

June 24, 2016

Veterans Service Update

Department Veterans Service Office July Business Hours: The Department's Veterans' Service Office will be closed during Independence day on Monday, July 4th. On Tuesday July 5 and Wednesday July 6, the office will have limited access due to making final preparations for the department convention. On Thursday, July 7 and Friday July 8, the office will be closed while service office employees participate at the department convention. Service officers will also be away from the office from Wednesday, July, 27 through Friday, July 29 while attending the national organization's Department Service Officers Training School. The Department Service Office will otherwise be open each Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM until 4:00 PM during the month of July. Appointments are necessary for client visits. You may contact the department veterans service office by calling our direct number of 317-916-3605; calling a long distance toll free number of 1-888-723-7999, extension 1; faxing us at 317-916-3406; or by using the following e-mail address: al.vbaind@va.gov.

Local Service Issues:

New Post Service Officers Training Seminar, Attention: Post Service Officers and Post Commanders:

Place and Time: Immediately following the Department Convention, on Sunday, July 10, 2016, 8:00 AM until Noon, Marriott Hotel, 7202 East 21st Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Topics: Post service officers' duties and responsibilities, ethics, the rehab program, Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA), homeless veterans program, claims representation, veterans service and membership, avoiding common mistakes, newly discharged veterans consultation checklist, replacing the DD Form 214, disability compensation, non-service connected pension, survivors compensation and pension, burial benefits, the appeals process, military correction and review board issues, concurrent receipt and combat related special pay, National Personnel Records Center, VA medical benefits, and informal and fully developed claims. Department Service Officers will also conduct an open panel discussion to help answer any veterans' benefits and service issues of concern to the audience.

Added Resources: Service officers may also find our post service officers' online home study course by opening the Department website at: <http://www.indianalegion.org/>, clicking "Services" then "Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation," and then clicking "Service Officer Training Manual." Service officers may then also complete the Service Officer Workbook and Test and receive a Certificate of Completion signed by the Department Commander

Why and How: This seminar will help American Legion posts assist its members with veterans benefit issues, and improve membership through services. Pre-registration is not required. All post service officers, especially new post service officers, are encouraged to attend. The training session is free, but attendees will likely incur costs associated with travel and lodging. Active post service officers volunteer much of their time while assisting post members. Post may now help their service officers by sponsoring their attendance at this training session, and then reap the benefit of their service officer's increased knowledge.

VA Veterans Benefits Briefing and Town Hall Meeting: The Indianapolis VA Regional Office, the Northern Indiana Health Care System and the National Cemetery Administration's Midwest District Office are co-hosting a Veterans Benefits Briefing and Town Hall Meeting in Goshen, Indiana. This will

take place at VFW Post 985, 1201 West Pike Street, Goshen, Indiana, on June 29, 2016 between 3:30 PM and 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

Indy Blue Star Mothers Provide Service Dogs for Veterans: We received the following e-mail from Vickie Sullinger, President, Indiana Blue Star Mothers – IN14 (317-775-4984):

“We have partnered with a professional, local Hoosier dog trainer and because of that the wait time is only 3-4 months so far and as long as we are raising money and the need is there, we will move mountains to make sure it happens.

Veterans have a choice between two breeds, one hypo allergenic breed for vets with families that have allergies and a German shepherd. The GS breed is a true German, imported from Germany where breeding is critical to avoid American ailments that GS dogs typically have like hip dysplasia. Our veterans deserve the best for the investment to insure the best health long term and their use for the veteran. Veterans will no longer have to travel out of state to a nonprofit charity that trains dogs, we have it here. The trainer also vets the need of the veteran to insure the dog is trained on all aspects that a service dog can provide to the veteran, and at the last leg of training, our trainers work with the veteran in their environment to insure success. Veterans have long needed this and we are so pleased to make this happen.

We need your help spreading the word and find veterans that have PTSD and let them know we have this available for them. They can go onto our website, and download the paperwork from there and mail all necessary paperwork to Ultimate Canine for privacy, in the meantime the Indy Blue Star Mothers will move mountains to insure they get one and no out of pocket costs for them. Here is the link: indybluestarmothers.com/forveterans/ < Caution-<http://indybluestarmothers.com/forveterans/> >.”

This is not an American Legion program. We are simply passing on what is apparently a very good service for veterans.

National Service Issues:

Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) May be Entitled Retroactive Benefits Based on Equitable Relief: When deciding claims for service connection of TBI residuals, VA rules require that initial TBI examinations be completed by a psychiatrist, physiatrist, neurosurgeon, or neurologist if a diagnosis is not already of record. Also review TBI examinations should be completed by a TBI DEMO-certified clinician. A VA review found that many TBI compensation examinations were not performed by designated specialist. On May 3, 2016 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, therefore, granted “equitable relief” for veterans who had TBI compensation examinations from 2007 through 2015. As a result, at the veteran’s request, VA will order new TBI exams by appropriate specialists, veterans can submit additional supporting evidence, VA will substitute the new TBI exam results in place of the inappropriate exam, and, if appropriate, VA may award an effective date as early as the date of the TBI claim associated with the original compensation examination. VA will soon send many veterans letters offering reexaminations and veterans will have one year from the date of the letter to request the new examination and reprocessing of their prior TBI claim. Unlike other claims, VA will not require the use of a standardized claim form. VA will require only that the veteran supply the VA regional office “clear” notice of the desire for reprocessing of the prior TBI claim. VA will accept the notice in writing or by telephone, but we recommend it be filed in writing. There is a danger in requesting a reexamination however; if the examination shows improvement in the disability, VA may propose reduction but only after the veteran is afforded a time of due process. If, however, the new TBI exam shows an increase compensation benefit is warranted, the increase for the TBI residuals may be assigned as early as the date of the prior TBI claim. *Although VA will not require the use of a standardized form for this purpose, we recommend the use of a VA Form 21-526EZ noting the application is being filed for a higher rating for TBI*

residuals and possible retroactive benefits based upon the Secretary of Veterans Affairs May 3, 2016 Equitable Relief order.