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Effort Aimed at Promoting Use of Fully Developed Claims to Deliver Timely Benefits

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today welcomed the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) to the Fully Developed Claims (FDC) Community of Practice (CoP), which was established in May to speed the processing of Veterans' disability compensation claims by promoting the early submission of all available evidence needed by VA to reach a disability rating decision. NASDVA joins Veteran Service Organizations, the American Legion and Disabled American Veterans, who are charter members of the community.

"We're thrilled NASDVA is part of the effort to increase the number of Veterans filing fully developed claims so that earned benefits can be delivered faster," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "State Veterans Affairs offices help many thousands of Veterans across the country each year to get the benefits they deserve, and their support is critical in in meeting our goal of processing all claims within 125 days in 2015."

Claims are considered "fully developed" when Veterans submit all available supporting evidence, such as private treatment records, at the time they first file a formal claim and certify they have no additional evidence to submit. VA can typically complete FDCs in half the time of traditionally filed claims.

Last week, VA announced that Veterans filing an FDC may be entitled to up to one year of retroactive disability benefits. The retroactive benefits, which are in effect Aug. 6, 2013, through Aug. 5, 2015, are a result of a comprehensive legislative package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama last year.

"I strongly encourage all states to embrace a claims culture that is centered on FDCs," said NASDVA President W. Clyde Marsh in a letter to members. "In order to make a huge impact on reducing the nation's claims backlog, it will take a collective effort with NASDVA, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and Veterans."

NASDVA has encouraged its member states to participate in FDC workshops at VA regional offices and to make a specific commitment to increase the percentage of FDCs submitted in their states (www.benefits.va.gov/fdc).

NASDVA is made up of directors and commissioners overseeing state-run Veterans programs and represents all fifty states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense-VA web portal *eBenefits* at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

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