

**Veterans’ Service-Related Ailments Task Force
Meeting Minutes
April 11, 2022, 12pm-2pm**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- a. Meeting called to order by William Sutton at 12:17pm
- b. Roll call taken and quorum established with 9 members at roll call
- c. IDVA staff members present: Crystal Womack, Sara Augustinas, Anthony Vaughn, Kourtney Hopkins

Senator Wilcox	Present
Representative Kifowit	Present
Representative Swanson	Present
Director Prince or designee	Present- Anthony Vaughn
COL John Fulk	Not present
Christopher Spears	Not present
Eric Butz	Not present
Kimyada Wellington	Present
Michael Iwanicki	Present
Michelle Ramlow	Present
Summer Padaoan	Present
Timothy Alexander	Not present
William Sutton	Present
VACANT	
VACANT	

2. Reading and Approval of Minutes from March 14, 2022

- a. William Sutton- Does everyone has a copy of meeting minutes?
 - a. Mr. Sutton discussed summary of minutes.
- b. Sutton- Any questions?
- c. Motion to approve March 14, 2022, meeting minutes by Michael Iwanicki and Second by Summer Padaoan. Minutes from March 14, 2022, stands approved as is.

3. Old Business

- a. Follow-up:
 - i. C&P examiner certification/recertification requirements
 - 1. Director Prince not present. Topic will be added to the agenda for next meeting.
 - ii. Secretary of State Memorandum of Agreement for data sharing purposes

1. Kourtney Hopkins- IDVA has a MOU with Secretary of State that permits the SOS office to share select applicant data via a daily batch transfer for IDVA to confirm the applicant's eligibility for the "veteran" designation on their license. Currently, of the applicant data received, IDVA has about 98-99% of the veteran information in IDVA's database.
2. Anthony Vaughn- Discussed how a veteran gets in the database and explains that any visit to an IDVA VSO reflects in IDVA's database. In 2015, IDVA was able to capture veterans through in-office Veteran designation requests. Information is also captured through sharing of DD214 from DOD to IDVA.

iii. Sutton-Does this answer the questions

iv. Summer Padoan -Yes this is a good resource to identify

v. Senator Wilcox? -How many county recorder offices allow DD214s be recorded as official documents?

vi. Padoan- Lake County records DD214s. Younger generation veterans typically do not record their documents. Do all county offices do that?

vii. Michelle Ramlow- My county does

viii. Iwanicki- Counties are required to record and add it as a protected document.

ix. Vaughn- believes that all counties, if presented, will record DD214. We do not have a data sharing agreement with county recorders. If we do not have a DD214, we ask if the veteran had it recorded when they were discharged from the service.

x. Senator Wilcox- Is it beneficial for IDVA send a notice to county recorders and request records to run against IDVA data base?

xi. Vaughn- If that were done, there will be a large amount that are not in IDVA database. Potential concerns are- can the county recorder offices share the information and if so, what are their capabilities in producing the records.

xii. Senator Wilcox- We do not want to send any records without giving the veterans notice

xiii. Vaughn- We try not to add to the IDVA database if we do not have a copy of DD214 or discharge document

xiv. Senator Wilcox- Can we run the county recorder office data against the IDVA database to ensure we are capturing the veterans in the state?

xv. Iwanicki- there is a law that allows VSOs request DD214s from county recorder offices. IDVA could register as a VSO with county recorder offices to be able to access DD214s.

xvi. Vaughn- To Determine whether we have a record of every veteran in every county recorder office even though they may not be alive or active. What would we hope to achieve in gathering this data?

