



NOTES FROM VBA AND VETERAN LEADERS MEETING – MARCH 11, 2021

The call was facilitated by Michael Stoddard, VBA VSO Liaison, Under Secretary for Benefits. Caleb Stone from William & Mary represented the NLSVCC.

- **Opening Comments (Mike Stoddard/Ray Kelley (VA Secretary's VSO Liaison))**
 - Secretary's priorities include toxic exposure, asset realignment, diversity/inclusion/equity, caregivers, suicide prevention, education/transition assistance.
 - 3 Agent Orange presumptive diseases were added in the NDAA, VA is planning to implement, but the timeline will take a while.
 - Time line extensions due to Coronavirus National Emergency are still in effect.
- **Dependency Verification Tool (Paul Shute/Alejandro Mendiolaflares)**
 - VA has put dependency verification on an eight-year cycle.
 - A lot can change in eight years, so VA is trying to streamline the process to prevent overpayment and underpayment situations. VBA is creating a tool through VA.gov to help, but very early in the process.
 - VA.gov authenticated users will be able to certify dependent status and get redirected if they report changes.
 - Presenters encouraged VSOs to recommend veterans become authenticated VA.gov users. Veterans can authenticate through DS Logon, MyHealtheVet, or ID.me.
 - Presenters acknowledged that VSOs don't have a user process in VA.gov, which seemed to indicate that VA would put this on veteran (continuing current process).
- **eBenefits update (Frank Bryceland)**
 - Migrating eBenefits to VA.gov began in FY 2017, with the then-SECVA wanting one site so that users did not have to go to multiple web sites. The majority of VBA features in eBenefits have been moved to VA.gov, with the final 8 features transitioning by the end of April 2021.
 - Most key features are currently only available at VA.gov, to include: filing a claim, claims status, Chapter 36, direct deposit, payment history, and uploading evidence.
 - VBA will provide guidance to all eBenefits users (Veterans, service members, spouses, caregivers, and other stakeholders) to visit www.va.gov and the option to create a new credential using the ID.me site provided on VA.gov.
 - Full sunset of eBenefits system will occur in March 2022.
 - The presenter stated that MyHealtheVet sunset will be a separate (VHA) process, and it is highly likely to be a lengthy one. He acknowledged that some dates got shifted later in eBenefits sunset process.
 - The Stakeholders Enterprise Portal (SEP) is owned by the Veterans Experience Office (not VBA); The presenter said that he has heard a decision is pending as to whether to integrate it into VA.gov or to keep it as a separate technology module.
 - Veterans who have problems with logging on to VA.gov can call the DMDC Help Desk at 1-800-538-9522.
- **Supply Chain Zero Update (Derek Herbert)**



- VBA will actively identify and target dependencies in process that require VBA to get papers from other federal agencies. Coronavirus has been a major eye-opener.
- The National Archives and its National Personnel Records Center control any new claim for veterans who served before 1990. The VA has historically received papers from NARA that the VBA would scan into VBMS. That is not feasible in the future. Within the next 30 days, VA is deploying on-site scanners to NARA's site that can scan items directly into VBMS.
- VBA is searching for and identifying files associated with veterans who are likely to file claims in the future, and it plans to scan these files into VBMS on-site and off-site preemptively.
- VBA is trying to limit adverse impacts from other agencies in future disaster situations.
- The VBA does not anticipate need for additional IT resources.
- The vendor is currently required to scan images with a 99% accuracy/quality rate to ensure that documents are as readable as possible considering what documents it is given—the biggest challenge is microfiche files and rescans of photocopies.
- **Home Loan Update (Terry Rouch)**
 - Forbearance options/eviction & foreclosure moratoriums/etc. extended through June 30.
 - VA is working on a partial claim payment program, and the rules are being written right now.
 - Wants to ensure vets remain in homes and working closely with partners to enact policies that make sense.
 - SAH has been challenging in the Coronavirus Era, but it's still ongoing under updated procedures.
- **Closing (Mike Stoddard)**
 - VSO call line came up, and the number is 855-225-0709.
 - VA's Education Service (EDU) has reached an exciting milestone in the Digital GI Bill initiative. VA has awarded a contract to Accenture Federal Services (AFS), who will partner with EDU and the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) to modernize claims processing and customer service for GI Bill beneficiaries and external partners by providing direct, online, one-stop access to GI Bill benefits and information. VA is looking to partially implement by end of FY 2021. GI Bill Beneficiaries who require assistance should contact the Education Call Center at 888-442-4551 between 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday.
 - VA Form 21-4138 has been replaced with five new forms:
 - VAF 20-10206 – FOIA/ Privacy Act Request
 - VAF 20-10207 – Priority Processing Request
 - VAF 20-10208 – Document Evidence Submission
 - VAF 20-10210 – Lay/Witness Statement
 - VAF 28-10212 – Ch 31 Request for Assistance
 - The 20-10206 Form is to help automation of the C-File request fulfillment process.