

Sunset Public Hearing Questions for
Department of Veterans' Affairs
Created by Section 4-3-2501, *Tennessee Code Annotated*
(Sunset termination June 2014)

1. Provide a brief introduction to the department, including information about its purpose, statutory duties, and staff.

HISTORY

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs was established in 1945 with the purpose to provide statewide services to Veterans, survivors and family members.

MISSION

The department's mission is to serve Tennessee's Veterans and their family members with dignity and compassion as an entrusted advocate.

VISION

- To connect Veterans, dependents and survivors with federal, state and local employment, educational and financial resources as well as benefits.
- To establish state Veterans homes and cemeteries within a 75 mile radius of the state's Veteran population.
- To ensure Tennessee court systems are educated on the need for Veteran dockets and to ensure at-risk Veterans are educated on federal health benefit eligibilities.
- To establish innovative streamlined processes and programs delivered with state of the art technology and security to provide high-quality customer service to Veterans and their families.
- To provide claims assistance training to TDVA employees and County Service Officers to ensure Veterans and family members receive highly qualified, updated and consistent service.

DUTIES

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs manages and maintains four State Veterans Cemeteries to include two in Knoxville, one in Nashville and one in Memphis. The department also operates 12 field offices statewide and a claims division which is comprised of eight Veterans Claims Specialists and one Claims Director to provide claims assistance for more than 500,000 Veterans and 1.5 million family members in 95 counties.

EMPLOYEES

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs is currently authorized to have 98 positions. There are currently 87 TDVA employees and 11 vacancies.

EMPLOYEE BREAKDOWN

PERONNEL	TITLE OR CLASSIFICATION
1	Commissioner
1	Deputy Commissioner-Middle Tennessee
1	Assistant Commissioner-East Tennessee
1	Assistant Commissioner-West Tennessee
1	Assistant Commissioner-Communications
24	Veterans Benefits Representatives
7	Veterans Claims Specialists
1	Claims Director
3	Cemetery Directors
19	Cemetery Caretakers
2	Cemetery Grounds Workers
4	Cemetery Equipment Operators
2	Cemetery Equipment Operator Supervisors
6	Secretaries
1	Training Officer
1	Legislative Liaison/Public Information Officer
3	Executive Secretaries
9	Administrative Assistants

2. What were the department's revenues (by source) and expenditures (by object) for fiscal year 2012 and to date for 2013? Does the department carry a fund balance and, if so, what is the total of that fund balance? If expenditures exceeded revenues, and the department does not carry a fund balance, what was the source of the revenue for the excess expenditures?

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs did not have a fund balance and did not exceed the budgeted source of revenue.

The department's federal revenue is generated by federal grants and burial reimbursements for Veteran burials. During fiscal year 2012-2013, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs increased the individual reimbursement rate for Veteran burials from \$700 to \$722. The state is not reimbursed for dependent burials, therefore the state charges \$700 for dependent interments in the four State Veterans Cemeteries.

FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012

State Appropriation	\$4,123,400.00
Federal Funding	\$857,700.00
Dependent Burials	\$316,900.00
Total Funding	\$5,298,000.00

EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012:

Field and Claims	\$1,896,824.00
Cemeteries	\$1,916,389.00
Administration	\$942,952.00
Total	\$4,756,165.00

FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR FY 2013

State Appropriation	\$4,921,500.00
Federal Funding	\$885,500.00
Dependent Burials	\$349,281.00
Total Funding	\$6,156,281.00

EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013:

Field and Claims	\$1,927,633.00
Cemeteries	\$1,894,353.00
Administration	\$863,186.00
Total	\$4,685,172.00

The department is preparing to establish two new State Veterans Cemeteries to include one in southwest Tennessee and in the upper Cumberland region. The federal government will fund the design and construction of these projects, however, the state must provide the initial funding for Architecture and Engineering (A&E) costs with the understanding the United States Department of Veterans Affairs will reimburse TDVA at a later date. Therefore, the department has requested an increase in carry over funds to allow TDVA to pay A&E costs. A new State Veterans Cemetery is estimated to cost \$7.9 million to construct and design. The state would be responsible to pay approximately \$790,000 for the design or A&E costs which would be reimbursed by the federal government at a later date. The department's carry over funds are generated by federal reimbursements for burial and may only be used for the State Veterans Cemeteries.

3. Has the department established branch offices in each congressional district in the state as required in Section 58-3-106(a), *Tennessee Code Annotated*? Does the assistant commissioner or service officer in charge of each office visit each county seat within the congressional district each month as required? Have additional offices been opened in some congressional districts as authorized in Section 58-3-106(f)?

