




Veterans Service Office

2021 Budget Presentation – September 16, 2020

Dan Connery – Veterans Service Director



Veterans Service Office Mission



To provide efficient and quality services to Dane County veterans, their families, survivors, and the community at large; to sustain successful outreach delivery in outlying Dane County communities; to establish eligibility for state and federal VA benefits and process applications for federal, state and local benefits; to serve as an advocate for Dane County veterans and a focal point to inform, coordinate, and integrate services for veterans and their dependents among other agencies; to refer to other services and resources when appropriate.

2021 Budget Guidelines (2.5% reduction)

- Unfunding vacant 0.5% FTE Assistant Veterans Service Officer position will allow office to meet budget guidelines.
- \$17,700 used to achieve 2.5% reduction.
- Remaining \$14,500 used to fund LTE line.

Drawbacks to “unfunding” position:


- 1) Scope of work LTEs can perform is limited, thus minimizing overall value. Per VA regulation, LTEs cannot receive mandatory VA Accreditation, access VA databases, or otherwise perform veterans service officer duties.
- 2) Being short-staffed poses challenges for any office; however, it's especially impactful in an office with only 6.0 FTE, as it equals 8.3% of our personnel.
 - Clients will experience longer wait times for appointments
 - Added delays will be seen with returning calls, emails, and performing other related case management duties
 - Office will have less flexibility to perform community-based outreach



Veterans Service Office Highlights - 2019



- Office provided direct service through office visits and through outreach/community events to over 5,100 veterans, dependents, and survivors in 2019.
- Office instrumental in helping Dane County veterans and survivors realize more than \$77M in VA Disability Compensation and needs-based Pension benefits in FY2019.
- Office maintained consistent community-based outreach to veterans, including vulnerable populations through the Dane County Veterans Treatment Court and Veteran Pod in the Public Safety Building.
- Site host for the Veterans Law Center.
- Hosted County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin (CVSOA) conference to approximately 100 County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and their staff in September 2019.
- Veterans Service Director Dan Connery served as CVSOA president in 2019.



Greatest Challenge(s) during pandemic

- Inaccessibility of office for “walk-in” clients.
- Technological adjustments: Some office clients less tech-savvy. Adjustments for staff – increased case management challenges (E.g. tracking of documents sent/rec'd via secure email or postal mail).
- Rapport building hindered: Some veterans prefer face-to-face meetings due to trauma or anxiety-related trust issues or personal preference.
- Unable to perform outreach to community.
- Short-staffed.



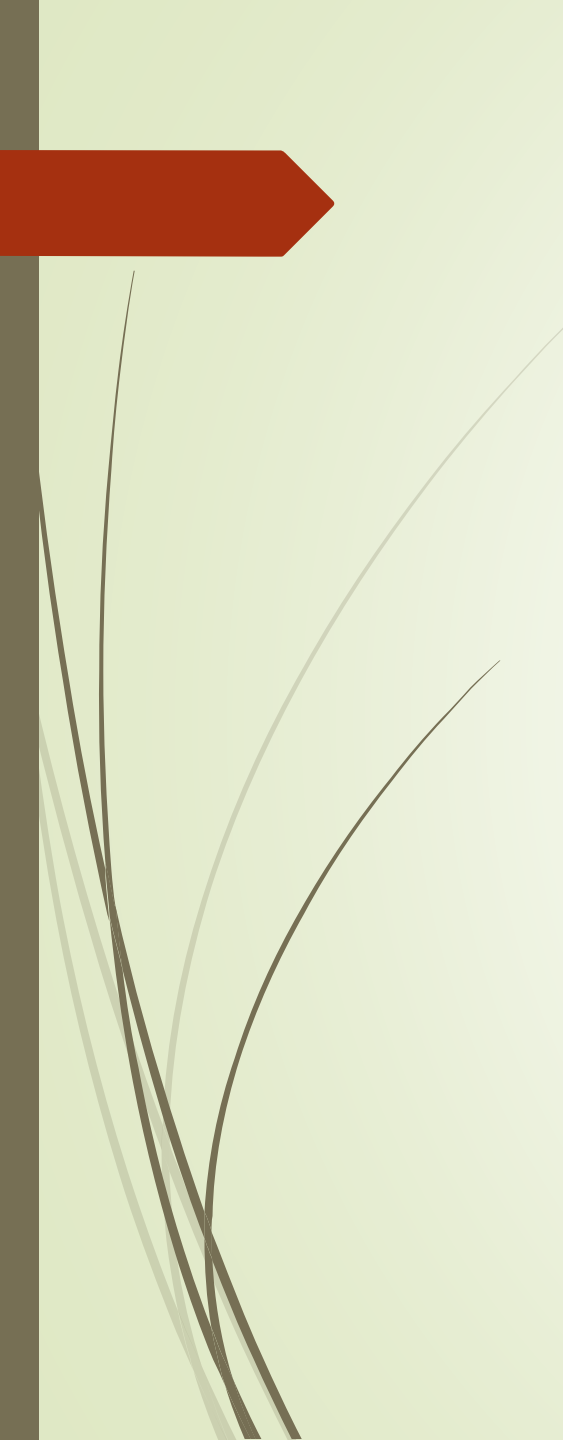
Greatest Accomplishment(s) during pandemic

- Dedicated staff continuing to maintain high level of customer service despite unusual conditions and being short-staffed.
- No appointments had to be cancelled, as we shifted to phone/virtual appointments.
- Staff developed creative ways to provide emergency assistance (gas and grocery checks) and bus passes despite CCB being closed to the public.
- Using technology to our advantage: Developing enhanced ways to provide delivery of services to veterans. For more tech-savvy clients, increased efficiencies were realized.



Unmet needs

- Other than being short-staffed, the veterans service office does not have any notable unmet needs.
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In light of the budget guidelines, how has your department made required cuts while bearing in mind the county's commitment to racial equity?

- Advocating and serving disabled and/or otherwise vulnerable veterans is inherent to what we do. Our veterans community includes persons of color, men, women, and those identifying as LGBTQ. Our clients come from various socioeconomic backgrounds and range in age from their 20s to upper 90s.
- Proposed Budget cuts will not impact local services – *Vets Ride with Pride* bus pass program and “Emergency Assistance” programs (Veterans Service Commission funds or Donated Aid funds) will remain fully funded.
- Our office, and staff therein, strives to be welcoming to all veterans, regardless of background, as we deliver high-quality customer service, ensuring all possible benefit entitlements are obtained.

Questions?



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