



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honoring those who served U.S.

Woman's Veteran's Program
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FDVA

FDVA

Office of the Inspector General
Denied Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Claims
Related to Military Sexual Trauma

Why did the OIG perform this Audit?

- DOD found that there was 5,200 service member report MST related issues in FY 2017. (inc. by 10% from the year before)
- VA was aware of specialized attention that would be needed for these types of claims.
- OIG conduct the audit to ensure there was fairness, consistency and a liberal approach in conducting these claims associated with Military Sexual Trauma

OIG Findings - Claims

- Of the 12,000 claims per year, over the last 3 years. 5,200 of the claims were denied.
- Of the 169 cases reviewed, 82 were denied.
- OIG estimated that VBA staff incorrectly processed approximately 1,300 of the 2,700 MST related claims. (49%)

Error Category

Projected Error Category	Projected Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Evidence was sufficient to request a medical examination and opinion, but staff did not request one	740 cases	28
MST Coordinator did not make the required telephone call, or VSRs did not use required language regarding the reporting of the assault in letter sent to the veteran	340 cases	13
Evidence gathering issues, such as VSRs not requesting the veteran's private treatment records	300 cases	11
RVSRs made a decision on the veteran's claim based on contradictory or otherwise insufficient medical opinions	270 cases	10
Total	1,300 cases	49

OIG Findings - Personnel

- OIG found that nearly half of denied MST related claims were not properly processed following VBA policy.
 - Lack of Specialized Rater
 - Lack of an additional Level Review
 - Discontinued Special Focused Reviews
 - Inadequate Training

Why did this Occur

- In 2016, the VBA Office of Field Operations implemented the National Work Queue (NWQ) and no longer required VA Regional Offices (VAROs) to use the Segmented Lanes Organizational Model. The Segmented Lanes model required VSRs and RVSRs on Special Operations teams to process all claims VBA designated as requiring special handling, which included MST-related claims. By implementing the NWQ, VBA no longer required Special Operations teams to review MST-related claims.

OIG Recommendations

- The Under Secretary for Benefits reviews all denied military sexual trauma-related claims since the beginning of FY 2017, determines whether all required procedures were followed, takes corrective action based on the results of the review, renders a new decision as appropriate, and reports the results back to the Office of Inspector General.
 - VBA is developing a plan to conduct a review of denied MST-related claims decided between October 1, 2016, through June 30, 2018, take corrective actions based on the review, and report the results back to the OIG.
- The Under Secretary for Benefits focuses processing of military sexual trauma-related claims to a specialized group of Veterans Service Representatives and Rating Veterans Service Representatives.
 - VBA will issue guidance to all VAROs to designate a specialized group of MST-trained VSRs and RVSRs that process MST-related claims.

OIG Recommendation cont

- The Under Secretary for Benefits updates the current training for processing military sexual trauma-related claims, monitors the effectiveness of the training, and takes additional actions as necessary.
 - VBA will update the Talent Management System training, mandate all VSRs and RVSRs who are dedicated to handling MST-related claims complete this training, and administer a targeted consistency study to assess the effectiveness of the training.
- The Under Secretary for Benefits updates the development checklist for military sexual trauma-related claims to include specific steps claims processors must take in evaluating such claims in accordance with applicable regulations, and requires claims processors to certify that they completed all required development action for each military sexual trauma-related claim
 - VBA will update the development checklist for MST-related claims to include the specific steps claims processors must take. When RVSRs sign the rating decision, they are certifying all required development actions have been taken.

OIG Recommendations cont

- The Under Secretary for Benefits requires an additional level of review for all denied military sexual trauma-related claims and holds the second-level reviewers accountable for accuracy.
 - in lieu of an additional level of review of all denied MST-related claims, VBA will institute a requirement for a 90 percent accuracy rate on at least 10 cases per employee, with all cases subject to a second-signature review until such accuracy rate has been achieved..
- The Under Secretary for Benefits conducts special focused quality improvement reviews of denied military sexual trauma-related claims and takes corrective action as needed.
 - VBA will conduct a special focus review of denied MST-related claims in FY 2019 after VSRs and RVSRs have completed the mandated training courses. Any erroneous decisions found during this review will be returned to VAROs for corrective action.

VA Plan of Action

- VA has developed an increased awareness of MST issues.
 - MST Coordinator in all VA Health Facilities
 - One Women
 - One Male
- VBA is developing a plan to conduct a review of denied MST-related claims decided between October 1, 2016, through June 30, 2018, take corrective actions based on the review, and report the results back to the OIG.

Re-Evaluating a Previously Denied Claim

- VA may review a previously denied MST-related PTSD claim.
- Simply call your regional office at **800-827-1000**.
- You can also log into your eBenefits account.
Visit <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>.

Resources

State of Florida DVA- <http://floridavets.org/our-veterans/women-veterans/>

Veterans Crisis Line- 1-800-273-8255 (press 1)

Women Veterans Hotline 1-855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)

WVC info

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Questions