The department does have a field office in each congressional district. There are 12 Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs field offices to serve more than 500,000 Veterans and 1.5 million dependents in 95 counties. Due to a lack of funding, the department has not increased the number of field offices, but has increased TDVA efforts to partner with county mayors and county executives to add county service offices in counties without a County Service Officer. The department also offers mentoring, training and has built relationships with existing County Service Officers to provide updated information on changing state and federal laws and procedures. A new TDVA training office is pending in Smyrna.

TRAINING

Each regional commissioner hosts quarterly regional training to provide updated information regarding new federal and state laws and processes. Quarterly training also allows for interactive communication and networking to deepen relationships and cultivate knowledge about new or upcoming resources. TDVA employees and County Service Officers are required to attend. Representatives from Veteran Service Organizations are increasing in attendance, but are not charged for training.

The department also organizes a multi-day statewide annual training event which includes knowledgeable speakers to increase awareness and education about new resources, laws and processes. After annual training is concluded, TDVA employees and County Service Officers are tested. TDVA notifies the County Service Officer and the County Mayor or County Executive of the test scores. Test scores are retained by TDVA to monitor increased or decreased comprehension and proficiency and to determine future training requirements.

DAY TO DAY CONTACT

Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Commissioners and Veterans Benefits Representatives offer mentorship to County Service Officers to maintain constructive lines of communication, increased knowledge in claims assistance and increased awareness about changing laws and processes. County Service Officers routinely call or email TDVA employees regarding difficult or unique claims scenarios. TDVA employees also partner with newly hired County Service Officers (CSO). Department employees train new CSO's as well as travel to their office to assist them as they file claims for Veterans and dependents.

REGION	AVERAGE MONTHLY INTERACTION WITH CSO'S
East	213
West	275
Middle	36

VETERAN OUTREACH PARTNERSHPS

The department partners with County Service Officers across the state to host Veteran Outreach Awareness to connect Veterans and dependents with federal, state and local assistance and resources. Outreach events also include job fair participation. Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs either organized or participated in 49 outreaches in FY 2012-2013 and reached approximately 6,044 Veterans, survivors and dependents.

REGION	OUTREACHES FY 2012-2013	ATTENDEES
East	19	669
West	23	4,050
Middle	7	1,325

MEETINGS WITH COUNTY MAYORS/EXECUTIVES

Due to the challenge of serving 2-million Veterans and dependents in 95 counties, the department set a goal in 2011, to meet with 100 percent of the state's county mayors and county executives to explain the importance of hiring and resourcing a highly qualified County Service Officer. The goal was set to be complete by 2016, but 74 percent of the goal has already been completed in 2013.

REGION	MAYOR MEETINGS TO DISCUSS CSO'S	NEED TO MEET
East	44	4
West	13	20
Middle	13	1

4. How many county and municipal service offices have been opened by local legislative bodies pursuant to Section 58-3-109? How does the department interact with these offices?

A total of nine County Service Officers have been added since 2011 bringing the total of CSO's across the state to 86. Due to the limited resources of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, partnerships with County Service Officers are critical to serving Veterans with high quality, knowledgeable claims assistance across the state. The department offers quarterly and annual training. TDVA Veterans Benefits

Representatives, training officers as well as Regional Commissioners answer County Service Officer claims assistance questions as needed.

WEST

Since 2011, Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs discussions have led to the addition of five new County Service Officers to include one in Madison, Fayette, Houston, Robertson and Cheatham Counties. Hickman County has approved a budget to hire a County Service Officer, but the position has not been filled.

There are three counties in West Tennessee that do not have a resourced County Service Officer to include Lake, Dyer and Dickson Counties.

MIDDLE

No County Service Officers have been added to Middle Tennessee since 2011, however, after discussions with the department, Davidson County has expressed plans to add a County Service Officer.

EAST

Since 2011, TDVA discussions have led to the addition of four new County Service Offices to include one in Clay, Jackson, Morgan and Van Buren Counties.

There are three counties in East Tennessee that do not have a resourced County Service Officer to include Trousdale, Washington and Hamilton Counties.

5. What type of training and accreditation is provided to county and municipal service officers as required by Section 58-3-111(d)? How does the department ensure that all county and municipal service officers are trained and accredited?

TRAINING

In 2011, the department reorganized and converted a position to a training officer to lead the development of training curriculum to be offered to TDVA employees and County Service Officers on a quarterly and annual basis.

In 2013, the department created a TDVA accreditation policy that has been shared with county leaders and County Service Officers. The policy was also added to the TDVA training page offered on the department's website. The department recommends accreditation to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. In accordance with Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations 14.629, no individual may assist claimants in preparation, presentation and prosecution of claims for VA benefits as an agent or attorney unless he or she has first been accredited by VA for such purposes.

