature of these funds many counties are taking an opportunity to purchase equipment to better support their clients. 51% of participating counties have initiated procurement of office equipment such as computers, laptops, scanners, printers, etc. to make better use of the mobility of our case management software, as well as to better integrate with the USDVA efforts to go to paperless claims processing. Both efforts will provided veterans with faster claims processing.

### **Implementation Constraints**

Rapid implementation of new activities at the county level were hampered by a number of circumstances that impact their ability to report more robust results. These constraints include:

*Late passage of trailer bill language* – AB 101 which enacted provisional language related to the use of these new funds was not enacted until mid-September. Implementing action at the county level was delayed until the parameters related to accepting these funds was finalized.

*Budget Action at County level* – Board of Supervisors action was needed to accept the conditions related to use of the funds and to take budget action to make the funds available locally. CVSOs were only able to begin implementation after their budgets had been adjusted locally.

*One-time nature of the funds* – While one of the stated top priorities of these funds was to expand CVSO staffing, the one-time nature of the funds makes this largely impracticable. Agencies are very reluctant to establish new permanent positions without the assurance of ongoing funding. As noted above, many counties found innovative ways to temporarily increase staffing but the impact will be lost without ongoing funds and conversion of those temporary efforts to permanent positions.

*Insufficient Funding* – Since 2007 there have been a number of reports and analyses that independently reach a conclusion that the most effective way to increase California's utilization of veteran benefits is to increase the number of professional veteran service representatives available to veterans. In the California model of providing veteran benefit counseling that translates to increasing CVSO staffing. Yet, while one of the stated top priorities of these funds was to expand CVSO staffing, the available funding and distribution methodology was such that 84% of the counties did not get enough funding to fund a full time veteran service representative. Yet they still found innovative ways to increase availability with the few dollars they were provided.



## **CalVet Connect “myCalVet”**

### **Executive Summary**

### **February 2014**

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) is implementing a \$1.2 million information technology project, Veterans Benefit Portal Project (CalVet Connect) that began in the second quarter of 2013. The *myCalVet* website will serve as the Department’s public facing website with additional functionality providing veterans and their families a personalized web experience by targeting information to them based on their personal profile.

The new website brings CalVet’s digital presence into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and enables the Department to leverage technology as a more cost effective means to reach the growing number of veterans in our state. CalVet Connect will serve as a conduit for information regarding services and benefits provided federally, by the state, or within their community).

*myCalVet* will provide:

1. A single point of entry for California veterans, family members and other interested parties to learn about benefits and services at multiple levels of government;
2. Replace our current CalVet internet site with this repurposed site, detailing the programs and services CalVet offers;
3. An intentions-based user experience, providing users with the option to create and maintain user profiles;
4. An information delivery system which searches and targets information based on the user’s personal profile;
5. CalVet the opportunity to merge existing data-bases, as well as provide a platform for information exchange with other federal/state agencies.
6. A fluid integration with “Web 2.0” and social media outlets, to include automatic updates to CalVet’s Facebook and Twitter;
7. A responsive design that effectively delivers full site access to users regardless of device or operating system;
8. A SharePoint architecture that maintains the flexibility and scalability to meet the emerging needs of California’s veterans and their families.

CalVet is currently in the final stages of production testing and expect to go-live with *myCalVet* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014.



**CalVet Executive Summary**  
**Incarcerated Veteran Outreach Program**  
**February 2014**

The passage of AB 2490 in September of 2012 required the California Department of Corrections (CDCR) to develop guidance policies to assist veterans who are currently incarcerated in pursuing claims for federal benefits, or in establishing rights to any other privilege, preference, care, or compensation provided under federal or state law. In developing these policies the CDCR was instructed to consult with the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and the County Veteran Service Offices (CVSO).

In November 2013, CDCR representatives reached out to CalVet in an effort to explore potential collaborative strategies to address the needs of incarcerated veterans. Currently, CDCR has placed a Community Resource Manager (CRM) in each facility that is the contact point for outside agencies attempting to provide service to inmates, including outreach efforts to incarcerated veterans. CDCR has also signed a MOU with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) which focuses on connecting veterans with their health benefits upon release.

After initial conversations, CalVet has started to explore potential strategies which will bring additional value to CDCR efforts. CalVet is currently gathering information and visiting facilities to understand the service delivery system within the prisons, as well as identify best practices.

CalVet is currently:

- Receiving contact information for the CDCR CRMs throughout the state.
- Receiving lists of veterans currently incarcerated, including their release dates.
- Visiting several facilities to better understand the service delivery model currently in place.
- Discussing with CVSO and internal outreach staff to begin constructing an outreach support model.
- Developing a veteran "tool-kit" that will serve as a transitional aid for exiting veterans.
- Drafting a MOU that will solidify the CalVet/CDCR relationship regarding this initiative.

CalVet is only in the preliminary stages of program development, however will be moving on this project quickly and hope to have a program solidified Late-Spring.



