



Warren County Veterans Service Officer's Report for January 2011
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VA Testing Quicker Access to Medical Records~

WASHINGTON (Nov. 29, 2010) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to significantly reduce the average time needed to obtain health-care records from private physicians with the help of a private contractor and the Internet to speed claims decisions.

"Innovations that will speed, simplify or improve our services to Veterans are receiving rigorous tests at VA," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are committed to harnessing the best technology and the brightest minds in the government and private sector to ensure Veterans receive the benefits they have earned."

One innovation is using a private contractor to assist VA in collecting health-care records. When private medical records support a Veteran's application for benefits, a contractor will quickly retrieve the records from the health-care provider, scan them into a digital format and send the material to VA through a secure transmission.

This pilot project hopes to validate initial estimates that a specialized contract can yield records required to process Veterans' disability compensation claims in seven to 10 days instead of VA's average 40 days. In addition, the additional contract frees VA staff to focus on core duties to process claims more quickly.

Exploring economical contract support for time savings is one of more than three dozen initiatives supporting VA's claims transformation plan, which aims to ensure that by 2015, Veterans' claims are decided within 125 days.

VA officials emphasize that in all cases Veterans must sign documents approving the release of their medical records to the department from private health-care providers.

The test is expected to involve about 60,000 records requests among regional benefits offices in Phoenix; New York City; St. Louis; Portland, Ore.; Chicago; Anchorage, Alaska; Indianapolis, and Jackson, Miss. At the conclusion of the test, VA officials will decide whether to cancel, modify or expand any changes in procedures nationwide.

***File for the Alternative Tax Exemption if you haven't already done so with your Town Assessor*
 DEADLINE IS March 1st, of every year to be effective the following Jan 1st.**