According to TCA 58-3-111 (d), "all veterans' service officers shall successfully complete training and be issued accreditation by the Department of Veterans' Affairs within one (1) year from the date of appointment." The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs is closely monitoring training attendance, test scores and office hours to determine recommendations for accreditation, continued accreditation or revocation of accreditation. Per Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) the County Service Officer (CSO) is required to be a paid employee of the county working as a CSO for not less than 1,000 hours annually. Each CSO must also successfully complete a course of training and examination. In order to ensure Veterans and their families are receiving high quality, knowledgeable, consistent claims assistance, the department will enforce accreditation requirements.

The department offers quarterly and annual training as well as annual testing to monitor comprehension and retention of federal and state laws and procedures.

In August 2013, the department will create a training division which will include two TDVA training officers to continue to develop relevant updated training curriculum, conduct quarterly and annual training as well as train new County Service Officers and existing CSO's struggling with changing laws and procedures.

6. How does the department interact with the War Records Bureau within the Military Department? What records does the bureau furnish to the department and how are those records used?

DISCHARGE PAPERS

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs heavily relies on DD-214's or discharge papers to determine Veteran status and service dates which can determine eligibility for federal benefits.

Currently, the United States Department of Defense mails DD-214's for newly discharged Tennessee Veterans to the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs. TDVA then mails the DD-214 to War Records with the Tennessee Military Department. When TDVA needs discharge papers to assist Veterans, survivors or family members with claims for federal benefits or burial eligibility, the department requests the DD-214 from War Records.

TDVA employees contact War Records approximately 307 times per month. It takes between 2 to 48 hours to receive the requested DD-214 or discharge papers if Tennessee was the home of record for the Veteran. If the Veteran enlisted out of state, TDVA employees must submit requests to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC).

REGION	MONTHLY REQUESTS TO WAR RECORDS
East	152
West	110
Middle	45

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs has created a secure server and is developing a secure process to scan and digitally archive incoming DD-214's before sending to War Records in an effort to streamline the claims assistance process. Veterans Benefits Representatives would have instant access to the appropriate discharge papers.

7. How was the department involved in the establishment of the State Veterans Homes? What continuing involvement has the department maintained with the home?

There are currently three State Veterans Homes to include one in Murfreesboro, Humboldt and Knoxville.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs serves as a liaison between the Tennessee State Veterans Homes Board and the state. The Tennessee State Veterans Homes Board (TSVHB) oversees the management of the three existing homes. The Governor appoints the board members and Commissioners from the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs and Finance and Administration are ex-officio voting members of the TSVHB.

To create a new State Veterans Home, the TDVA Commissioner establishes a committee comprised of local community members to increase local awareness, support and to recommend a proposed site. The community member committee is also responsible to raise local funding. Federal funds provide 65 percent of the design and construction of the site, but state and local funding must provide for the full cost of land acquisition. State and local funding also pays for 35 percent of the design and construction of the proposed State Veterans Home. The community member committee recommends three sites which must go through an environmental assessment as well as state and federal review before the site is approved as the future site of a State Veterans Home.

During the conceptual, design and construction phase, the TDVA Commissioner presents the plans and developments to the State Building Commission (SBC).

All three of the current State Veterans Homes are self-sustaining and do not require state funding.

TDVA Commissioner continues to monitor operations, capital planning, accomplishments, violations and operating budget after admissions begin. TDVA Commissioner and Regional Commissioners increase awareness of the award winning facilities by offering tours to legislators and partnering with the State Veterans Homes for community outreach events as well as free claims assistance for residents.

TDVA also offers communication support and marketing consultation for the State Veterans Homes. TDVA Communications assisted the State Veterans Homes to announce that two of the three homes were named among the best in the country in U.S. News & World Report 2013. The Tennessee State Veterans Home in Knoxville and Murfreesboro also received a five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2012.

8. How does the department interact with veterans' groups within the federal government and in other states?

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs maintains a productive and constructive partnership with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs VA Regional Office in Nashville and leadership for VA Medical Centers in Mountain Home, Nashville and Memphis.

These partnerships have created positive change in state and federal processes. TDVA's success in submitting fully developed claims has led to public recognition from United States Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Benefits General Allison Hickey. During public speaking engagements and conference calls with other state leaders, General Hickey has used TDVA's progress in submissions of fully developed claims as an example of efficiency that is impacting federal backlogs.

STATE PARTNERSHIPS

TDVA Commissioner is a member of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) and is the Vice President for NASDVA representing the Southeast District. NASDVA members maintain constructive working relationships with national leadership for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Administration and Health Care Administration which allows them to share information and feedback.

The department has sent surveys to other State Veterans Affairs Directors and Commissioners to gather information on salaries, cemetery operations and outsourcing.

