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VA'S REGIONAL OFFICE IN TOGUS, MAINE FAILS VAOIG INSPECTION

At least 25% of claims processed incorrectly. Management admits to lack of oversight and poor staff training.

by Larry Scott, VA Watchdog dot Org

On March 23, 2010, the [VA's Office of Inspector General \(VAOIG\)](#) released the following report:

Inspection of VA Regional Office Togus, ME -- Report Number 09-03659-111, 3/23/2010 | [Summary](#) | [Report \(PDF\)](#)

This is just more of the same ... management admitting to lack of oversight on their part and also admitting that the staff has not been properly trained.

Be sure to read the full report for the details on botched claims.

The report Highlights are posted below.

Report Highlights: Inspection of VA Regional Office, Togus, ME

Why We Did This Review

The Benefits Inspection Division conducts inspections at VA Regional Offices (VAROs) to review disability compensation claims processing and Veterans Service Center (VSC) operations.

What We Found

The VARO management team needs to improve the accuracy of disability

claims processing and provide additional oversight of personnel responsible for claims identified as temporary 100 percent disability evaluations, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and disabilities related to herbicide exposure. VARO management attributed this to inadequate staff training and management oversight.

Management also needs to improve controls over the following activities:

- Correcting errors identified by the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR).
- Safeguarding of veterans Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- Handling of claims-related mail.
- Processing adjustments for incompetent veterans' fiduciary claims correctly.

What We Recommended

We recommended the VARO improve oversight of the processing of temporary 100 percent evaluations to ensure staff complete required future medical examinations, correcting STAR errors timely and accurately, safeguarding veterans' PII, and managing mail within the VSC.

We also recommended the VARO provide training to Rating Veterans Service Representatives to ensure they properly assess and make competency determinations for veterans' that require assistance to manage VA benefit payments.

Agency Comments

The Director of the Togus VARO concurred with all recommendations. Management's planned actions are responsive and we will follow-up as required on all actions.

(original signed by:)
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