



(April 12, 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: Inspection of VA Regional Office Montgomery, AL**  
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The Veterans Benefits Administration has 56 VA Regional Offices (VAROs) that process disability claims and provide services to veterans. We evaluated the Montgomery VARO to see how well it accomplishes this mission. We sampled claims we considered at increased risk of processing errors; thus, these results do not represent the overall accuracy of disability claims processing at this VARO. VARO staff did not accurately process 13 of the 47 disability claims (28 percent) reviewed, resulting in 77 improper payments to 6 veterans totaling \$89,853. The 13 cases with errors related to temporary 100 percent disability evaluations. Most of the errors occurred because VARO staff delayed scheduling medical reexaminations despite receiving reminder notifications—taking on average 1 year and 3 months to do so. All 13 traumatic brain injury claims VARO staff completed from January to June 2015 were accurate. In addition, all four Special Monthly Compensation and ancillary benefits claims completed by VARO staff from July 2014 through June 2015 were accurately processed. VARO staff established the correct dates of claim for 30 cases reviewed in the electronic record. However, 10 of the 30 benefits reduction cases we reviewed had processing delays. Generally, the errors related to prioritization of workload. Effective management of this workload can reduce the risk of improper payments and provide better stewardship of taxpayer funds. We recommended the VARO Director implement plans to ensure staff take timely action to schedule required medical reexaminations and to review the 15 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations remaining from our inspection universe. We also recommended the Acting Under Secretary for Benefits (USB) implement a time frame in which staff are required to schedule medical reexaminations after receiving reminder notifications. Furthermore, we recommended the VARO Director implement a plan to prioritize actions related to benefits reductions to minimize improper payments to veterans. The VARO Director concurred with our recommendations. The USB agreed the timely scheduling of medical examinations promotes efficiency and

financial stewardship; however, the Veterans Benefits Administration did not reinstate a timeliness goal. We determined the planned actions lacked urgency and financial stewardship. We will follow up as required.