Regional Commissioners are also visiting other State Veterans Cemeteries and State Veterans Affairs Departments to learn from their successes, challenges and innovation. In 2012-2013, Regional Commissioners visited State Veterans Cemeteries in Kentucky, North Carolina and Arkansas to learn more about the use of grave liners and pre-registration for burials. TDVA has implemented the use of grave liners to prevent grave collapses and launched an online pre-registration for burials resource this summer.

During 2013-2014, Regional Commissioners plan to visit Alabama State Veterans Affairs personnel and Texas Veterans Commission leadership.

9. How many veterans' claims were processed during fiscal year 2012 and to date for 2013? Of those claims, how many were approved by the federal government? Is the number of claims processed each year increasing, decreasing or remaining level over the last 10 years?

CLAIMS FILED IN FISCAL YEAR 2012

ORIGINATING AGENCY	NUMBER OF CLAIMS FILED
TDVA	5,302
COUNTY SERVICE OFFICERS	4,227
TOTAL	9,529

CLAIMS FILED IN FISCAL YEAR 2013

ORIGINATING AGENCY	NUMBER OF CLAIMS FILED
TDVA	4,495
COUNTY SERVICE OFFICERS	4,192
TOTAL	8,687

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS FILED IN FISCAL YEAR 2012

ORIGINATING AGENCY	NUMBER OF CLAIMS FILED
TDVA	3,698
COUNTY SERVICE OFFICERS	2,769
TOTAL	6,467

The department's training and accountability processes increased the number of fully developed claims for Fiscal Year 2013.

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS FILED IN FISCAL YEAR 2013

ORIGINATING AGENCY	NUMBER OF CLAIMS FILED
TDVA	4,018
COUNTY SERVICE OFFICERS	3,592
TOTAL	7,610

Data from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs shows Tennessee Veterans and dependents received \$1,628,011 billion in pension, educational and disability benefits during Fiscal Year 2012.

The number of claims and federal monetary awards can fluctuate substantially every year. A change in federal law can cause an increase in service-connected disabilities during war-time and the federal government's efforts to focus on the back-log can also cause an influx in claim totals.

In 1986, a group of Vietnam Veterans and their survivors filed a class-action lawsuit (***Nehmer (Beverly Nehmer) vs United States Department of Veterans Affairs***) against the United States Department of Veterans Affairs alleging the federal government improperly denied their claims for service-connected compensation for disabilities caused by exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

On October 13, 2009, United States Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki announced his decision to establish presumptive service connection for three additional illnesses associated with exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam based on an independent study conducted by the Institute of Medicine. The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B-cell leukemias (such as hairy cell leukemia), Parkinson's disease, and ischemic heart disease. A proposed rule adding these three conditions to VA's list of presumptive diseases was published in the Federal Register on March 25, 2010, 75 Fed. Reg. 14,391.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Nashville estimates an 8 percent average annual increase in federal claims. However, due to the increase in Nehmer claims, the number of claims for federal benefits increased in fiscal year 2012.

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Annual Benefits Report Fiscal Year 2012, the average number of disabilities per Veteran is steadily increasing from 2.37 percent for World War II Veterans to 5.42 percent for Gulf War Veterans.

An average of 4.16 contentious issues are linked to each claim which can also consume TDVA manpower to re-file claims, draft appeals and

present appeals as an advocate for Tennessee Veterans and dependents.

10. What programs does the department participate in to assist veterans with job placement or training?

PAYCHECKS FOR PATIOTS

In 2012, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs partnered with the Tennessee Department of Labor, Tennessee Military Department and Dollar General for a statewide job fair event called Paychecks for Patriots. More than 2,400 Veterans participated in the 13 concurrent job fairs across the state which showcased 92 employers with 4,000 job openings.

The statewide effort has become an inspiration to other states such as Georgia. All involved state departments and Dollar General received the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Parthenon Award as a result of the effective effort to unite Veterans with job openings throughout Tennessee.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs also invites representatives from the Tennessee Department of Labor to every TDVA Veterans Outreach event to ensure Veterans and dependents have an opportunity to speak to a Department of Labor Veterans Employment Representative.

TDVA is also promoting Department of Labor job fairs on the TDVA website and social media and participates in the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes events which happen throughout the state.

11. During the 1990s, the department opened three state-owned veterans' cemeteries, one in each grand division of the state. How many veterans are buried in those cemeteries, and how many were buried there during fiscal year 2012 and to date for 2013? How are the cemeteries funded? What were the annual costs for operating the cemeteries during fiscal year 2012 and to date for 2013 and what was the source of the funding to pay those operating costs?

BACKGROUND

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to establish a State Veterans Cemetery within 75 mile radius of Tennessee's Veterans.

