



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Todd Richter
Interim Veterans Service Officer

February 5, 2019

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Adam Payne

I am pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report of the Veterans Service Department and Veterans Service Commission. The Veterans Service Commission ended the year with a positive variance of \$12,817.83 and the Veterans Service Office ended with a positive variance of \$6,925.77.

Our client base consists of over 7,500 Veterans from WW II, Korea, Vietnam, 1st Gulf War, Operation Enduring /Iraqi Freedom, Cold War, Peacetime, the continuing Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and an untold number of qualified survivors and dependents of disabled and/or deceased Veterans. We provided assistance and advocacy for these residents helping to bring more than \$35 million dollars of federal benefits into the County.

I am extremely proud of the hard work and dedication our staff gives each and every day. Our current military involvement in the GWOT is unique in a couple of areas because it has created an unprecedented number of activated members of the National Guard and Reserve forces and it has also created a substantial increase in the number of women serving in war zones as combat participants. Each war seems to create its own set of issues (particularly health) and concerns and we work diligently with our partners to meet those needs.

We thank you for the continuing support and trust you have placed in us and look forward to 2019 meeting the ever changing needs of our Veterans and their families. We hope to collaborate with all of our partners as we look for ways of providing a level of service to our clients that is commensurate with their commitment of preserving and protecting the principles of justice, freedom and democracy. We invite your inquiries and feedback throughout the year and will be happy to provide additional information as may be needed.

Sincerely,

Todd A Richter
Interim-Veterans Service Officer

Veterans Service Department

Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

The Veterans Service Department's mission statement is to provide timely and quality service for veterans seeking assistance with local, state, and federal benefit programs. We advocate for and support the military veterans and their families in our county. "Serving Those Who Served."

The Veterans Service Department exists under Chapter 45, Wisconsin Statutes, which mandates that each county in Wisconsin shall appoint an honorably discharged veteran of the U S military service to the position of County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO). The CVSOs primary function is to act as an advocate for veterans, their dependents and survivors. These duties include but are not limited to:

- Advise persons living in the service officer's county who served in the U S armed forces regarding local, state, and federal benefits to which they may be entitled.
- Assist in resolving any problems veterans encounter accessing the programs provided by the federal or state Veteran's Administration.
- Provide service and assistance to qualified dependents and/or surviving spouse to ensure they are informed of benefits they may be entitled to.
- Maintain a record of burials of all veterans within the county.
- Cooperate with other local, state, and federal agencies to provide services to veterans and answer questions regarding veteran's issues.
- Serve as executive secretary of the Veterans Service Commission.
- Ensure Veterans and their spouses are interred in a decent and respectable manner in any cemetery in this state.
- Furnish information about veterans' burial places within the county.
- Responsible for case management of federal and state Veterans' Service programs which may include Compensation, Pension, Education, Burial, Survivor Benefits, VA Loans, Grants, and Insurance.
- Work independently to apply State and Federal policy and procedures to dynamic situations to ensure accurate benefit determinations.
- Work in a fast paced environment handling multiple interactions daily covering a wide variety of topics and benefits.
- Handles urgent inquiries relating to health, home and family needs in a time sensitive manner.
- Assist with applications for Wisconsin G.I. Bill education benefits for veterans and eligible dependents.
- Assist with Vocational rehabilitation benefits for disabled veterans.
- Assist with federal and state home loans, personal loans and home improvement loans.
- Provide burial benefits (i.e. cemeteries, markers, burial flags, funeral honors, etc.).
- Provide dependent and survivor benefits (i.e. healthcare, education, pensions, etc.).
- Enrollment of veterans into VA medical system.
- Register discharge papers/DD-214 with county.
- Assist military retirees and their surviving families with Department of Defense (DOD) benefits and services.
- Coordinate Transportation to and from medical care.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2018

