

Veteran Service Officer I, II

GENERAL SUMMARY

Primary function of the job is to provide information, assistance, advice, and guidance to individuals seeking Veterans benefits through Federal, state, and local government. Interviews and advises clients, research claims and conditions, determines accuracy of information and eligibility status, and provides referral services. Acts as an advocate for clients. Employees work as part of a team.

Employees must meet the minimum requirements, conditions of employment, and be able to successfully perform all essential duties and responsibilities with or without reasonable accommodations.

This position may require irregular hours. This position may also require travel by the employee in his/her own vehicle.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (may include but are not limited to the following)

- The Veterans Service Officer acts as an advocate and represents veterans of the United States Armed Forces, their dependents, and survivors in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under the laws administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA); represents claimants as federally authorized representative to file claims and actions on behalf of veterans, their survivors, and dependents to ensure they receive the maximum entitlement of benefits.
- Manages caseload.
- Interviews, counsels, and provides technical assistance to Veterans, dependents, and survivors in filing their applications for pensions, compensation, education, dental and medical care, burial allowances, home eligibility, financial relief applications, and other available Veterans benefits.
- Assists Veterans and their dependents in completing and filing applications for claims and benefit entitlements such as hospitalization, pension, burial, and loans. Gathers evidence and supporting documentation necessary to process applications.
- Researches, interprets, and applies the federal, state, and local laws and regulations related to Veterans benefits. Determines the effects of laws and regulations on benefits which Veterans, dependents, and survivors may be entitled.
- Checks and certifies each case to ensure all necessary documentation and criteria have been met.
- Assists clients and their families in filing their applications for services and benefits and acts as liaison between the client/family and outside agencies.
- Establishes medical aspects of a claim by evaluating medical reports, laboratory findings, medical opinions, medical journals, and related medical research publications; monitors progress of claims and keeps client informed of the status of claims
- Represents claimants as an advocate in local hearings at the Department of Veteran Affairs as to the status of claims, clarification of requests, and further development of claims.

Grand Traverse County, MI Job Description

- Reviews and evaluates documentation such as military service records, medical reports, and income and estate values to determine individual and family qualifications for claims and benefits.
- Researches, develops, and writes appeals of Department of Veteran Affairs' decisions to be presented to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) and the Court of Appeals for Veteran claims (CAVC).
- Analyzes claims decisions made by the USDVA Rating Teams and acts as a negotiator with the USDVA Ratings Teams and/or the USDVA Decision Review Officers. Appears and presents oral arguments before USDVA Rating Boards in support of claims and re-consideration of cases; acts as an attorney-in-fact in advocating a claim and considers wide range of legal, medical, occupational, and other factors.
- Analyzes decisions issued by the USDVA for factual accuracy, legal consistency, and consistency with federal law for purposes of determining whether the decision, in whole or in part, should be appealed.
- Reviews and analyzes the case file to determine that a full and fair inquiry occurred, and a fair decision was rendered by the Hearings Officer or Appellate Judge.
- Assist in the daily operation of departmental programs to include coordination of transportation.
- Advises clients and provides information regarding services and benefits available to them and/or refers them to proper outside agencies when applicable and updates clients as changes occur, which may include coordinating the scheduling of appointments for applicable services.
- Work with/assist local law enforcement and Court systems in getting justice-involved veterans their benefits.
- Participates in/on meetings, committees, and/or other related groups involving other agencies, service organizations, hospitals, and other community groups to receive and convey information.
- Corresponds with appropriate agencies to secure required documentation to properly submit necessary claims or obtain necessary services for clients from State and County agencies.
- Conducts field trips to assist clients who cannot come to the office to file for benefits and services.
- Prepares and facilitates training sessions and/or presentations to internal employees, groups, and/or other interested parties related to available programs in assigned area of responsibility.
- Monitors changes in federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as court decisions and Committee opinions to advise claimants regarding benefits and services.
- Acts as an interviewer/Trust Fund Agent for the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund.
- Act as an authorized agent or custodian of state and county emergency relief programs and may intervene when necessary to address emergent situations.
- Provides case management for all assigned files and serves as alternate for the assigned files of other counselors in their absence.
- Represents the department at a variety of meetings and conference involving Veterans services.
- Maintains information, data, and statistics on operational activities and prepares related reports.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality of sensitive and personal client information.
- Attend formal training through MACVC and/or NACVSO, in state or out of state as required by Director.

