



COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

September 2024

BENEFITS AWARDED

\$503,569.59

SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS

103

WALK-IN CLIENTS

562

CLAIMS FILED

184 Auditable
599 Total

MEDI-CAL VERIFICATIONS

14

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Despite continuing to be down two Veterans Claims Representatives for half the month, plus another Claims Representative position being vacant while that Representative fills the CVSO role, August saw some significant increases in both total claims filed, increasing 19.2% from 484 to 599, and auditable claims filed, which increased 33.7% from 122 to 184. This indicates that although we were short-staffed, our Claims Representatives were very busy assisting walk-in clients at both our 2 Gough St. location and our SF VAMC Outstation, increasing 27.15% from July to August from 442 to 562 clients. Scheduled appointments decreased likely due to fewer Claims Representatives being bookable earlier in the month, falling from 137 to 103, a 24.82% decrease from July to August. Although total benefits awarded decreased \$229,690, or 31.32%, from July to August, August's benefits awarded figure was buoyed by \$179,745 in CA College Fee Waivers processed by our office.

Now that the San Francisco VAMC Outstation has resumed operations, the continued challenge of creating a successful sign-in model remains. Conversations with SF VAMC Business Services staff continue, but at this time the only identified solution is a physical sign-in sheet. Another identified issue is that clients are queuing up outside the Veterans Welcome Center at least an hour before it opens at 8:00am. Some of these clients have mobility issues or





other conditions that make standing for long periods of time problematic. We have identified a short-term solution to this issue, but continue to seek a long-term one that reduces the need for Veterans to queue-up outside.

The CVSO conducted a successful two-day outreach event in August at City College of San Francisco alongside the San Francisco VA's Student Health Program, providing presentations to new and returning student Veterans on our office, Federal and State Veterans benefits, and the VA disability claims process, as well as providing a claims clinic each day where over 15 student Veterans were assisted with disability claims and benefits-related issues.

SUCCESS STORIES

This office assisted a Veteran who had previously been homeless and was, at the time he walked into the office, living in a housing program. The Veteran's experiences in the military created a hardship for him leading to divorce and termination from his civilian employment. These issues were exacerbated by the deaths of both of his adult children leading to the Veteran becoming dependent on alcohol, which contributed to his homelessness. While his housing was stabilized when he came to the SF CVSO at the suggestion of his housing program social worker, the Claims Representative who assisted the Veteran stated "he was intoxicated." He had also never used VA Health Care, which was likely due in part to lacking sufficient time-in-service to be eligible to enroll in VHA because the Veteran was administratively separated from basic training for failure to obey orders. The orders the Veteran failed to obey were one of the Veteran's claimed stressors that contributed to his mental health condition. The challenges continued for the Veteran's claim because he repeatedly missed Compensation and Pension Examinations, which the VA requires the Veteran to attend in most cases. However, the Veteran's Claims Representative assisted the Veteran with getting the exams re-submitted by the VA. The Veteran was able to get into a recovery program for his substance use disorder at the encouragement of his Claims Representative, which helped him get into remission and ultimately meet the requirements of attending his C&P exams. The Veteran was found entitled to 70% service-connected disability for PTSD with Alcohol Use Disorder, and due in part to the Veteran's socio-economic challenges that delayed his claim, he was awarded over \$31K in retroactive compensation and an ongoing monthly award of \$1,663.00. However, the Claims Representative who assisted the Veteran was not satisfied with simply helping the Veteran with his initial claim, but encouraged the Veteran to file for Individual unemployability based on the Veteran's service-connected condition affecting his ability to gain or maintain employment. The VA granted the Veteran's claim and found him entitled to compensation at the 100% rate backdated to the effective date of his initial claim, which triggered a retroactive payment of over \$41K and ongoing monthly payments of \$3,621.95.





The Veteran has now moved out of his housing stabilization program and into his own house in the East Bay. Realizing all the benefits a client might be entitled to is one of the important characteristics of a Veterans Claims Representative at the San Francisco County Veterans Services Office, who seek to maximize the benefits the client might be entitled to as well as encourage and guide the client towards a successful outcome both for their claim and in their life.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 4-6 the SF CVSO will be supporting the Santa Clara County Veterans Stand Down with a Claims Representative to assist Veterans in need with filing claims for Federal or State Veterans benefits or checking on the status of a previously filed claim.

Oct 11-13 the SF CVSO will be conducting outreach at the 2024 San Francisco Fleet Week along with our Dept. of Disability and Aging Services Benefits and Resources Hub partners at the Humanitarian Assistance Village (resource fair).

