

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043
March 18, 2024 at 7:30 a.m.

Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on March 18, 2024 at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Room.

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

II.) Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Eilers to approve the minutes from February 12, 2024. Motion was seconded by Clark; Motion carried.

III.) Public Comments: No public comments noted.

IV.) Budget Review. Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for 2023-2024. Budget this month included a return that resulted in a negative cash balance of \$304.00 for expenditures (fiscal activity). This balance was the result of a rental deposit being returned for an outreach event. The Veterans Affairs office spent \$4207.51 during the month with 61.27% remaining in the budget. Eilers made the motion to approve the budget, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried.

V.) Old Business:

Jordan noted that that the Emergency Management Office had no space available for van storage onsite. The van will continue to be stored at the current facility.

VI.) New Business

a). The District 2 Meeting will be held at the Diamond Joe Casino in Dubuque March 22, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

b). Spring Schooling Dates for Veteran Service Officers are scheduled for April 16-18 in Johnson County. There will be no separate training for Commissioners at this time.

c). Discussion was held regarding the upcoming VA Technical Artificial Enhancement aspect for applications/claims of veterans. Examiners will be able to determine if the veteran meets the criteria established and process veterans' claims faster.

d). 1). Jordan asked to replace the plastic floor mat in his office and purchase a new stronger glass floor mat.

2). He also suggested that the Commission invest in a new brochure packet which would outline the VA state and federal disability benefits using a larger print. These brochures could be created individually for each client. Pages could be inserted or deleted depending on the needs of the veteran.

3). Jordan requested to order more calendars, pens, and notebooks to be distributed to veterans.

4). Jordan recommended that we consider a rural transit option serving veterans who are not mobile. He said he would like to allocate \$1,000-\$1500 to contract with EARL, the rural transit van operating in the area. Transportation would be arranged by our Transportation Director to the VA facility using grant dollars.

5). Motion was made by Eilers to allow Jordan to purchase the items requested, and seconded by Clark; Motion carried.

e). Jordan said that there would be a Van Driver's Meeting in the large conference room on April 12, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

f). The February Statistical Report was distributed. 31 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 37 total office visits from Veterans, and 4 home visits.

g). The VA now offers online ordering for CPAP supplies.

h). The Air Force recently announced the reopening of its recall program to fill mid-careered commissioned and enlisted jobs. This announcement was made to address critical staffing issues.

VII. Review and approval of Claims.

VIII. Confirmation of Next Meeting. Next meeting will be on April 8, 2024 at 7:30 a.m.

IX. Adjourn. Clark made the motion to adjourn, Eilers seconded the motion; Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

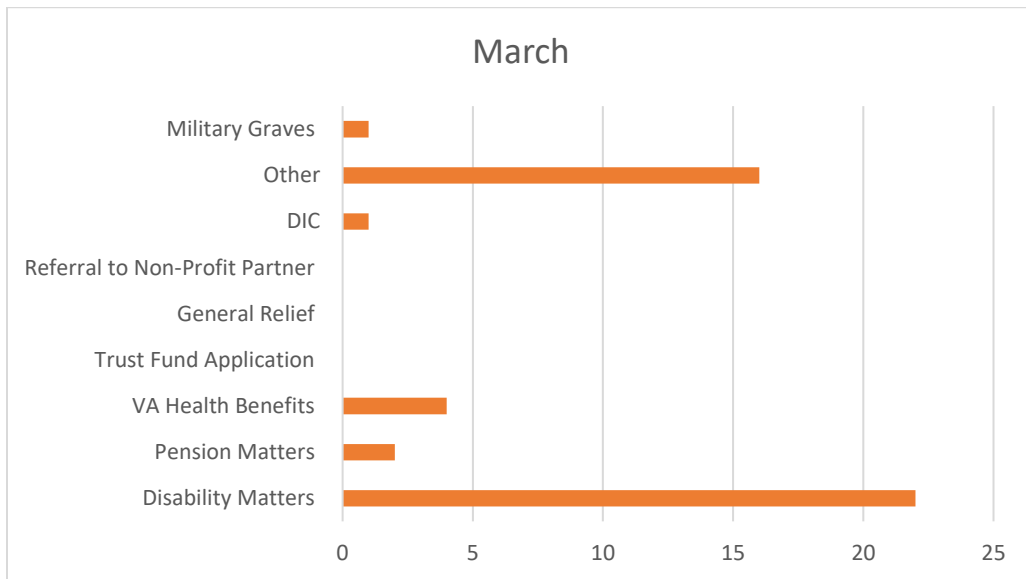
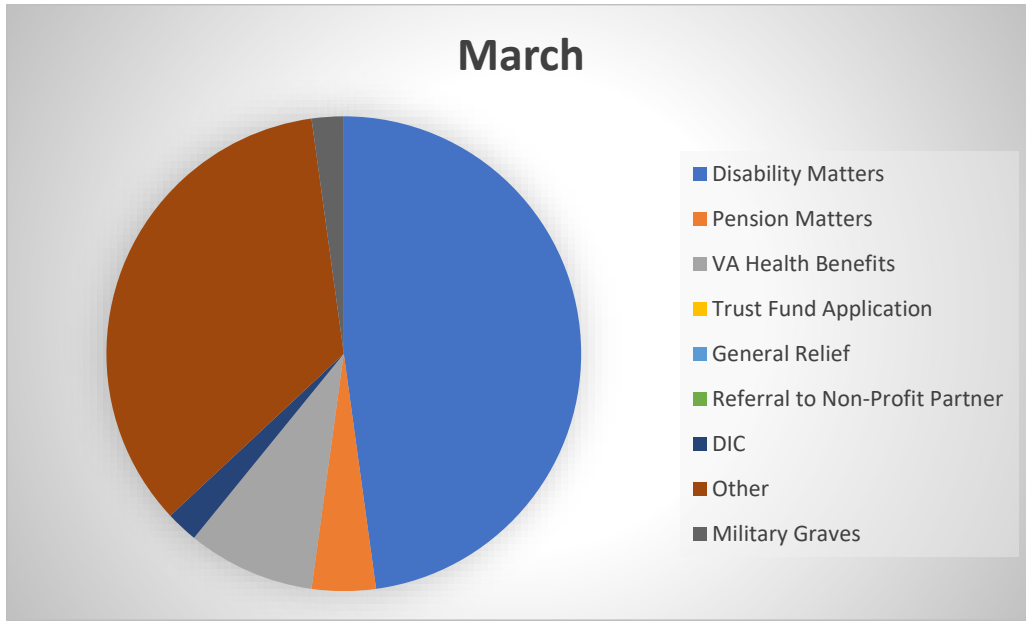
March Report