The East Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery at 5901 Lyons View Pike in Knoxville opened in August 1990. However, that cemetery is at capacity for new burials. TDVA opened the East Tennessee State

Veterans Cemetery at 2200 E. Gov. John Sevier Highway 168 in Knoxville in August 2011.

The West Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery at 4000 Forest Hill in Memphis opened in January 1992.

The Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery at 7931 McCrory Lane in Nashville opened in January 1993.

FUNDING

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs fully funds construction and design of State Veteran Cemeteries. Funding for land acquisition for State Veterans Cemeteries is a combination of state and local money as well as donations.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs can also apply for federal grants from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain or improve State Veterans Cemeteries. In Fiscal Year 2012-2013, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs received a grant of \$2.7 million to realign headstones at the West Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery in Memphis.

Operational costs for the four State Veterans Cemeteries are funded by both state appropriations and federal reimbursements for burials. During fiscal year 2012-2013, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs increased the individual reimbursement rate for Veteran burials from \$700 to \$722. The state is not reimbursed for dependent burials, therefore the state charges \$700 for dependent interments in the State Veterans Cemeteries.

In Fiscal Year 2012, TDVA received \$857,700.00 in federal reimbursements for Veteran burials and \$316,900.00 for dependent burials.

OPERATING COSTS FISCAL YEAR 2012

CEMETERY	OPERATING COSTS
Knoxville (Combined)	\$617,619.00
Nashville	\$592,772.00
Memphis	\$705,998.00
Total Statewide	\$1,916,389.00

In Fiscal Year 2013, TDVA received \$885,000.00 in federal reimbursements for Veteran burials and \$349,281.00 for dependent burials.

OPERATING COSTS FISCAL YEAR 2013

CEMETERY	OPERATING COSTS
Knoxville (Combined)	\$619,657.00
Nashville	\$586,278.00
Memphis	\$688,418.00
Total Statewide	\$1,894,353.00

TOTAL BURIALS SINCE CEMETERIES OPENED

CEMETERY	TYPE	TYPE
Knoxville-Lyons View	Veteran	4,705
Knoxville-Lyons View	Dependent	1,255
Knoxville-John Sevier	Veteran	487
Knoxville-John Sevier	Dependent	103
Nashville	Veteran	8,096
Nashville	Dependent	2,099
Memphis	Veteran	13,662
Memphis	Dependent	4,195
Statewide	Total	34,602

BURIALS FISCAL YEAR 2012-2013

CEMETERY	TYPE	TYPE
Knoxville-Lyons View	Veteran	63
Knoxville-Lyons View	Dependent	67
Knoxville-John Sevier	Veteran	281
Knoxville-John Sevier	Dependent	56
Nashville	Veteran	408
Nashville	Dependent	151
Memphis	Veteran	710
Memphis	Dependent	276
Statewide	Total	2,012

12. What were the department's major accomplishments during fiscal year 2012 and to date for 2013?

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs made exciting strides in fiscal year 2012-2013.

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS

In 2012, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs pursued a policy to increase awareness for the need for fully developed claims. After notifying employees, County Service Officers and Veteran Service Organizations, the department proceeded with an accountability process to return incomplete or incorrect claims to the originator. Training, awareness and accountability have led to an increase in fully developed claims which has improved the efficiency and response time of the federal government for claims originating in Tennessee. In 2013, TDVA's success in submitting fully developed claims led to public recognition from United States Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Benefits General Allison Hickey. During public speaking engagements and conference calls with other state leaders, General Hickey has used TDVA's progress in submissions of fully developed claims as an example of efficiency that is impacting federal backlogs.

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS FILED IN FISCAL YEAR 2012

ORIGINATING AGENCY	NUMBER OF CLAIMS FILED
TDVA	3,698
COUNTY SERVICE OFFICERS	2,769
TOTAL	6,467

The department's training and accountability processes increased the number of fully developed claims for Fiscal Year 2013.

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS FILED IN FISCAL YEAR 2013

ORIGINATING AGENCY	NUMBER OF CLAIMS FILED
TDVA	4,018
COUNTY SERVICE OFFICERS	3,592
TOTAL	7,610

ONLINE PRE-REGISTRATION FOR BURIALS

Traditionally, funeral directors contact the nearest State Veterans Cemetery when they receive the remains of a Veteran or dependent who previously expressed interest in burial at one of the four locations. In many cases, family members are unable to locate the Veteran's discharge papers which must be used to determine eligibility. The process to request and receive the appropriate discharge papers as well as determine eligibility can take several days or weeks.

Veterans and their families can now fill out the secure form which is submitted to their preferred State Veterans Cemetery, then mail their discharge papers to complete the submission process. Cemetery personnel will use the discharge papers to confirm burial eligibility and will mail a formal response to the Veteran or dependent within four to six weeks. Documentation will be archived digitally to ensure authorized cemetery staff can quickly access the information when the Veteran or dependent passes away to provide immediate assistance. The process does not reserve a specific plot, but will ensure the eligibility process is completed before time of death.

