



Mike Prendergast
Executive Director

State of Florida
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Office of the Executive Director
11351 Ulmerton Road, Suite 311-K
Largo, Florida 33778-1630
(727) 518-3202
www.FloridaVets.org

Rick Scott
Governor
Pam Bondi
Attorney General
Jeff Atwater
Chief Financial Officer
Adam Putnam
Commissioner of Agriculture

DATE: April 22, 2015

TO: The Honorable Rick Scott
The Honorable Pam Bondi
The Honorable Jeff Atwater
The Honorable Adam Putnam

FROM: Mike Prendergast
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Quarterly Report – Third Quarter 2014-2015

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs submits this Quarterly Report for the Third Quarter of the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year, covering the period January 1 – March 31, 2015.

This Quarterly Report is submitted pursuant to the procedures authorized by Rules 55-1.003 and 55-2.010, Florida Administrative Code. The report will be placed on the agenda at a future meeting of the Governor and Cabinet.

If you have any questions regarding any matter covered by this report, please contact me, Deputy Executive Director Al Carter, at (727) 518-3202, or the Legislative Affairs Director Colleen Krepstekies, at (850) 487-1533.

CC: Senator Rene Garcia, Chairman, Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee
Senator Thad Altman, Chairman, Military Affairs, Space and Domestic Security Committee
Representative Kenneth L. Roberson, Chairman, Health Innovation Sub-Committee
Representative Matt Hudson, Chairman, Health Care Appropriations Sub-Committee
Representative Jimmie T. Smith, Chairman, Veterans and Military Affairs Sub-Committee
Cynthia Kelly, Director, Governor's Office of Policy and Budget

Attachment 1: FDVA Quarterly Report

ATTACHMENT 1

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS THIRD QUARTER REPORT January 1 – March 31, 2015

This report covers the activities of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) for the Third Quarter of the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year.

1. **Administrative Highlights:**

a. **Current Issues/Concerns**

Executive Direction: Executive Director Mike Prendergast continued his campaign of advocating with purpose and passion for Florida veterans and linking them to superior services, benefits, and support. Colonel Prendergast presented department overviews and updates on current federal and state legislative initiatives to veterans' groups, civic groups, and legislative committees. During this quarter he also met with local businesses and organizations to discuss outreach programs and projects to assist veterans. Colonel Prendergast served as the keynote speaker at the Citrus County Military Officers Association of America Luncheon in Crystal River and attended a Florida National Guard ceremony to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Camp Blanding Joint Training Center Museum and Memorial Gardens in Starke. He also attended the Change of Command Ceremony for the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team at the C.W. Bill Young Armed Forces Reserve Center in Pinellas Park and attended the Military Order of the Purple Heart 10th Annual Ceremony in Crystal River. The ceremony commemorated the proud legacy of the Purple Heart and honored Florida's fallen heroes of the Global War on Terror.

New State Veterans' Nursing Home: Veteran Nursing home care delivery has experienced a significant change in philosophy of care, complexity of care, levels of service, length of stay, architecture, demographics of populations served, and new generational cohorts of residents requiring care that can only be provided in nursing homes. This has resulted in an initiative to transform the culture of nursing home care in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs from a medical model where the care is driven by the medical diagnosis to a person-centered model where the care is driven by the needs of the individual, as impacted by medical conditions. In personalizing the delivery of care, the transformation of the culture of nursing home care challenges care providers to deinstitutionalize care and workplace practices. The Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie (St. Lucie County) is in the initial planning stages and will be the first FDVA home to be reflective of these new changes. The 120-bed facility will offer skilled nursing care and will accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease.

Division of Benefits and Assistance:

Bureau of Veterans' Claims: Claims Services has adapted to recent VA paperless upgrades and mail as we know it is a thing of the past. All mail from Florida Veterans who correspond through the US Postal Service to the VA was moved from the VA Regional Office in St Petersburg to a scanning facility in Georgia. The mail is digitized, uploaded to the VA web-based mail portal for a VA employee to review, and forwarded to the appropriate team for processing. These new procedures were modified to provide quicker access to the mail and upload to the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS). VA employees now review the digitized file from any VA office. Claims Services has kept in step with the VA, making the transition appear seamless to Veterans we serve. This quarter, the office advocated for over 43,648 Veterans and their families and reviewed over 8,116 disability claims for disability benefits. The Claims Appeal Team represented 237 Veterans before Judges at the Board of Veteran Appeals, advocating for benefits sought. Additionally, the Claims Team attended 96 VA Personal Hearings scheduled to represent and assist veterans to present their cases to the VA Hearing Officer regarding proposal to reduce or retention of their benefits. The Veteran Claim Examiners worked with the VA to resolve 65% of the Personal Hearings in favor of the Veteran without the necessity of the Veteran traveling to the VA Regional Office.

