



(March 31, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing:** [Review of Alleged Untimely Processing of VBA's Specially Adapted Housing Grants at the Regional Loan Center in Phoenix, Arizona](#)  
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[**Review of Alleged Untimely Processing of VBA's Specially Adapted Housing Grants at the Regional Loan Center in Phoenix, Arizona**](#)
03/30/2016 08:00 PM EDT

We conducted this review in response to an allegation received through a Office of Inspector General (OIG) hotline pertaining to VA’s Specially Adapted Housing Grant Program. This review specifically assessed why the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Loan Center, in Phoenix, AZ, was taking more than 2 years to process and approve grants in the Specially Adapted Housing Grant Program, for Veterans with certain service-connected disabilities. We substantiated the allegation that the Phoenix Regional Loan Center has taken more than 2 years to process and approve Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) and Special Housing Adaptation grants. For the 191 grants approved from October 1, 2013, through the first quarter of fiscal year 2015, we identified 45 of 191 grants (24 percent) had periods of inactivity before approval. We defined a period of inactivity as the span of time from when a grant becomes inactive to returning to an active status. A case becomes inactive when the veteran chooses to stop pursuing the grant. The reasons a grant may become inactive could include veterans who are hospitalized or who want to suspend the process. By excluding the periods of inactivity from the timeliness calculation, we determined that out of the 191 grants reviewed,

there were: 109 (57 percent) approved within 1 year; 56 (29 percent) approved greater than 1 year and less than 2 years; 26 (14 percent) approved 2 years or longer. Of the 191 cases we reviewed, SAH agents documented required monthly and annual communication with veterans who have applied for grants. SAH agents are required to contact each veteran every 30 business days to provide follow up by telephone, email, or regular mail. Follow up by SAH agents provides veterans the opportunity to ask questions and obtain assistance throughout the approval process. Although it is essential that the Veterans Benefits Administration approve these grants timely so eligible veterans may live in homes that accommodate their disabilities, we made no recommendations concerning this allegation. We found the current approval process relies upon veterans and external agencies, such as contractors, to complete required actions. Our review of SAH documentation shows that SAH agents are communicating with veterans monthly and are assisting veterans in completing required actions.