- xvii. Senator Wilcox- Ultimate goal to know all veterans who reside in Illinois.
- xviii. Vaughn-The concern of gathering information from county recorders is that there can be a large amount of DD214s filed with the county recorders but will not be in our database because the veteran(s) did not visit our office nor have their DD214 sent to us. The purpose of the database is not necessarily to be a repository but to collect the information so that it can be utilized to provide services.
- xix. Senator Wilcox-The data could be used to project services, for example-space needed in veterans homes, the aging veteran population. Would IDVA be willing to take this as a task and consider the benefits of doing this type of pilot and what could accomplish or be of value?
- xx. Vaughn- Absolutely.
- xxi. Padoan- Census numbers are something we can use to get that information as well.
- xxii. Vaughn- The VA does do provide projections as well. Their GDX is based on the census. Last GDX from 2000 projects until 2045. The data projects current veteran population and accounts for the veterans who are passing away, along with tracking veteran eras. Vietnam veterans are the largest population in the state. Projections that come out from VA are believed to come from the US Census.
- xxiii. Sutton- We are starting a program where county and state level service officers are working on dual training. This could help the County level and relieve some of the pressure. Working together, we would be able to collaborate in tracking all the veterans that are out there.
- xxiv. Ramlow-Requested clarification
- xxv. Sutton- We (VACs) will be training with state level so that we can relate to each other and how our services can be brought together to make us better as a whole.
- xxvi. Padoan- Sharing training both ways will help to ensure we have the best outcome possible.

4. New Business

- a. Re-entry to Illinois Program
- i. Sutton- Work with IDVA to bring together a group of service officers, have a lunch, and teach veterans about services and benefits.
 - ii. Padoan-we will continue this discussion on next month's agenda after we review the previous program. Representative Kifowit resent to Michelle Ramlow to send out to the group.
 - iii. Ramlow- VFW and the American legion would love to be hubs for this. IDVA needs to be central hub and help to recognize the returning veterans and who to refer them veteran to. Getting other organizations on board to back the initiative will help to the effort to eventually become second nature.

- iv. Representative Kifowit- Veteran service communities are already underway through IJF. If we have it once a quarter and give the individuals a stipend to incentivize them. Logistics can be worked out too.
 - v. Kimyada Wellington- I agree with last comment. People are interested in being heard. I attended an event with National Women Veterans United and the people I was sitting with were heads of different organizations and interested in sharing their thoughts. We discussed different experiences at the VA. I am trying to obtain the information.
 - vi. Sutton- Michelle will get the notes to everyone and get it on the schedule for next month. Definitely a program we should pursue. Anything else for re-entry for Illinois program?
- b. C&P. Certification requirements.
- i. Padoan- I did some research and did not see any mention of recertification in the policy. It looks like recertification is not required. If I find something else, I will report back to the group.
 - ii. Sutton- Service Officers have to recertify every year. If we have to recertify, so should the examiners.
 - iii. Representative Kifowit- Recertification requirement may be federal not state jurisdiction. We can send it up, whether it is acknowledged is different. I will do some more research under the healthcare arena and get it back to the group on how can state legislators present recommendations.
- c. Training and Outreach to veterans
- i. Previously discussed in above conversation. Database, training sharing
- d. Training and Outreach for VHA providers
- i. Sutton- VA providers are scared to write DBQs or nexus letters. Out of fear of losing their job. To Anthony Vaughn- do you know why VA providers are hesitant to complete DBQs and nexus letter?
 - ii. Vaughn- Providers fall under federal VA.
 - iii. Sutton-Also wondering why there hasn't been change overtime.
 - iv. Padoan- I can track down Peoria VA provider who is also a veteran who attended training. Their director was giving nexus letter training to their providers. Even though it is federal, we can work with that Director and branch

out to the other VHAs in the state and get the training out to other medical centers in the state.