This innovative process will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process, improve customer service and give Veterans and family members peace of mind.

The online pre-registration form was launched on the department's website July 2013.

UNCLAIMED VETERAN REMAINS

In 2012, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter No. 828 Relative to Human Remains to allow funeral directors to assume the right of disposition in situations where next of kin is not available or next of kin forfeits right of disposition. Please refer to Public Chapter 828 for the full text and guidance.

In 2013, the President of the United States signed the "Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012" to allow the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to partner with funeral directors and medical examiners to ensure unclaimed Veterans received dignified burials and federal reimbursements were made to funeral directors providing caskets and urns for unclaimed Veteran remains. To review the full text of the federal law, refer to Public Chapter No. 1087- Amendment 67-5-704.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs has created a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to offer guidance to funeral directors throughout the state about our commitment to ensure unclaimed Veteran remains are given proper military funeral honors and a final resting place intended for them at the State Veterans Cemeteries. TDVA has established a partnership with the Tennessee Funeral Directors

Association to increase awareness of our services. TDVA has also posted the new policy on the department's website, shared the news with Veteran Service Organizations and expanded on the topic with presentations from TDVA, Berry Funeral Home and Missing In America during a United Tennessee Veterans Association (UTVA) meeting on June 4.

UPCOMING STATE VETERAN CEMETERIES

In 2012, TDVA created the West Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery Steering Committee which is comprised of community members from Henderson, Madison, Gibson, Hardin and Carroll Counties to recommend three proposed sites for the future Southwest Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery and raise local funding. The Committee has recommended a site in Henderson County and the state has completed a preliminary environmental assessment. More state and federal evaluations are pending.

In 2013, TDVA created the Upper Cumberland State Veterans Cemetery Steering Committee which is comprised of community members from 11 Upper Cumberland counties. The Committee is in the process of increasing awareness in their communities, searching for potential sites and raising local funding.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL

Executive Order #15 signed by Governor Bill Haslam on July 23, 2012 established the Governor's Council on Armed Forces, Veterans and their Families. The Council includes ex-officio members or their designees, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, Adjutant General of the Tennessee Military Department, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, one member of the Tennessee Senate to be selected by the Speaker of the Senate and one member of the Tennessee House of Representatives to be selected by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Council also includes ten citizens appointed by the Governor.

The Governor's Council focuses on suicide prevention, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and unemployment.

The Council met in November 2012, February 2013 and will meet again in August 2013.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT STATE EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT

In May 2013, a request from a Korean War Era Veteran was given to our department to find out the process to get an honorary high school diploma to 84-year old William Duncan.

Public Chapter No. 736 allows the State of Tennessee to issue a high school diploma to Veterans unable to receive diplomas due to an interruption of their education by service in World War I, World War II, the Korean War or the Vietnam War. According to the Tennessee Department of Education, only three to four Veterans request a high school diploma each year since the state law went into effect in 2010.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner and Senator Douglas Henry presented the honorary high school diploma to Corporal William Duncan in June 2013.

The public presentation helped to raise awareness about the little known state benefit and made a Korean War Era Veteran's lifelong dream come true.

MILESTONE VIETNAM VETERAN RECOGNITION

In March 2013, Governor Bill Haslam publically signed a proclamation to recognize and remember Vietnam Veterans Day at the State Capitol. TDVA organized the event to observe the 40th anniversary of the withdrawal of combat troops from Vietnam. Governor Haslam presented the proclamation to Vietnam Veterans of America Tennessee State Council President Barry Rice. This is the first public event hosted by the State of Tennessee to recognize Vietnam Veterans and the anniversary of the withdrawal.

JOBS FOR VETERANS

In October 2012, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs partnered with the Tennessee Department of Labor, Tennessee Military Department and Dollar General for a statewide job fair event called Paychecks for Patriots. More than 2,400 Veterans participated in the 13 concurrent job fairs across the state which showcased 92 employers with 4,000 job openings.

The statewide effort has become an inspiration to other states such as Georgia. All involved state departments and Dollar General received the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Parthenon Award as a result

of the effective effort to unite Veterans with job openings throughout Tennessee.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs also invites representatives from the Tennessee Department of Labor to every TDVA Veterans Outreach event to ensure Veterans and dependents have an opportunity to speak to a Department of Labor Veterans Employment Representative.

TDVA is also promoting Department of Labor job fairs on the TDVA website and social media and participates in the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes events which happen throughout the state.

