



Federal Update for October 12 - 16, 2015



Elks Pledge Four Million Dollars to End Veteran Homelessness

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is strengthening community and non-profit partnerships to better serve Veterans. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America (BPO Elks) today announced that it has committed \$4 million over a 4-year period to help end Veteran homelessness.

This partnership and pledge embodies the mission of MyVA, launched last year to transform VA by putting Veterans in control of how, when and where they wish to be served. In order to achieve transformation, the Department has been reaching out to community partners working to meet the needs of Veterans.

As a part of this partnership, the Elks will work with VHA staff on pilot programs in the cities of Washington, Chicago and New York City. In addition, the organization is calling on the group's 800,000 members across the country to support efforts to support homeless Veterans in their communities. The Elks have a strong tradition of service to VA. In this fiscal year alone, approximately 1,300 Elks members volunteered more than 117,000 hours of service at VA facilities nationwide.

“We’re so excited about partnering with the Elks on this important issue impacting far too many Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “As we move closer to our goal of ending Veteran homelessness, partnerships like these will be critical to ensuring that all Veterans have access to safe and affordable housing.”

“Our goal is to provide the tools and support necessary for homeless Veterans to transition successfully into healthier and more stable lives,” said Mary Morgan, Director of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission. “Most Americans agree that Veteran homelessness should not exist, but few people know how they can help.”

For more information about VA’s homeless initiatives, visit <http://www.va.gov/homeless/>. For more information about the Elks’ service to Veterans, visit <http://www.elks.org/vets/>.

MyVA Advisory Committee Meets in Tampa, Florida at New Primary Care Annex

Secretary Bob McDonald and VA leadership gathered with a team of skilled experts from the private, non-profit and government sectors in Tampa, Florida, to discuss the changes needed to improve customer service and long-term Veteran outcomes.

With his own private-sector experience, McDonald recognized the need for an outside advisory board and established the MyVA Advisory Committee (MVAC) in April 2015. This is the committee's third meeting, the first outside of Washington, D.C., and is focusing on implementation of the MyVA plan.

"We are really changing from planning to execution... Now that we have set the priorities, what are some of the roadblocks that we need to be looking out for? How do we get the right people in the right spots with the right tools?" said Scott Blackburn, who oversees the MyVA initiative. Tampa, was chosen for the MVAC's first offsite meeting not only because Florida is home to more than 10 percent of the nation's Veterans but also because of the Tampa VA Medical Center's new primary care annex. McDonald and the MVAC toured the Tampa medical center, met with patients and listened to their feedback.

The facility, which is strategically placed next to one of Tampa's main highways, provides primary care services, ancillary services and is home to a 10,000 square foot comprehensive women's clinic and a homeless patient aligned care team.

"A Veteran checks in, goes to a room and everyone comes to that Veteran, the Veteran doesn't move. The doctor, nurse, dietitian, psychologist or anyone else – everyone goes to that room," said Joe Battle, medical center director of the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa. "It's a one-stop shop for the Veteran."

The primary care annex is a state of the art model for the delivery of primary health care and its success is being replicated across the VA healthcare system.

The MVAC will continue to not only observe and promote best practices within VA, but will also advise McDonald of prevailing techniques from the private and non-profit sector to assist with the VA transformation