Bureau of Field Services: Field Services provided 13 Veterans' Claim Examiners and 201 Man Hours to support the Governor's Veterans Service Award Ceremonies in Melbourne, Panama City and The Villages. The Bay Pines zone assisted Lee County Service Officers by providing a VCE to serve Veterans and their families while they were hiring new Service Officers. Field Services' David Austin, Harry Rudy and Ernie Kuykendall provided training at the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Certification Course March 2-5. This quarter, Field Services attended 182 outreach events providing benefit information to 9,522 veterans and their families. Total Veterans served this quarter by Field Services is 66,616.

The Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Education and Training (or State Approving Agency/SAA): State Approving Agency team members, Betsy Wickham and Katherine Snyder, were active providing legislative guidance this quarter. Public Law 113-146, The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, Section 702, requires all public Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) to charge 'covered individuals' no more than the state resident rate for tuition and fees beginning July 2, 2015, or face disapproval of participation in Ch. 30 and Ch. 33 VA Education Benefits. Working closely with Florida Senate and House committee members, SB 7028 and HB 35 were drafted and have gone forward for committee review and consideration. In addition, Katherine Snyder, Florida Program Specialist and Chair of the National Association of State Approving Agencies' (NASAA) Flight Committee also provided input for HR 476, The GI Bill Education Quality Enhancement Act of 2015, a bill which is being reviewed by Congress and which addresses the role of SAAs, approval criteria and IHLs that have contracted with flight schools. SAA members presented information and fielded questions pertaining to aforementioned bills at the NASAA Mid-Winter Business Meeting in Washington, D.C., in February and at the Atlanta VA Regional Processing Office's School Certifying Official and VA/SAA Conference in Atlanta in March where over 800 school and VA/SAA officials were in attendance.

b. **Audits**

- No internal or external audits were finalized this quarter.

c. **Consultants**

- No new consultants were contracted, nor were any existing agreements changed this quarter.

d. **Contracts**

- Sims SVNH “Chiller Removal and Replacement” contract, with DMS as Project Agent, executed on 8/13/14. DMS activated “architect/engineering services” with McGinnis & Fleming Inc., on 9/26/14. DMS activation of “construction services” firm is pending as of 3/31/15.
- Lopez SVNH “Chiller Removal and Replacement” contract, with DMS as Project Agent, executed on 6/20/14. DMS activated “architect/engineering services” with TLC Engineering Inc. on 8/1/14. DMS activated “construction services” with Tappouni Mechanical Services on 3/26/15. Project underway.
- Lopez SVNH “2 new pavilions” contract, with DMS as Project Agent, executed on 3/5/15. DMS activation of “architect/engineering services” firm and “construction services” firm pending as of 3/31/15.
- Jenkins SVDH “Chiller Removal and Replacement” solicitation issued on 2/3/15. Bid opening performed on 3/31/15. Anticipated notice of intent to award on 4/14/15.
- Bennett SVNH “Nurse Call System” contract Change Order No. 5, with JSC Systems, executed on 2/23/15; extended contract completion date to 4/30/15 (due to required State/AHCA approvals).
- FDVA “Veterans Career Services and Promotion of State Residency” contract, with Florida is for Veterans, Inc., executed on 1/27/15.
- FDVA “New State Veterans’ Home” legislative appropriation provided on 7/1/14, with DMS as Project Agent. DMS “architect/engineering services” contract with Rogers, Lovelock, & Fritz Inc. executed on 10/20/14. DMS “construction services” contract with OHL-Arellano Construction Co. executed on 1/30/15. State/FDVA receipt of USDVA funding letter and USDVA Memorandum of Agreement pending as of 3/31/15.
- FDVA “Veterans Benefits Information System” solicitation revised and re-issued on 2/19/15. Response opening held on 3/13/15; response evaluation meeting on 3/27/15. Oral Presentations and system demonstrations to be held on 4/9/15. Anticipated notice of intent to award on 4/27/15.
- FDVA “Medicare/Medicaid Cost Reporting Services” solicitation, replacing contract w/Moore Stephens Lovelace P.A., issued on 3/17/15. Respondent proposals due by 4/28/15.
- FDVA annual certification of Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF), for fiscal year 2013-14, issued on 1/12/15.

e. **Leases**

- FDVA made no additions, alterations, or modifications to leased space this quarter.

