



Mike Prendergast
Executive Director

State of Florida
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Adam Putnam
Commissioner of Agriculture

October 24, 2014

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 – First Quarter 2014-2015

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs submits this Quarterly Report for the First Quarter of the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year, covering the period July 1 – September 30, 2014.

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 our department Legislative Affairs Director Bobby Carbonell, at (850) 487-1533.

cc: Senator Denise Grimsley, Chairman, Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee
Senator Thad Altman, Chairman, Senate Military Affairs, Space and Domestic Security Committee
Representative Jason Brodeur, Chairman, Health Innovation Sub-Committee
Representative Matt Hudson, Chairman, Health Care Appropriations Sub-Committee
Representative Ronald Renuart, 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 FIRST QUARTER REPORT July 1 – September 30, 2014

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

1. Administrative Highlights:

a. Current Issues/Concerns

- **Executive Direction:** This quarter, 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. He met with local business and organizations within the state to discuss outreach programs and projects to assist veterans. He attended the Florida Defense Support Task Force Meeting in Jacksonville and presented a presentation on Veterans' Homes. ED Prendergast conducted outreach at the Florida Sheriff's Association Summer Conference in Ponte Vedra Beach. He attended the groundbreaking ceremony at the Panama City VA and Navy Branch Clinic and also attended the Veterans Health Administration SimLearn National Simulation Center in Orlando. Executive Director Prendergast attended the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs in San Diego, California. This semi-annual training allows for the exchange of ideas and best practices, joint strategizing, and development of plans of action to address veteran issues at all levels of government.
- **New State Veterans' Nursing Home:** This quarter the site selection committee met to discuss their evaluations of the proposed sites, and scored them. The scores were forwarded to the Executive Director, with a recommendation he consider the highest scoring site, and further consider the second highest as an alternate in the event something unforeseen prevents the first choice from being accepted by the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of State Lands. Executive Director Prendergast studied the evaluations, and upon consideration forwarded that proposal to the Governor and Cabinet. On September 23, Governor Scott and the members of the Florida Cabinet unanimously selected the site offered by St. Lucie County as the location of the newest State Veterans' Nursing Home, with the site offered by Marion County as the alternate selection.
- **Division of Benefits and Assistance:**
 - **Bureau of Veterans' Claims:** Claims Services employees continue to positively adapt and respond to the changing policies and procedures of the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). As the electronic medium replaces traditional paper claim files, we have modified our procedures on how we submit and review claims, appeals and prepare for hearings. Through hard work, the claims service has kept in step with the VA, making the transition appear seamless to the veterans we serve. This month, Claims Services advocated for over 9,665 veterans and their families, to ensure they are receiving the

maximum benefits they are entitled to and provide a current status of their pending claim or appeal.

Additionally, the Claims Service Office had fifty hearings scheduled for veterans to present their case to the VA detailing why they should be able to retain their benefits. Our Claims Examiners worked with the VA to resolve 66% of the claims in favor of the veteran without the veteran traveling to the VA Regional Office. Overall, 90% of the veterans represented retained their benefits at the current level and the remaining 10% are yet to be decided by the VA.

- **Bureau of Field Services:** Field Services provided 48 Veterans' Claim Examiners and 430 man-hours to support the Governor's Veterans Service Award Ceremonies. The Gainesville zone acquired additional office space at Ocala Vet Center, enabling increased outreach and service to Florida veterans and their families. Field Services David Austin, Harry Rudy and Ernie Kuykendall provided training at the FDVA certification course September 8-11. This quarter, Field Services attended 198 outreach events providing benefit information to 15,365 veterans and their families.
- **The Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Education and Training (or State Approving Agency/SAA):** During this end of federal fiscal year quarter, the SAA received word of the renewal of our contract with the US Department of Veterans' Affairs (USDVA). It was also the quarter for self-assessment and the readying for the submission of end-of-year reporting to USDVA. With school and organization compliance survey visits being a USDVA focal point, SAA performed extremely well; 108 visits required and 117 compliance survey visits were completed. Since the assignment of compliance survey visits to the nation's SAAs, teamwork between VA and the SAAs is at a high. With changes in the reporting structure of Education Services within USDVA, the nation's regional Chief Education Liaison Officers (CELO) and the state Education Liaison Representatives (ELR) were able to join members of the National Association of State Approving Agency members during our annual Summer Business Meeting and training sessions for the first time in many years. Of note, a Florida VA/SAA team led the nation's education representatives delivering training materials related to the use of GI Bill Benefits for Flight Training. Florida SAA Program Specialist, Katherine Snyder, and Florida's ELR, Ron Scoggins, delivered the flight approval and compliance information to this national group of GI Bill Education Benefits Program administrators.