## California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Secretary Jeffery Beard, Ph.D Services for Veterans

To date, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has 3,260 inmate offenders, and 1,265 parolees who have self-identified as military veterans. To provide access to services and programs for these inmates, CDCR has partnered with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet).

### **In-Prison Services**

CDCR offers voluntary support groups that meet regularly throughout the month. These programs:

- Provide community assistance and support with reentry
- Promote and foster better self-worth through interactions with fellow veteran inmates and volunteers
- Facilitate periodic visits by a representative of the VA, who ensures that inmates close to release understand what benefits are available to them
- Offer workshops on affliction management and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

In addition to these voluntary programs, the Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) provides the following in-prison services:

#### *Transitional Case management Program (TCMP):*

- Prepares and submits VA benefits applications
- Applications are submitted to VA up to 180 days prior to release from incarceration
- Provides the inmates with the VA's Guidebook for California Incarcerated Veterans
- Contracted benefit workers in adult prisons provide application assistance for inmates to obtain Veterans, Social Security and Medi-Cal benefit entitlements upon release

#### *Parolee Health Management Unit (PHMU):*

- Meets with veterans six months prior to release
- Works closely with each VA Healthcare System in California to provide accurate information about resources with detailed instructions for point of entry
- Provides contact information for local resources
- The VA provides the Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV) program to assist offenders with a successful transition
- Assists inmates with a VA healthcare enrollment form
- Provides assistance with submission of enrollment forms and obtaining copies of military records



# California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

## Secretary Jeffery Beard, Ph.D

### Services for Veterans

#### Veterans on Parole

CDCR maintains two units that assist with specific services for veterans on parole which provide the following:

#### *The Parole, Planning and Placement (PPP) Unit:*

- All identified Veteran's receive a copy of the VA's 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the California Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans.
- Provides pre-release services to enable effective transition to parole and better prepare the offender for reintegration into the community
- 240 days prior to the offender's release, initiates comprehensive needs assessment of the offender's criminogenic needs
- Participates in collaborative case planning process with parolee
- Case plans document community service providers in the community to which the parolee will return.
- Veteran Resources are given to all inmates with Military Service at the time of the PPP Interview
- VA Re-entry Specialists distribute information to inmates with prior military service, and meet individually with Veterans within six months of release. This information includes:
  - Homeless veterans services
  - Veterans drug and alcohol services
  - DD214 information/assistance
  - Medical information/assistance
  - Service and non service connected disability funding information/assistance

#### *Parole and Community Team (PACT)*

- Provides parolees with information about available community based programs
- County, State, and Federal VA representatives regularly attend PACT meetings
- VA representatives at PACT meetings provide information for services such as:
  - Housing
  - Job assistance
  - Financial assistance
  - Residential and outpatient treatment for drug and alcohol-related dependencies
  - Mental health treatment
  - Medication management
  - Dental, inpatient and outpatient medical services

For more information regarding services available to veterans under the jurisdiction of CDCR, please contact DAPO at (916) 445-6200.

## ICV UPDATE- JUDGE RICHARD KING, ORANGE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT\*

The two main areas of support to California veterans from the California judiciary since the signing of Executive Order B-09-11 are (1) the change in legislation pertaining to veterans convicted of crimes and (2) a statewide working group of judges focused on how the judiciary can better serve those veterans who entered the criminal justice system.

1) Significant changes to section 1170.9 of the Penal Code. Prior to 2011, a veteran (a) who is convicted of either a felony or a misdemeanor, (b) who is granted probation, (c) who alleges that he or she committed the crime due to psychological problems, substance abuse, or PTSD stemming from military service in a combat theater, and (d) the court finds that the veteran has such a disorder due to military service, the court has the discretion to order a veteran, who consents, into a treatment program.

In 2011 and 2013, significant changes occurred to expand the eligibility for consideration under this section. Sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury were added as well as replacing psychological problems with the more expansive definition of mental health problems as the disorders that are a prerequisite. In addition, it is no longer necessary for the veteran to allege that he or she was in a combat theater. All that is required that the disorder stem from military service. Also, the court ordered treatment program may collaborate with the Federal Veterans Administration to maximize the benefits offered to the veteran.

Finally, if it is concluded that the veteran has successfully completed the treatment program, the veteran may petition the court for "restoration of relief". This includes the sealing of police and court records as well as relieving the veteran from an obligation in the future to disclose the conviction under penalty of perjury. However, this relief does not apply to employment to a law enforcement agency.

2) Statewide Veterans Courts Working Group. Under the direction of Justice Eileen Moore of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Three, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) established the Veterans Courts Working Group, which meets every few months. The focal points of recent meetings has been to (1) discuss procedures to identify veterans who are in the criminal justice system who could take advantage of section 1170.9 of the Penal Code and (2) educate judges on the parameters of section 1170.9.

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\* Appointed by Chief Justice Tani Gorre Cantil-Sakauye as the representative from the California Judiciary per Executive Order B-09-11