f. **Lawsuits/Claims in Litigation or Settled this Quarter**

- **2 General Liability Claims** (0 new this quarter): 0 won, 0 settled, 0 lost, 2 pending
- **2 Employment Liability Claims** (1 new this quarter): 0 won, 1 settled, 0 lost, 1 pending

g. **Donations**

Cash Donations by State Veterans' Home

FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015	FIRST QUARTER	SECOND QUARTER	THIRD QUARTER	FOURTH QUARTER	Total, Year to Date
Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	\$1,014.27	\$521.01	0.00		\$1,535.28
Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	\$9,227.06	\$15,657.00	\$5,129.42		\$30,013.48
Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	\$1,000.00	\$20.00	\$1,900.00		\$2,920.00
Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	\$1,000.00	\$299.00	\$410.00		\$1,709.00
Sims SVNH, Panama City	\$1,000.00	\$200.62	\$585.00		\$1,785.62
Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	\$1,000.00	\$225.00	\$12.51		\$1,237.51
Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	\$1,000.00	\$275.00	\$1,375.00		\$2,650.00

Non-Cash Donations:

Jenkins State Domiciliary – Lake City

No Donations this quarter

Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home – Daytona Beach

Electric Mobility Scooter

Go-Go Elite Traveler \$929.00

Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home – Land O Lakes

Did not respond

Nininger State Veterans' Nursing Home – Pembroke Pines

4-16" wide wheelchairs @ \$119.00 \$476.00

4-18" wide wheelchairs @ \$119.00 \$476.00

Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home – Panama City

Wheelchair – Drive transport chair \$143.82

Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home – Port Charlotte

Broda chair \$1,000.00

Hausmann Bariatric table \$3,266.00

50 folding chairs w/storage rack \$744.49

Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home – St Augustine

2- Gas grills Charbroil Advantage \$369.00 \$738.00

h. **Memberships in Professional Organizations Paid this Quarter**

St. Augustine 50-95-10 Health Planning \$900.00

2. Division of Benefits and Assistance: Statistics

- Summary of veterans' benefits derived vs. cost of the benefits staff: \$128:1 (ROI).

a. Bureau of Veterans' Claims

<i>EVENT 2014-2015</i>	<i>FIRST QUARTER</i>	<i>SECOND QUARTER</i>	<i>THIRD QUARTER</i>	<i>FOURTH QUARTER</i>	<i>YEAR TO DATE</i>	<i>PREVIOUS FY to this Qtr.</i>
Retroactive compensation	\$36,770,963	\$29,067,865	\$39,184,611		\$105,023,439	\$138,121,275
Largest single retro. benefit	\$292,897	\$502,803	\$204,354		\$1,000,054	\$502,693
Debt relief	\$77,113	\$133,494	\$36,163		\$246,770	\$239,518
Notices of Disagreement	526	575	658		1,759	1,047
Statements of Argument in Appeals Cases*	179	241	415		835	941
Act as Representative at Hearings*	82	102	27		211	111
Veterans' Appeals Hearings*	55	111	237		403	162
Ratings Reviewed	10,039	8,500	8,116		26,655	24,548

* The appeals representation process includes formal filing of the appeal application, and paralegal representation with the veteran at the Regional Office and in teleconferences with the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA).

b. Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Training (SAA)

<i>EVENT 2014-2015</i>	<i>FIRST QUARTER</i>	<i>SECOND QUARTER</i>	<i>THIRD QUARTER</i>	<i>FOURTH QUARTER</i>	<i>YEAR TO DATE</i>	<i>PREVIOUS FY to this Qtr.</i>
SAA Programs Approved	3,671	2,551	1,467		7,689	6,757
Other Approval	778	649	594		2,021	1,375
Compliance Visits	40	28	29		97	89
Inspection Visits	12	13	6		31	27
Outreach Activities*	185	204	155		544	561
Liaison Activities**	183	142	248		573	643
Technical Assistance***	1,050	857	1,054		2,961	2,547

* Outreach Activities are any activity designed to inform or encourage those with entitlement to use it.

** Liaison activities are those that foster education about the SAA with other education and training professionals, which promote and encourage the exchange of information and support to raise awareness of the professional nature of the SAA approval function.

*** Technical assistance is any interaction designed to assist an individual or a facility with any aspect of the approval function.

c. Bureau of Veteran Field Services

EVENT 2014-2015	FIRST QUARTER	SECOND QUARTER	THIRD QUARTER	FOURTH QUARTER	YEAR TO DATE	PREVIOUS FY to this Qtr.
Issue Resolution	5,304	4,790	6,132		16,226	15,375
Total Amount	\$14,627,699	\$14,284,148	\$16,435,695		\$45,347,542	\$41,877,024
Outreach Visits	198	180	182		560	459
Veterans Served at Outreach	15,365	13,153	9,522		38,040	33,196
Bedside Interviews	3,138	3,049	2,867		9,054	13,017
Walk-ins/ Counseling	33,060	31,164	34,929		99,153	100,298
Claims	8,310	7,685	8,044		24,039	20,386
Voter Regis/ Pref forms	3,060	2,893	2,551		8,504	7,708
Homeless Walk In	933	543	403		1,879	1,995
Ratings Reviewed Orlando/W Palm	260	146	81		487	2.127