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**

- Lopez SVNH Building Rehabilitation contract with DMS (Project Agent) completed; final payment/close out pending as of 9/30/14.
- Bennett SVNH HVAC Commissioning contract with DMS (Project Agent) completed; final payment/close out pending as of 9/30/14.
- Lopez SVNH Chiller Removal and Replacement contract with DMS (Project Agent) executed on 6/20/14; DMS activated engineering services on 8/1/14; project commencement pending DMS activation of construction services as of 9/30/14.
- Sims SVNH Chiller Removal and Replacement contract with DMS (Project Agent) executed on 8/13/14; DMS activated engineering services on 9/26/14; project commencement pending DMS activation of construction services as of 9/30/14.
- FDVA Health Information Technology System (MDIA Matrix-Care) contract went “live” agency-wide by 8/1/14.
- FDVA Treasury Services (for resident trust) contract with Bank of America executed on 7/23/14. Services for Bennett, Lopez, Lassen, Jenkins, Nininger, Sims, and Jacobson SVH's.
- FDVA Treasury Services (for resident trust) contract with Hancock Bank was received (fully executed) on 9/9/14. Services only for Sims SVNH.
- FDVA Veterans Treatment/Care Referral Services contract with the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay” executed on 7/23/14.
- Jenkins SVDH Air Handlers Removal and Replacements contract completed on time (7/6/14) and was \$15,800 below the approved budget of \$70,000. Final payment (\$54,200) and contract closeout was issued on 7/17/14.
- FDVA USDVA/VISN-8 pharmacy annual contract renewal Amendment No. 4 was executed on 7/14/14; for period of 9/1/14 to 8/31/15.
- FDVA USDVA/VISN-16 pharmacy annual contract renewal Amendment No. 3 was executed on 8/20/14; for period of 10/1/14 to 9/30/15.

e. **Leases**

- FDVA increased leased space in the capitol by a sum total of 590 square feet. No other changes this quarter.

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

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

6 Employment Liability Claims (1 new this quarter): 2 won, 2 settled, 0 lost, 2 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				\$1,014.27
Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	\$9,227.06				\$9,227.06
Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	\$1,000				\$1,000
Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	\$1,000				\$1,000
Sims SVNH, Springfield	\$1,000				\$1,000
Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	\$1,000				\$1,000
Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	\$1,000				\$1,000

Non-Cash Donations

- Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home: electric scooter
- Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home: flat screen television, Karaoke machine, 4 outdoor umbrellas for the courtyard
- Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home: electric wheelchair, 2 power lift chairs

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

- \$345 for membership in National Institute of Government Purchasing
- \$800 for annual membership in the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs
- \$500 for annual membership in the National Association of State Approving Agencies

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

EVENT 2014-2015	FIRST QUARTER	SECOND QUARTER	THIRD QUARTER	FOURTH QUARTER	YEAR TO DATE	PREVIOUS FY to this Qtr
Retroactive compensation	\$36,770,963				\$36,770,963	\$51,243,193
Largest single retro. benefit	\$292,897				\$292,897	\$376,635
Debt relief	\$77,113				\$77,113	\$121,779
Notices of Disagreement	526				526	306
Statements of Argument in Appeals Cases*	179				179	326
Act as Representative at Hearings*	82				82	31
Veterans' Appeals Hearings*	55				55	48
Ratings Reviewed	10,039				10,039	10,059

* 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)

EVENT 2014-2015	FIRST QUARTER	SECOND QUARTER	THIRD QUARTER	FOURTH QUARTER	YEAR TO DATE	PREVIOUS FY to this Qtr
SAA Programs Approved	3,671				3,671	1,907
Other Approval	778				778	453
Compliance Visits	40				40	36
Inspection Visits	12				12	8
Outreach Activities*	185				185	166
Liaison Activities**	183				183	269
Technical Assistance***	1,050				1,050	889