- v. Representative Kifowit- State level can look into creating a CEU program for them as well.
 - vi. Padoan- The VA Provider came to VAC training for CEUs. We can offer CEUs as an incentive for training.
- e. Training and Incentives for contracted C&P Examiners
- i. Padoan- Similar to what we have been talking about- How we can make an impact as a state? How can we get more providers to sign up with VA? Somehow, as an organization, we should encourage more providers to sign up. Can the state create an incentive program? Can the state provide incentive?
 - ii. Representative Kifowit- We can look at a particular designation, but we need details of C&P examiners and what category they fall under in the law in terms of training.
 - iii. Padoan – Most seem to be NPs, PAs, PhD. As long as they are certified as a practitioner there seems to be little outside requirements.
 - iv. Iwanicki- As long as the VA accepts them then their opinion is good enough.
- f. Claim results based on self-filing vs VSO filing
- i. Iwanicki- VA did a study in early 2000s. They continue to advise veterans to use an accredited VSO
 - ii. Vaughn- There was IOG report in response to Chicago Tribune article. There was a deep dive on all criteria and factors that go into where each state ranked nationally on how much they are paying out to veterans compared to other states. I am not sure if that has been re-validated. VA may have recently revalidated the information about those who use a service organization having better outcomes than those who don't.
 - iii. Sutton- Does every veteran service organization have to submit a governor's report? Does the Governor's report get utilized for anything?

- iv. Vaughn- Clarification- referring to your annual report going to the Governor's office?
- v. Sutton-yes. Annual report to the Governor's Office.
- vi. Representative Swanson- When I was a VAC Superintendent, a copy of our annual report went to Governor's office. I'm not sure where those letters/reports go. Even now, still not sure where it goes.
- vii. Representative Kifowit- Jake sends courtesy copy to me. We can introduce statute to make sure legislators get a copy.
- viii. Sutton- Wouldn't that help understand the tracking of Veteran Service Organizations?
- ix. Representative Swanson- Not every county has a VAC that does a report. Most that have a VAC comply, but there are a lot of veteran deserts without a VAC.
- x. Vaughn- We need to consider doing an analysis of is the state right now. Where does the state stand? In regard to compensation and pension, we can do a statistical analysis of GDX that came out in 2020If we want to move forward, we need to figure out where we are on these measures. One of the things the OIG report identified, it looked at compensation and pension and at that time the state was last. That metric used the amount each veteran received in compensation and pension average amount. We need to decide what metric we want to use, combination of categories, or just one.
- xi. Iwanicki- It took population divide by total number of dollars and around 52 or 53 at the time.
- xii. Padoan- Was it a raw data set?
- xiii. Iwanicki- Using GDX number from the VA.
- xiv. Sutton-we should establish a baseline which will help track improvements.

5. Member Updates

- a. Representative Kifowit- I don't have the whole list of bills on hand but there was a change to the Veteran Lottery language to encompass more mental health, updated Military Veteran

Assistance Act, changed benefits for surviving spouses of veterans in addition to a couple of other things. Will have a more comprehensive report next meeting.

- i. Sara Augustinas- Also working on getting a list of passed legislation can share.
- b. Representative Kifowit-last two years we moved a lot of legislation for veterans.
- c. Senator Wilcox- I have a standing meeting at 1:30 and will be dropping off. For the group- Do we have plans to fill the vacancies?
- d. Senator Wilcox can work and Representative Kifowit will work on engaging Senator Munoz Representative Kifowit to text him.
- e. Senator Wilcox left the meeting at 1:30pm
- f. Sutton-Training reminder. Have the training by the next meeting.
- g. Padoan- Update/reminder- Federal registrar. Proposed changes VA rating schedules. Only a few days left to add public comment. We can reshare information and make comments.
 - i. Sutton- IACVAC already submitted comments. Can forward to Michelle and send out to everyone.
- h. No other updates.

6. Adjournment

- a. Wellington- Motion to adjourn at 1:37pm
- b. Padoan- second the motion
- c. Adjourned at 1:37pm **7. Next scheduled Meeting is May 9, 2022, 12:00pm-2:00pm**

7. Resources provided in chat:

- a. Representative Kifowit-<https://www.illinoisjoiningforces.org>
- b. Sara Augustinas- HB 4682, SB 1975, HJR 64, SJR 28, SB 257, HB 5175, SB 3762, HR 810?