d. Outreach*

EVENT 2014-2015	FIRST QUARTER	SECOND QUARTER	THIRD QUARTER	FOURTH QUARTER	YEAR TO DATE	PREVIOUS FY to this Qtr.
Reintegration and Pre-Deployment Events for Guard and Reserve units	4	3	4		11	17
Homeless Veteran Stand Down Events	7	7	4		18	20
Medical Center Welcome Home events	0	0	1		1	6
Congressional Open House events	9	8	6		23	11
National Conferences	0	0	0		0	1
New Patient Orientation	67	35	30		132	127
Transition Assistance Briefings	10	8	11		29	20
Other	102	180	123		405	258

* Supervisors and VCEs throughout the Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance provide presentation, orientations, and briefings on state, federal, and local veterans' laws and benefits.

3. State Veterans' Homes Program

State Veterans' Homes Census

<i>FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015</i>	<i>FIRST QUARTER</i>	<i>SECOND QUARTER</i>	<i>THIRD QUARTER</i>	<i>FOURTH QUARTER</i>	<i>YEAR TO DATE</i>	<i>PREVIOUS FY, same 1/4</i>
Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	97.24%	97.72%	97.54%		97.50%	87.0%
Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	99.65%	98.70%	97.75%		98.70%	99.8%
Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	99.76%	99.63%	99.60%		99.66%	99.6%
Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	98.33%	97.45%	97.92%		97.90%	99.0%
Sims SVNH, Panama City	99.76%	99.88%	97.87%		99.83%	99.9%
Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	99.53%	98.70%	99.11%		99.11%	99.4%
Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	99.73%	99.90%	99.93%		99.85%	99.6%

a. Quality of Care:

Panama City has been chosen for the Gold Seal Award which recognizes nursing homes that demonstrate the highest standards of quality of life and care for their residents. They will receive a new facility license with the Gold Seal Emblem as well as a certificate signed by Gov. Scott. The Gold Seal Award will be in effect from July 1, 2014 thru June 30, 2016.

The Gold Seal Award program was established in 2002 and developed and implemented by the Governor's Panel on Excellence in Long-Term Care, which is composed of persons appointed by the Governor's Office, Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Health, Department of Elder Affairs, Florida Association of Homes for the Aging, Florida Health Care Association, Florida Life Care Residents Association and the State Long Term-Care Ombudsman. Nursing homes that wish to be considered for the Gold Seal Award are reviewed by the panel, which considers the criteria below and makes recommendations to the Governor. Gold Seal recipients must be in operation a minimum of 30 months prior to the date of application and the facility must:

- Meet a quality of care scoring and ranking that places them in the top 10 percent in their region or top 15 percent in the state and be a 5-star facility in the Nursing Home Guide
- Have no Class I or II deficiencies within 30 months preceding application
- Provide evidence of financial soundness and stability
- Participate in a consumer satisfaction process involving residents, family members and guardians
- Involve families and members of the community in the facility on a regular basis
- Have a stable workforce
- Have an outstanding record with the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council within the 30 months preceding application
- Provide targeted in-service training to meet training needs identified.

b. Occupancy Trends:

The third quarter data confirms that census levels are greater than 98% for FDVA skilled nursing homes with the average occupancy for the State of Florida at 87%. Florida has the third highest population of veterans' in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau data indicates that based on population figures, Florida has the highest number of elderly residents. This segment of the population will continue to increase because people born during the baby boom generation are beginning to retire. This trend of occupancy for FDVA nursing homes will likely continue as the State of Florida has a rapidly growing veteran population and the third largest population of disabled veterans in the nation.

c. State Veterans' Homes Program Renovations:

The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) received a grant under the State Veterans Homes Construction Grant Program to design and install a Safe Resident Handling and Transfer System to accommodate residents in all six State Veterans' Nursing Homes throughout the state. Facilities with ceiling lifts have shown a reduction in patient falls; a marked reduction in workers' comp injuries to nursing staff and a higher retention of nursing staff. The total project cost estimate is \$6,158,173.00; the federal funding's cost at 65% is \$4,002,812.45.

d. Volunteer Services:

There are a number of registered volunteers in the State Veterans' Homes that provide invaluable services for our veteran residents. The multitude of hours that are contributed add to the quality of life for the residents as well as allow the skilled employees to attend to more complicated, professional level tasks associated with resident care.



Veteran Fletcher Cooper enjoys the St. Patty's Day music show



1950's party at Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home