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

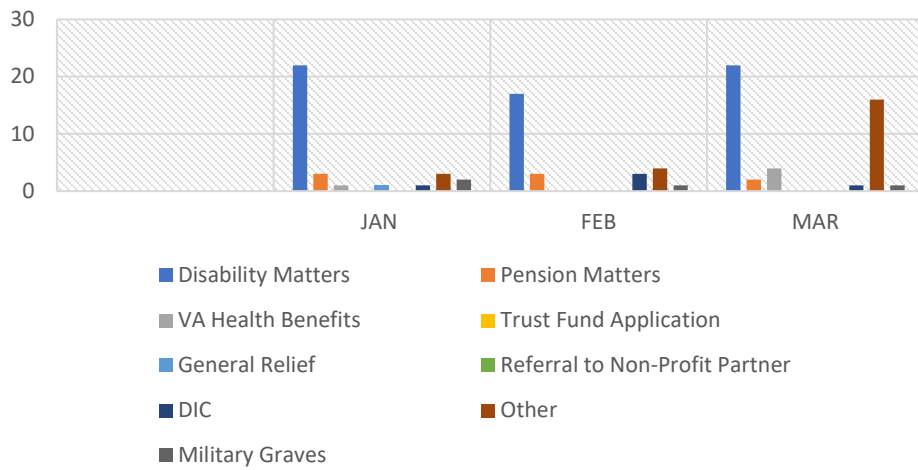
17 total office visits from Veterans.

1 home visit

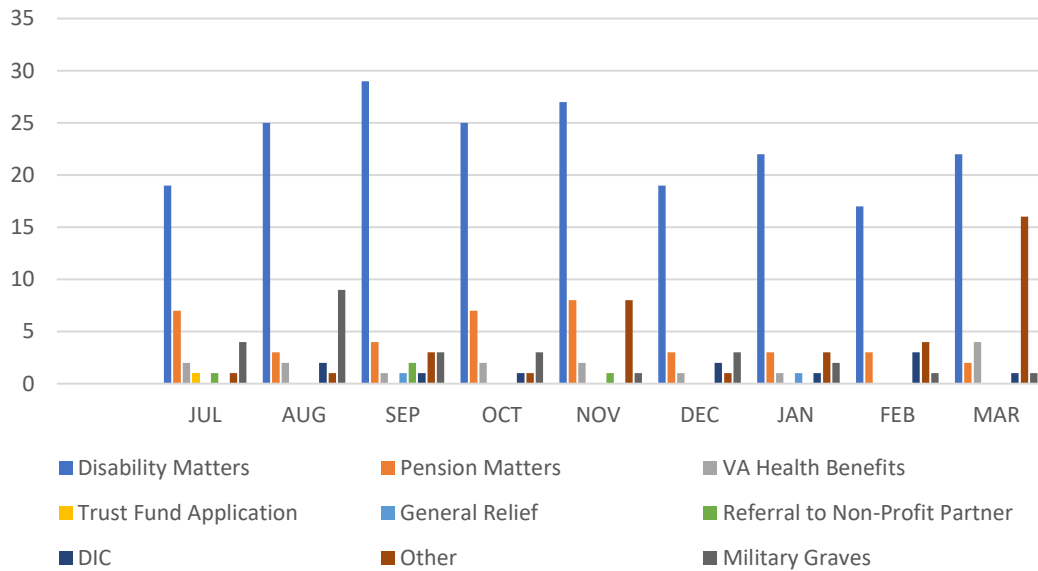
1 training event



Q3-2024 Veterans Affairs Activity



MTD-2024 Comparison - VA Activity



VA & State Updates:

VA Health Care – Expansion of Benefit

Veterans who were exposed to toxins or other hazards during their military service are now eligible to enroll in VA health care. This is a change expands eligibility to include all Veterans served (whether in the US or abroad) in the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq or Afghanistan or another other combat zone after September 11, 2011. Additionally, who were never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazard while training or on active duty in the US are now eligible to enroll and may enroll directly without applying first for VA disability compensation benefits. US Department of Veterans Affairs News Release dated March 5, 2024, is attached.

VA Announces Steps to Increase Screening & Benefit Access for Veterans with Cancer

VA has announced implementation of new steps to expand preventative services, health care and benefits for Veterans with cancer.

- VA will expand access to genetic, lung and colorectal cancer screenings for veterans. The goal is to have a process in place by year's end that ensures that each veteran, in need, is provided with an option to have genetic screening test done.
- VA plan to ensure that each VA medical facility can perform lung cancer screenings. Additionally, smoking cessation services will continue to be provided with the goal is to integrate this program as part of lung cancer screening services. Veterans may continue to use the tobacco quit line at 1-855-QUIT-VET to enroll in cessation programs.

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans AffairsVA Manchester Healthcare System
Contact: Lori Flynn, Public Affairs Officer
(603) 624-4366 x 6779
Lori.Flynn@va.gov**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 5, 2024

NEWS RELEASE

In one of the largest-ever expansions of Veteran health care, all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards during military service – at home or abroad – are now eligible for VA health care

At the direction of President Biden, VA is expanding health care eligibility to millions of Veterans – including all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, and any other combat zone after 9/11 – years earlier than called for by the PACT Act

WASHINGTON — Today, VA announced that all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military – at home or abroad – are now eligible to enroll directly in VA health care. This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 are eligible to enroll in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States are eligible to enroll.

As [directed by President Biden](#), this expansion of VA health care eliminates the phased-in approach called for by the PACT Act – meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law. This is a critical step forward because Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in [overall quality ratings](#) and [patient satisfaction ratings](#). Additionally, VA health care is often [more affordable](#) than non-VA health care for Veterans.

VA encourages all eligible Veterans to visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care today. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on August 10, 2022, more than 1,800 Granite State Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

"If you're a Veteran who may have been exposed to toxins or hazards while serving our country, at home or abroad, we want you to come to us for the health care you deserve," said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. "VA is proven to be the best, most affordable health care in America for Veterans – and once you're in, you have access for life. So don't wait, enroll today."

"Today, we're making millions of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act," said VA **Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D.** "With this expansion, VA can care for all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11. We can also care for Veterans who *never* deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more. We want to bring *all* of these Veterans to VA for the care they've earned and deserve."

"The expansion of VA health care through the PACT Act is an opportunity for all New Hampshire Veterans eligible under the expansion to receive care," said **Manchester VA Medical Center Director Kevin Forrest**. "Veterans, it's quick and easy to enroll. You don't need to be sick or file a claim to become eligible. You may not need us today, but when you do, being proactive and enrolling now, helps our dedicated team of health care be here for you."

In addition to expanding access to VA care, this decision makes it quicker and easier for millions of Veterans to enroll. Many Veterans believe they must apply to receive [VA disability compensation benefits](#) to become eligible for VA health care, but this is not correct. With this expansion and other authorities, millions of eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA care – without any need to first apply for VA benefits.

This expansion of care covers Vietnam Veterans, Gulf War Veterans, Iraq War Veterans, Afghanistan War Veterans, Veterans who deployed in support of contingency operations for the Global War on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission), and [more](#).

This expansion also covers many Veterans who never **deployed** as a part of a conflict but were exposed to toxins or hazards while serving in the U.S. Specifically, under this expansion of care, any Veteran who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) – at home or abroad – is eligible for VA health care. VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA: air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires); chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water); occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams); radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure); warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons); and more. VA will use all available information to determine if Veterans participated in a TERA, including military records and service connection.

VA is executing a nationwide campaign to ensure that as many Veterans as possible enroll. To date, VA's PACT Act outreach campaign has included more than 2,500 events nationwide, \$13 million in [paid advertising](#), 88,000 earned media clips, more than 400 million emails and letters to Veterans, VA's first-ever text messaging campaign, the creation of a [one-stop-shop PACT Act website](#), and more. This is the largest outreach campaign in VA history, which has one goal in mind: ensure that all Veterans – and their survivors – get the health care and benefits they deserve under the PACT Act.

For more information about how the PACT Act is helping Veterans and their survivors, visit VA's [PACT Act Dashboard](#). To apply for care or benefits today, visit [VA.gov/PACT](#) or call 1-800-MYVA411. More information on eligibility can be found at [VA.gov/PACT](#).

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