



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Todd A. Richter
Veterans Services

February 10, 2020

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

I am pleased to present the 2019 Annual Report for the Veterans Service Department and Veterans Service Commission.

Our client base consists of approximately 7,000 veterans covering WW II, Korea, Vietnam, Cold War, Peace Time and the current Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). We also serve an unidentified number of qualified dependents and widows of disabled or deceased veterans. We provide advocacy and assistance for these Sheboygan County residents. Being the advocate for this population we have successfully brought in more than \$36 million dollars of state and federal benefits into Sheboygan County. The Veterans Service Commission ended the year with a negative variance of \$199 and the Veterans Service Department ended the year with a positive variance of \$32,655.

In early 2019 the Veterans Service Office moved from the Courthouse Annex in Sheboygan to the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) in Sheboygan Falls. This move proved to be a much better fit for the veterans that we serve. It is more easily accessible to our aging veteran population. We are also able to more readily share services with the ADRC. Since our move we have partnered with the ADRC and now offer transportation to veterans to and from all of their medical appointments. This program has been met with great success and we find ourselves in need of more volunteer drivers.

In early 2019 the previous Veterans Service Officer retired and I was promoted into this position by the County Administrator. This created a vacancy for one of our Benefit Specialists. We were successful in filling this vacant position by mid-2019. I am extremely proud of this team and the great work they do on a daily basis. Without my team we would not be able to deliver the level of service that we currently provide. Being veterans, our passion and drive is to help veterans and their families to the fullest extent.

We thank you for the continuing support and trust you have placed in us and this office. We look forward to meeting the challenges of the ever-changing needs of our veterans and their families. We will continue to collaborate with our partners and try to build new partnerships as we move forward. We invite your inquiries and feedback throughout the year

Respectfully Submitted,

Todd Richter

Veterans Service Department

Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

The Sheboygan County Veterans Service Department will 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.

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:

- Working under the three main benefit pillars of the Federal and State Veterans Affairs; Health Care, Compensation/Pension and Mortuary Affairs.
- Healthcare enrollment for spouses and children that are eligible.
- Transportation to VA healthcare appointments.
- Mission Act eligibility.
- Compensation benefits for veterans that sustained an injury while serving on active duty.
- Compensation benefits for surviving spouse and children who meet the VA qualifications.
- Pension for veterans or spouse that may require in-home healthcare, assisted living or nursing home care.
- Maintain a record of burials of all veterans within the county.
- Apply for Burial Benefits for veterans that passed from service connected injuries and non-service connected injuries.
- Obtain Grave Markers, Headstones or Medallions.
- Help register for state or federal cemetery burials.
- Provide a flag and marker for veterans grave site.
- Work with local Funeral homes to ensure Military Honors are provided for veterans that qualify.
- Wisconsin Driver's License Identifier.
- Sheboygan County Veterans Service Commission.
- Partnering with other local agencies to help veterans that are in need.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2019

- Staff have obtained/maintained our accreditations with the various National and State Veterans Service Organizations through continuing education credits.
- Currently hold the 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.
- Hold Biweekly/Monthly and Quarterly staff meetings to discuss process improvement ideas.
- With our newest Benefit Specialist, we are training on office procedures and requirements while keeping up with the multitude of changes to federal and state benefits.
- We meet Quarterly with the local Veterans Service Organizations in our area to share information on the programs and benefits to which they are entitled to.

- We have fostered new partnerships with local business and other agencies so that we may help deliver more timely and effective help to those we serve.
- I have included the Senior Benefit Specialist in the management of the office and he has been involved in the various responsibilities of the Assistant Service Officer. This training will help him to develop training and various other proposals required by the office.
- I have involved the Newest Benefit Specialist in a training and mentoring program with the Senior Benefit Specialist. This will help with identify areas in our training and operations manual that need refinement for the office.
- We continue to scan and eliminate the paper files as we meet with Veterans. We have the services of two Senior Aide workers from New Curative along with 6 veteran volunteers to assist with scanning paper files. Once the paper files have been purged and scanned into our database, we must then build an electronic file for the 26,000 records to help move us to a near paperless system.
- We support the County Veterans Service Organizations, other local agencies and business 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. Our intent is to heighten visibility along with honoring our currently serving Veterans and educate the citizenry of their presence in our communities.

Budget

	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	Variance	2020 Budget
Revenues	\$274,504	\$279,852	+\$5,075	\$293,425
Expenses	\$279,852	\$253,873	+\$25,979	\$293,425

We finished 2019 with a positive variance of \$25,975. The department budget is less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of the amount of federal dollars (over 36 million dollars) we helped bring into the county.

Issues and Challenges Ahead

- We partnered with the Aging and Disability Resource Center to provide rides to VA medical appointments for veterans and their spouses. This program has the program expanded at such a fast rate that we need volunteer drivers to help support this program.
- The veteran population has seen a spike in its homelessness. The challenge we face is identifying the homeless vets, and what we can do to help mitigate the homeless issue. We will try and create a pipeline for veterans to help with employment, find housing and guide them to services and organizations available in the community.
- We continue to take our paper files and convert them to digital files. To date we are currently half way through the 26, 000 paper records that we keep. As this is an arduous process we will continue to seek support from the veteran's community to help us with this project.

Goals and Objectives for 2020

- Veteran Service Officer and Benefit Specialists to obtain/maintain VA accreditation with continuing education units.

- Continue to work with the Senior Benefit Specialist to indoctrinate him on the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Service Officer to include end of year reports, budget, liaison committee meetings, service commission and other Assigned duties.
- Conduct weekly and Quarterly training in the office to keep current on new Federal and State programs as well as changes to their current programs.
- Continue purging and electronic scanning of office records and files and make them digital files.
- Outreach to the Veterans Service Organizations, Nursing/Assisted Living Homes and other community partners to educate them on the benefits available to Veterans and their families from the state and federal government and other local agencies.
- Conduct outreach and foster potential partnership within the county to provide information on potential Veteran benefits available to their resident's spouses and other family members.
- Continue to build/strengthen relationships with other agencies and businesses within Sheboygan County.

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.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2019

The following is a composite of the activities of the Commission for 2019.

Cases Accepted	33
Cases Not Accepted	11
Rides to VA Medical Appointments	150

Budget

	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	Variance	2020 Budget
Revenues	\$21,930	\$21,930	\$0	\$21,930
Expenses	\$21,930	\$21,930	-\$199	\$22,128

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 has partnered with the Aging and Disability Resource Center to provide rides to veterans to and from their VA medical appointments. The program is successful, that we are now faced with the challenge of creating a larger pool of volunteer drivers for this program. If we are unsuccessful in recruiting more volunteer drivers we will have to start turning down veterans that are eligible for this program.

Goals and Objectives for 2020

- Monitor, revise, and update the Commission Policy to reflect Veteran's current needs as they change with the local economy.
- Partner with Veterans Organizations, community resources and other local agencies to ensure we are providing the needed assistance for our Veterans in a timely manner.
- Refine office procedure to expedite the application process.
- Convert our remaining paper files to an electronic database to facilitate a streamline claims processing.