* 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

<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>
Issue Resolution	5,304				5,304	4,749
Total Amount	\$14,627,699				\$14,627,699	\$13,798,280
Outreach Visits	198				198	125
Veterans Served at Outreach	15,365				15,365	11,739
Bedside Interviews	3,138				3,138	5,306
Walk-ins/ Counseling	33,060				33,060	34,349
Claims	8,310				8,310	6,527
Voter Regis/ Pref forms	3,060				3,060	2,761
Homeless Walk In	933				933	1,010
Ratings Reviewed Orlando/W Palm	260				260	665

d. Outreach*

<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>
Reintegration and Pre-Deployment Events for Guard and Reserve units	4				4	6
Homeless Veteran Stand Down Events	7				7	8
Medical Center Welcome Home events	0				0	0
Congressional Open House events	9				9	5
National Conferences	0				0	1
New Patient Orientation	67				67	42
Transition Assistance Briefings	10				10	3
Other	102				102	60

* 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

FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015	FIRST QUARTER	SECOND QUARTER	THIRD QUARTER	FOURTH QUARTER	YEAR TO DATE	PREVIOUS FY, same 1/4
Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	97.23%				97.23%	86.9%
Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	99.65%				99.65%	99.7%
Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	99.75%				99.75%	99.6%
Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	98.32%				98.32%	99.0%
Sims SVNH, Panama City	99.75%				99.75%	100%
Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	99.54%				99.54%	99.6%
Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	99.72%				99.72%	99.6%

- a. Quality of Care: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced plans to expand and bolster Medicare's Five-Star Quality Rating System (Five-Star System) for nursing homes, provided to the public on the Nursing Home Compare website. The rating system is a CMS online tool that offers information about the quality of care in the nearly 16,000 nursing homes that participate in Medicare or Medicaid. Beginning January 2015, CMS plans to initiate the following steps to improve reliability of the data used in the Five-Star System:
- Nationwide Focused Survey Inspections Following a pilot in fiscal year (FY) 2014, CMS and individual states will implement survey inspections focused on verifying performance on resident assessments and the data set that is used in QMs for a sample of nursing homes nationwide. The inspections are intended to enhance verification of both the staffing and QM information that is part of the Five-Star Quality Rating System.
 - Payroll-based Staffing Reporting CMS will implement a system of quarterly electronic reporting that is auditable back to payrolls to verify staffing information. The system is intended to increase accuracy, improve data timeliness and allow for the calculation of QMs for staff turnover, retention, types of staffing and levels of different types of staffing. CMS expects that pilot testing will occur in FY 2015, with nationwide reporting by all nursing homes by the end of FY 2016. The funding for this program is provided by the Improving Medicare Post-Acute Care Transformation (IMPACT) Act of 2014, signed by President Obama on October 6, 2014. (The IMPACT Act, which was passed without change from the House Bill, was addressed in an [On the Subject](#) published September 24, 2014.)
 - Revised Scoring Methodology CMS will revise the scoring methodology used to calculate each facility's Five-Star rating. The revised scoring methods will place more emphasis on data that is verified by independent sources, rather than data that is self-reported by nursing homes.
 - Additional Quality Measures CMS will increase both the number and type of QMs used at Nursing Home Compare. The first addition (effective January 2015) will measure the extent to which antipsychotic medications are in use.

- b. Occupancy Trends: The first quarter data confirms that census levels are greater than 99% 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 the third largest population of disabled veterans in the nation.

c. State Veterans' Homes Program Renovations:

Daytona HVAC Renovation #12-018: Post Grant Requirements form 10-0388-13 was sent to DVA along with the final reimbursement request. Total amount of project:

<u>% of Cost</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Funds</u>
65%	USDVA	\$1,241,154.60
35%	FDVA	\$668,314.01
	Total Project:	\$1,909,468.61

Land O' Lakes Renovation #12-016: Land O' Lakes Renovation #12-016: Post Grant Requirements form 10-0388-13 was sent to DVA along with the final reimbursement request. Total amount of project:

<u>% of Cost</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Funds</u>
65%	USDVA	\$1,365,596.15
35%	FDVA	\$735,321.00
	Total Project:	\$2,100,917.15

- d. Volunteer Hours: 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.



A Jenkins State Veterans' Domiciliary Home resident and volunteer cut quite a rug at the July Sock Hop!