

Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: December 9, 2014

From: Assistant Inspector General for Audits and Evaluations (52)

Subj: Request Close-out, Hotline Referral (2015-00417-HL-0093) Alleged Inflated Rating Decision for Disabled American Veterans (DAV) service organization staff at the VA Regional Office (VARO), Denver, CO.

To: For the Record

We request the close-out of the subject Hotline referral. The Office of Audits and Evaluations (OAE) was unable to substantiate the allegations. On October 23, 2014, OAE accepted the subject referral and assigned it to our San Diego Inspections Division.

The Office of Inspector General received an allegation that a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) working for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) service organization at the Denver VA Regional Office (VARO) received an inflated rating decision for a mental condition. The rating decision was completed at the Salt Lake City VARO in accordance with VBA policy.

We conducted site visits at the Denver and Salt Lake City VAROs from November 13-14, 2014, to assess the merits of the allegation. We interviewed the DAV supervisor who was the subject of the allegation, as well as VARO management and the Rating Veterans Service Representative (RVSR) at the Salt Lake City VARO who rated the disability claim. We also interviewed additional DAV and VARO staff at both locations. Further, we reviewed the claim and related medical evidence to determine whether a DAV employee received an inflated disability evaluation for a mental disability.

The Denver DAV supervisor received an increased disability evaluation for a service-connected mental condition from 30 percent to 100 percent disabling. Based on medical evidence available at the time of our review, the increase to 100 percent may have been inflated as the DAV employee was fully employed. One criteria for a 100 percent disability evaluation for a mental condition is total occupational and social impairment. However, the assigned 100 percent evaluation was not considered permanent and is subject to a future medical examination in March 2018 to determine whether that evaluation should continue. Further, the RVSR stated she did not receive any pressure from DAV to assign a higher disability evaluation than what the medical evidence warranted. Additionally, we found no indication of any undue pressure from DAV staff to inflate the rating decision for the DAV supervisor at the Denver VARO.

Our review did not identify any fraud resulting in personal financial gain or pressure from DAV staff in the Denver or Salt Lake City VAROs to assign a higher evaluation for the VSO's mental condition. Therefore, we cannot substantiate this allegation.

DAVID S. ENGELEN