

Recommendations

Operation and Performance of the Department of Veterans Services

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Department of Veterans Services should develop and use performance measures for all programs. Performance measures should reflect the relationship between inputs, outputs, and outcomes to allow assessment of program efficiency and effectiveness (Chapter 3, page 22).

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Department of Veterans Services should use the Department of Human Resource Management's time allocation system, require staff to use the system to report time spent and activities performed each day, and use reported staff time information to assess allocation of staff time and redirect as appropriate to efficiently and effectively meet program goals (Chapter 3, page 23).

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Department of Veterans Services should (i) provide staff with accurate descriptions of each program and detailed protocols for directing veterans to other programs, and (ii) ensure staff use these descriptions and protocols to correctly refer veterans to other DVS programs when necessary (Chapter 3, page 24).

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Department of Veterans Services should develop a detailed communications plan that details how DVS will (i) identify specific populations of veterans who are likely to be unaware of its services, (ii) develop strategies to reach these populations, (iii) implement these communications strategies, and (iv) evaluate the success of the communication strategies (Chapter 3, page 27).

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Department of Veterans Services should eliminate the Virginia Transition Assistance Program and incorporate strategies to engage the population of transitioning service members through the agency's broader communications strategy (Chapter 3, page 28).

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Department of Veterans Services should monitor turnover rates among benefits assistance staff and use the information to identify strategies to retain staff. Monitoring should include (i) the number and percent of staff who leave, (ii) the reasons for departure, and (iii) the percentage of staff who have fewer than three years of experience assisting veterans with benefits claims processing (Chapter 4, page 32).

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Department of Veterans Services should collect and monitor benefits assistance program customer feedback to assess, at a minimum, the extent each customer was (i) satisfied with the service they received, and (ii) made aware of additional federal or state benefits during their meetings with benefits assistance staff. The Department should systematically use this customer feedback to identify opportunities to improve staff performance (Chapter 4, page 34).

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Department of Veterans Services should monitor approval rates across staff and offices. The Department should (i) use this information to assess variation across staff and offices, (ii) evaluate whether staff and offices with lower approval rates could benefit from additional training, and (iii) provide such training as needed (Chapter 4, page 35).

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Department of Veterans Services should establish agency goals for the percentage of claims that should be submitted as Fully Developed Claims. The Department should determine the reason why some offices are submitting fewer Fully Developed Claims than others and implement changes as needed to increase the percentage (Chapter 4, page 36).

RECOMMENDATION 10

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriations Act directing the Department of Veterans Services to monitor (i) the wait times of veterans who receive services through the benefits assistance program, (ii) the number of veterans who arrived at a benefits office and left without receiving assistance, and (iii) the wait times for an appointment at each office. The Department should report this information to the Board of Veterans Services and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations. The Department should also use this information to inform resource allocation decisions and to balance staff workloads across offices (Chapter 4, page 39).

RECOMMENDATION 11

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to determine whether and to what extent the Virginia Veteran and Family Support program should comply with state case management regulations and licensing requirements and its staff be subject to minimum qualification requirements (Chapter 5, page 46).

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Department of Veterans Services should develop policy guidance and require Virginia Veteran and Family Support program staff to use the policy guidance to effectively implement program goals and activities (Chapter 5, page 48).

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Department of Veterans Services should collaborate with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Community Services Boards, and other organizations as appropriate to develop and execute clearly defined partnerships to ensure veterans are properly referred to the organization best suited to provide the service they need (Chapter 5, page 49).

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Governor should convene a working group to develop a plan detailing how the Virginia Veteran and Family Services program will best fulfill its statutory mandate to monitor and coordinate mental health and rehabilitative services for veterans. The working group should be chaired by the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs and include the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. The Department of Veterans Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department of Aging and Rehabilitation, as well as other appropriate agencies and external consultants, as necessary, should be working group participants. The plan should be submitted to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees no later than November 1, 2016 (Chapter 5, page 50).

RECOMMENDATION 15

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Veterans Services to develop and submit a plan to make the V3 program more effective and scalable, and less time consuming. The plan should also identify (i) the measures that will be used to assess the program's impact on employer knowledge and hiring decisions and (ii) the specific value that the program provides over existing resources that are available to all companies online. The plan should be submitted to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance committees no later than November 1, 2016 (Chapter 6, page 58).