EDUCATION, FORMAL TRAINING, AND EXPERIENCE (minimum requirements)

- Associate's (two-year) degree in Business or a related field, AND
- Two to four years of related experience, OR
- A four-year college degree in a related field may substitute for up to one year of required experience. Two years directly related experience may substitute for each year of the education requirement, if there is demonstrated knowledge, ability, and skills to perform the work.
- Must attend NACVSO Training annually for CEU to maintain accreditation.

CERTIFICATIONS, LICENSES

- Must have valid driver's license and personal vehicle insurance and maintain eligibility to drive as per the County's Vehicle policy.
- Must be an accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of General Counsel OR become accredited at the first available NACVSO training.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT (minimum requirements - legal or contractual pre-employment obligations and/or requirements, such as drug testing, background check, etc.)

A background check may be required initially and periodically for an individual hired, transferred, reclassified, promoted, or currently working in this job. Appointment to or continued employment in this job is contingent upon a satisfactory background check which may include but is not limited to confirmation of a persons' identity; review of criminal conviction records; verification of educational degree, license, or certificate required for the position; review of Department of Motor Vehicles records; Department of Justice fingerprint scan; and/or drug and alcohol testing as required and allowable by law. A satisfactory background check is defined as the absence of a criminal history record which bears a demonstrable relationship to the applicant's or employee's suitability to perform the required duties and responsibilities of the position.

May be required to serve in an "on-call" capacity.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Work performed involves the exercise of considerable discretion and independent decisions based on professional knowledge, with a manager available for consultation in difficult situations. Regular communications with the general public and the handling of difficult people is expected. Errors at this level could cause serious, long-term consequences involving substantial financial costs, significantly reduced service to the public, and/or negative media reaction. These errors affect others outside of a department and may require the intervention of an agency head to resolve.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS, WORK ENVIRONMENT, AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Work is primarily performed in an office or indoor environment
- May be required to reach with hands and arms; sit; stand; talk and hear.
- May be required to lift/move up to 50 pounds (such as a box of paper)

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, COMPETENCIES (minimum requirements)

- Proficiency in English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and simple mathematical functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages, ratios, etc.
- Interpersonal skills necessary to develop and maintain effective and appropriate working relationships with customers, co-workers, and representatives of other agencies.
- Knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, procedures and terminology applicable to the assigned subject area or program (victims' rights, veterans' services, etc.)
- Knowledge of community resources relevant to assigned program or subject area
- Knowledge and ability to use a personal computer to prepare reports, maintain records, search for and compile data
- Skill in operation of modern office equipment such as personal computer, facsimile, copiers, scanners and telephones
- Skill in researching and resolving problems to ensure compliance
- Skill in assessing clients' needs and in assisting clients to seek solutions to problems
- Ability to effectively manage a high volume of cases
- Ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously with frequent interruptions
- Ability to assess and provide guidance within area of specialized knowledge
- Ability to interpret and explain policies, processes, regulations, and applicable laws within area of expertise in layman's terms
- Ability to consistently demonstrate sound ethics and judgment
- Ability to display tact, emotional stability and patience while dealing with distressed individuals and to make immediate decisions in difficult and/or emergency situations
- Ability to think analytically and apply sound judgment, solve problems, make effective decisions, and act with integrity
- Ability to facilitate meetings effectively and efficiently
- Ability to effectively assess and guide both individuals and their families in their area of expertise
- Ability to comprehend, process and apply both verbal and written skills appropriate to the job
- Ability to accurately organize and maintain paper documents and electronic files
- Ability to maintain the confidentiality of information and professional boundaries
- Ability to use County resources effectively and efficiently