

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2016-17 Performance Report

Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs

AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:

In partnership with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, State and Local Agencies, and Veterans Service Organizations, the State of Oklahoma will facilitate in providing to the Veterans residing in the State of Oklahoma the highest quality support and care available anywhere in the Nation.

LEAD ADMINISTRATOR:

Myles Deering, Executive Director (405) 521-6098

GOVERNANCE:

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission is the controlling board of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs. It is composed of nine members, of which at least 8 are honorably discharged Veterans; provided three of the members shall be Veterans of the Vietnam Conflict and one shall be a Veteran of the Persian Gulf Wars. The members are selected in the following manner: The state executive board or committee of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the National Guard Association of Oklahoma shall each submit to the Governor a list of five persons qualified to serve as members of the Oklahoma Veterans Commission. The Governor shall name one member from each of these organizations to serve on the Commission. The Governor shall also appoint three members at large, one of whom may be a non-Veteran on the condition they have a family member residing in one of the state's 7 Veterans Centers. Members of the Oklahoma Veterans Commission shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. In addition, it administers the veterans program on Oklahoma through a Director appointed by and responsible to the Commission. The Office of the Director is maintained in the Central Office which is located in the Veterans Memorial Building, Oklahoma City, OK. From this location, the Director exercises operational oversight of the two principal operations of the Department: The Oklahoma Veterans Centers and the Claims and Benefits Division.

GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY:

Recent Commission meeting minutes have been posted in the agency website.

Is there an attendance policy for board members/commissioners? If so, is it being followed?

There is no attendance policy for Commissioners. However, historically we have complied with the attendance requirements. Currently, all of the nine Commissioners are filled.

MODERNIZATION EFFORTS:

Savings and efficiencies achieved this past fiscal year.

- Pursuit of Past Due Accounts/Minimize future delinquent payments: Seeking online payments capability to allow Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) to obtain authorization from our nursing home residents to initiate scheduled/recurring drafts from the resident's bank accounts on a monthly basis for maintenance charges payable.

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- ODVA's capability to perform med reviews accurately online resulted in reduction of Pharmacists in couple of centers.
- Monitoring continued savings in workers compensation expenditures;
- Increased use of P-cards resulted in rebate of \$47,744 for FY 16.

Are there efforts that have been successful which you believe could serve as a model for other state agencies seeking to keep costs minimal? Information about how an agency reform or update has resulted in better services for citizens or less burden for businesses?

- ODVA - Education is partnering with the Oklahoma State Board of Regents for Higher Education to hold a military-connected conference for schools throughout Oklahoma, as well as an education fair for veterans to be connected with quality schools.
- ODVA Education held the first workgroup together with schools and other state departments to discuss programs and services for veterans at their respective sites.
- Passage of SB 877, the ODVA In-House Council bill. This bill has given the ability to retain direct, in-house legal representation, thus providing cost savings, efficiency and continuity of counsel.
- A collaborative project by ODVA and the Department of Public Safety to create a state-wide Veterans Registry. This would be a voluntary option of self-identification with the ODVA to confirm Veterans status and the verification of eligibility for state benefits.

CORE MISSION:

What services are you required to provide which are outside of your core mission? Are any services you provide duplicated or replicated by another agency? Are there services which are core to your mission which you are unable to perform because of requirements to perform non-core services elsewhere?

We do not regularly provide services which are outside of our core mission.

One of the key components of our core mission is assisting Veterans obtain federal VA benefits including disability compensation, pension, survivor benefits, healthcare, education, etc.. The Federal VA and other private organizations replicate this service to some degree. ODVA is the only service provider in the state with a comprehensive network of full-time, professional Veterans Service Representatives (VSR) that cover all urban and rural areas. Our VSRs are accredited by the USDVA to represent Veterans in all claims actions including representation before the Board of Veterans Appeals. As of the end of November 2016, ODVA represents 23,802 claims (13% increase) with a monthly benefit value of \$34,587,069 (8% increase).

There are no core mission services that we are unable to perform because of non-core services.

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PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:

Are any of the services which are performed by the agency also performed in the private sector in Oklahoma? In other states? Has the agency been approached by any foundation, for-profit or not-for-profit corporation with efforts to privatize some of the functions of the agency?

Nursing Care is provided in the private sector; however, the level of care is different than that provided in the State Homes and the private facilities are not participants in the State Home Program for per diem to eligible residents, nor are they eligible to participate in the State Home Construction Grant program with a 65% match for construction related programs.

Every state has State Veterans Homes Program for long-term nursing care.

No. The agency has not been approached by any foundation, for-profit or not-for-profit Corporation with efforts to privatize some of the functions of the agency.