VETERANS COURTS

In 2012, Shelby County established the Shelby County Veterans Court Mentors Program which is provided to assist Veterans who are charged with a crime and have been accepted into the Shelby County Veterans Court. Mentors, who are also Veterans, volunteer to help the defendant to successfully complete the court's requirements by providing needed resource information and personal support. The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs provides a Veterans Benefits Representative to answer questions from the court, assists the Veteran with information about federal and state benefits and offer claims assistance. TDVA employees offer support on every Wednesday and have assisted approximately 300 Veterans to date.

Montgomery County started a Veterans Court in 2013. TDVA began a partnership with the court in July.

A Veterans Court has started in Nashville and TDVA will pursue opportunities to support the critical program to support Veterans who may be struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or addictive behaviors which may be connected to their time in military service.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE COMES TO TENNESSEE

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner combined efforts with the Governor and Tennessee Department of Tourism to win the bid for the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) and National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) Summer Joint Conference. The national conference will bring approximately 250 decision makers from State Veterans Affairs Departments and State Veterans Homes to Nashville August 31-

September 3, 2013. The NASDVA/NASVH Conference will also bring dignitaries from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and other partners to share developments on federal benefits, healthcare, education, training and other Veteran-focused topics.

WOMEN VETERAN OUTREACH

The number of Tennessee women Veterans has risen to 51,176 according to a report from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs posted in September 2012.

The department recognized a need to create a networking, educational and informational statewide event to help recognize and support women Veterans.

The inaugural event hosted by the department created a partnership with Women Veterans of America (WVA) Chapter 20 which a Veterans Service Organization in 2012. The department has now co-hosted two Women Veterans Summits which included speakers such as Dr. Betty Moseley-Brown from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Associate Director for VA Center for Women Veterans, State Senator and Marine Veteran Dolores Gresham and President of the Board of Directors of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. retired Brigadier General Wilma Vaught. The Summit has also named two Tennessee Women Veterans of the Year to include Tennessee State Veterans Homes Board Chair Mary Ross in 2012 and in 2013 recognized Harriett Howard who retired from the United States Navy after nearly 39 years of service.

The department has also designated two Women Veteran Coordinators, established a Women Veteran Database, and publishes a Women Veteran Newsletter to address needs and issues of women Veterans.

TENNESSEE STATE VETERANS HOME GROUNDBREAKING

In 2004, the application for a new Tennessee State Veterans Home in Montgomery County was filed with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

After reviewing multiple sites, updating the design of the project per changing federal regulations and requesting additional state and local funding, the Governor, Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, Tennessee State Veterans Homes Board, Montgomery County and Clarksville leaders broke ground on the new Montgomery County Tennessee State Veterans Home in May 2013.

GOVERNOR MEMORIAL DAY AND VETERANS DAY EVENTS

In 2011, Governor Bill Haslam decided to change the format of the Governor's Memorial Day event to include formal invitations, recognition and presentations to the surviving family members of Tennessee service members killed in action. The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs now organizes the Governor's Memorial Day event which pays tribute to fallen heroes and honors surviving family members.

For the first time in the state's history, the Governor and First Lady presented a state flag and iris to the families of seven service members killed in action.

In 2013, the Governor presented the state's first Gold Star Family Day Proclamation. The Governor and First Lady also presented the Honor and Remember Flag and iris to surviving family members of three Tennessee service members killed in action.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs also organizes the Governor's annual Veterans Day Event.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs hired an Assistant Commissioner for Communications and Outreach in March 2012. Previously, the department did not have an employee dedicated to communications. In 2013, the department hired a Legislative Liaison who also handles Public Information Officer (PIO) responsibilities.

The department website has been completely redesigned to include a new cemetery page which includes the online pre-registration resource, a Jobs for Veterans page, Women Veterans page, TDVA Training Site, United Tennessee Veterans Association or UTVA page, TDVA events page, online customer service survey, redesigned federal benefits, state benefits page and State Veterans Homes page.

Since 2012, TDVA Communications has distributed and posted **40** press releases and **44** media advisories on the department's website which has garnered a combined **57,072** reads.

Communications has also distributed TDVA Headlines to give state legislators, TDVA employees, Veteran Service Organizations and County Services Officers a snapshot of the news coverage highlighting TDVA events or accomplishments. Since 2012, **65** TDVA Headlines have been distributed.

TDVA Communications has also distributed **four** electronic department newsletters and **five** electronic women Veteran newsletters. The newsletter distribution list for the department newsletter includes **686** addresses. The distribution list for the women Veteran newsletter is **480** subscribers.

Since 2012, the department's facebook page, facebook.com/myTDVA has climbed from **83** likes to **751** likes.

TDVA Communications has also created a YouTube Channel/TDVAServe to highlight department events which recognize and remember Veterans. Since 2012, TDVA Communications has posted **12** videos which have been viewed **2,723** times.

