



COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

November 2024

BENEFITS AWARDED

\$693,111

SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS

174

WALK-IN CLIENTS

542

CLAIMS FILED

189 Auditable

627 Total

MEDI-CAL VERIFICATIONS

14

ANNOUNCEMENTS

October was a busy month for the San Francisco County Veterans Services Office between juggling staff leave, major events, and an almost all-hands training conference. Despite being short-handed in the first half of the month and nearly all Veterans Claims Representative attending the CA Association of County Veterans Services Officers Fall training conference over three days in the second half of the month, we saw significant increases in scheduled appointments and claims filed (both auditable and total). We had 21 more scheduled appointments from September to October, a 13.73% increase, and 34 additional walk-in clients between the DAS Benefits and Resources Hub at 2 Gough St. and the San Francisco VA Medical Center Outstation, a 6.7% increase.

This seems to correspond with increases in both the total number of claims filed and auditable claims filed: Total claims filed saw an increase of 19.89% from 523 in September to 627 in October, and auditable claims filed increased 13.86% from 166 in September to 189 in October. Total benefits awarded saw a modest increase of \$15,000 between September and October.

This coincided with one of our Veterans Claims Representatives supporting the Santa Clara County Veterans Stand Down claims clinic where Veterans Claims Representatives from multiple CVSOs provided claims assistance to over 100





Veterans over three days. CVSO team members also conducted outreach to Veterans and families Bay Area-wide at the 2024 San Francisco Fleet Week, reaching over 860 people during the three-day event.

October also saw an important change to our webpage where we added an 'In-Person' appointment option that clients can choose to make an appointment with a Veterans Claims Representative at the DAS Benefits and Resources Hub. Previously, a client only had one appointment option, 'Virtual', and could attend their appointment at the Hub in-person if they preferred, but the Veterans Claims Representative might be telecommuting that day. Now, a client is guaranteed that their Claims Representative will be at the office when they choose the 'In-Person' appointment type. We hope this provides an additional level of customer service and accommodation for those who have challenges with technology or need other in-person support. Separately, clients can now also request reasonable accommodations through our or the DAS Hub's webpage at least 72-hours in advance so that we can provide the tools or resources at our disposal to accommodate their disability during their in-person appointment.

SUCCESS STORY

An US Army Gulf War-era and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran walked into the CVSO in January 2023 seeking assistance in filing a claim for new and increased conditions. He stated he had started the claims process at another County Veterans Services Office but did not receive any follow-up. The Veterans Claims Representative was able to review the Veteran's claims folder in a Veterans Benefits Administration records system due to the Power of Attorney appointing the California Dept. of Veterans Affairs on file from the previous county, but the Rep. discovered that the CVSO that assisted the Veteran previously had only completed an Intent to File, which was expired. The Rep. completed and submitted a new Intent to File at the time of the appointment and provided guidance to the Veteran about getting treatment and diagnosis for any conditions, and recommended completing an environmental health assessment for Gulf War and Burn Pit/Airborne Hazards to identify potential presumptive conditions. At a later appointment, the Rep. reviewed the Veteran's claims folder to identify additional possible issues to claim, including new conditions, PACT Act related conditions, increases for worsening conditions he was already service-connected for, and any mental health conditions resulting from his experiences in Iraq.

The Rep. provided detailed information about where to seek treatment and what to discuss with providers. It took some time for the Veteran to get appointments scheduled and attend a sufficient number of appointments, obtain diagnoses, and complete environmental health exams, but he was able





to do so and the claim was filed in October of 2023. Through late October 2024, the Veteran attended numerous compensation and pension examinations and at the end of October was granted a combined disability rating of 90%, which was an increase from his previous disability rating of 60%. Because of the Intent to File dating back to January 2023, the Veteran received a retroactive award of over \$19,000 and will receive an ongoing monthly payment of \$2,429. San Francisco County Veterans Services Office Claims Representative work diligently to maximize clients' benefits and entitlements, and closely review all available records to guide the client about what evidence may be needed to support their claim.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov. 12 the San Francisco CVSO will provide a claims clinic at City College of San Francisco as part of their Veterans Day event. Veterans Claims Representatives will be on hand throughout the day to assist Veterans with their VA benefits related claims while the Veterans Resource Center hosts its Veterans Day Ceremony.

Dec. 5 the San Francisco Dept. of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) Benefits and Resources Hub will host an open house and resource fair geared towards Veterans and their families. The goal is to introduce the many Veterans who may not be familiar with the DAS Hub to its programs and services that might benefit them, as well as with Veterans programs and services throughout the City. Other Veteran focused organizations that will be in attendance to inform attendees about their services and provide direct assistance include the San Francisco VA Health Care System, Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office, Oakland, California Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Swords To Plowshares programs, the San Francisco Vet Center, and the CA Employment Development Dept.