- **Veteran Service Officer, Assistant, and Benefit Specialist to maintain VA accreditation with continuing education units.** The office staff has maintained our accreditations with the National County Veterans Service Officer Association, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and Military Order of the Purple Hearts, through continuing education credits. We also have our Veterans Affairs (VA) Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card that is a credential that provides the attributes of security, authentication, trust and privacy and can be used to verify identities in order to gain access to federal computer networks.
- **Conduct training in the office to keep current on new federal and state programs as well as changes to their current programs.** Regularly scheduled meetings are held with the staff to receive process improvement ideas from them and to train on office procedures and requirements as well as to update ourselves on the multitude of changes to federal and state benefits. We also work closely with the Veterans Service organizations and other community partners in our area to share information on helping Veterans access the programs and benefits to which they are entitled.
- **Conduct training with Assistant on duties of the Service Officer / Department Head.** The Assistant in the management of the office has been involved in the various responsibilities of the department head helping to develop training and various other proposals required by the office. He has also started to assume some duties and responsibilities of the department head as outlined in the Veterans Service Office succession planning.
- **Conduct training with Benefit Specialist on the Commission responsibilities.** The Benefit Specialist has been involved in a revision of the Veterans Service Commission policy and the daily workings of the Commission. He has worked with Veterans to compile the necessary data and made recommendations on the referrals to the Commission. He has maintained and updated our office policy manual to keep up with the changes in the office. He has been learning the roles and responsibilities of the Assistant Service Officer.
- **Continue purging and electronic scanning of office records and files.** We continue to scan and eliminate the paper files as we meet with Veterans. We have had the honor and privilege of having a volunteer come in and continue to help scan and purge our active and deceased files. This continues to be an on-going project as we have over 26,000 records to scan.
- **Outreach to the community partners and the Counties Veteran Service Organizations to brief them on VA benefits.** We support the County Veterans Service Organizations in their various programs and ceremonies conducted throughout the year. We have participated with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Wisconsin Military Networks, and Sheboygan Area Veterans Treatment Court as well as local schools and businesses. Our intent is to heighten visibility along with honoring our currently serving Veterans and educate the citizenry of their presence in our communities.

Budget

	2018 Budget	2018 Actual	Variance
Revenues	\$266,711	\$269,341	\$2,630
Expenses	\$266,711	\$262,415	\$4,296

We finished 2018 with a positive variance of \$6,926. The department budget for 2019 is \$274,504.

Issues and Challenges Ahead

The Veterans Service Department will be changing locations in 2019. We will move from the Courthouse Annex in Sheboygan to the Aging and Disability Resource Center located in Sheboygan Falls. The move will be a joint effort between Building Services, Information Technology, and our Department. The anticipated move date will be in March of 2019.

The Veterans Service Department continues to face an enormous workload with the many Veterans and their families that are seeking assistance. We continue to lose our World War II, Korean and Vietnam Veterans (288 in 2018) which impacts the workload as we ensure they are honored at their passing and that their dependents receive all their entitlements. We estimate that each case requires a minimum of 3 hours work on our part. That doesn't include all the other administrative tasks that need to be handled.

Goals and Objectives for 2019

- Veteran Service Officer, Assistant, and Benefit Specialist to maintain VA accreditation with continuing education units.
- Conduct training in the office to keep current on new federal and state programs as well as changes to their current programs by attending state and national conferences.
- Train volunteers to aid in reducing paper files and inputting them in to our electronic data base.
- Continue purging and electronic scanning of office records and files.
- Outreach to the Veterans Service Organizations on the benefits available to Veterans and their families from the state and federal government.
- Conduct outreach to the Assisted Living and Nursing Homes in the county to provide information on potential Veteran benefits available to their residents.
- Build new community partners and strengthen our relationship with our current community partners in order to continue to deliver timely assistance needed to veterans and their families.

Veterans Service Commission

Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

The County Veterans Service Commission (CVSC) exists under Chapter 45 (45.81) of the Wisconsin statutes which mandates that each county in Wisconsin have in place a three member CVSC to provide financial aid to needy veterans, their survivors and dependents. The Commission consists of three honorably discharged veterans who are (appointed) to serve staggered three year terms. From among them they annually elect a Chairperson and Secretary.

CVSC Members: David C Williams, Chairman; Konrad K Kaczowski, Secretary; Jennifer Sampson, Member.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2018

In 2018, 66 cases were accepted and 9 cases were not accepted.

Budget

	2018 Budget	2018 Actual	Variance	2019 Budget
Revenues	\$22,429	\$22,429	\$0	\$21,930
Expenses	\$22,429	\$9,611	\$12,818	\$21,930

Issues and Challenges Ahead

The Commission continues to work at reaching a balance of helping our needy Veterans while being fiscally responsible with those tax dollars. The Commission is for emergency assistance only; it is to be a solution to a problem and not intended to be used as a supplement to income or to facilitate mismanagement of income. We are pursuing other areas that we can be of assistance to our Veterans in the coming year.

Goals and Objectives for 2019

- Monitor, revise, and update the Commission Policy to reflect Veteran's current needs with the changing market.
- Partner with Veterans Organizations and other agencies to ensure we are providing the needed assistance for our Veterans and their families.
- Refine office procedure to expedite the application process to ensure a timely distribution of benefits.
- Convert our files to an electronic database to facilitate claims processing.
- Expand our Veteran volunteer driving program to include appointments at the Milo C Huempfer VA Clinic located in Green Bay and Zablocki Hospital located at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center.