Four twitter accounts have been created by TDVA Communications to increase the departments outreach through the free social media resource. A total of **2,285 followers** are reached by tweet updates from the department.

Twitter accounts-

@YvetteM_TDVA **2,133** followers

@TNDVA **92** followers

@ColonelTDVA **53** followers

@ColinL_TDVA **7** followers

The department has also posted **589** photos in **21** sets of pictures on the free social media site called Flickr. Flickr allows Veterans, survivors and family members to download and print photos at no charge.

13. What reports does the department prepare on its operations, activities and accomplishments and who receives those reports?

TDVA Communications creates the department Annual Report which highlights the operations, accomplishments and federal benefits received by Tennessee Veterans. The TDVA Annual Report is distributed in hard copy and is posted on the department website.

TDVA Communications also organizes quarterly United Tennessee Veterans Associations (UTVA) meetings which allows the department and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs VA Regional Office and VA-Medical Centers to share information, accomplishments and challenges with state leadership for Veteran Service Organizations. Topics for 2012-2013 include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),

resources for Rural Veterans and unclaimed Veteran remains. Meetings are recorded in entirety, archived and available through the TDVA website.

TDVA Headlines and quarterly newsletters are sent to state legislators, TDVA employees, Veteran Service Organizations, County Service Officers, UTVA members and federal partners.

14. Are current national security concerns affecting how the department functions within the provisions of the Sunshine law (Section 8-44-101 et seq.)? If so, how?

In accordance with the Tennessee Open Meetings Act, TDVA Communications posts notices regarding upcoming United Tennessee Veterans Association (UTVA) meetings and distributes media advisories regarding upcoming steering committee meetings where committee members will discuss, deliberate and vote on recommendations for land acquisition and fundraising efforts for the proposed Tennessee State Veterans Homes and State Veterans Cemeteries. The national security concerns have no impact on TDVA operations.

15. How does the department ensure that its staff is operating in an impartial manner and that there are no conflicts of interest? If the department operates under a formal conflict of interest policy, please attach a copy of that policy.

Due to the limited budget, resources and staff, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs uses Shared Services and the Central Purchasing Office for procurement and contract creation and negotiation. TDVA does not have a conflict of interest policy.

16. Has the department promulgated rules? If so, please cite the reference.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs does not have any promulgated rules.

17. Please list all department programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance and, therefore are required to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Include the amount of federal funding received by program/activity.

The four Tennessee State Veterans Cemeteries receive federal grants for cemetery construction, improvements and reimbursements for Veteran burials in the State Veterans Cemeteries.

In Fiscal Year 2013, TDVA received \$885,000.00 in federal reimbursements for Veteran burials and \$349,281.00 for dependent burials.

If the department does receive federal assistance, please answer questions 18 through 29. If the department does not receive federal assistance, proceed directly to question 28.

18. Does your department prepare a Title VI plan? If yes, please provide a copy of the most recent plan.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs has a Title VI plan that is updated every year. A copy of the Title VI plan for 2013 is attached to this report.

19. Does your department have a Title VI coordinator? If yes, please provide the Title VI coordinator's name and phone number and a brief description of his/her duties. If not, provide the name and phone number of the person responsible for dealing with Title VI issues.

The department Title VI Coordinator is LaDonna Copeland at (615) 741-2931. The Title VI Coordinator is responsible to create the annual Title VI test administered to TDVA employees and is required to be completed by June 30 each year. The Coordinator has also created the Title VI curriculum and brochure which is posted on the TDVA website for employees to access at their convenience. Posters have also been posted on the department's website to make it easier for field offices to print and display publically.

20. To which state or federal office (if any) does your department report concerning Title VI? Please describe the information your department submits to the state or federal government and/or provide a copy of the most recent report submitted.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs submits Title VI data to the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights, 101 Market Tower, Suite 2706, Atlanta, GA 30323 and the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, Andrew Johnson Tower, 710 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 100, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243.

21. Describe your department's actions to ensure that department staff and clients/program participants understand the requirements of Title VI.

Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs employees are required to review the Title VI curriculum and are tested using an online fillable PDF form that is graded by the Title VI Coordinator. Title VI curriculum, test, brochure and poster are posted on the department website and brochures as well as posters are offered at the TDVA field offices.

22. Describe your department's actions to ensure it is meeting Title VI requirements. Specifically, describe any department monitoring or tracking activities related to Title VI, and how frequently these activities occur.

TDVA employees are tested annually to ensure they are reminded of Title VI requirements and compliance. TDVA Veterans Benefits Representatives also maintain Title VI reports that are submitted to the Title VI Coordinator monthly to ensure employees are serving customers of all races, ethnicities and gender.

23. Please describe the department's procedures for handling Title VI complaints. Has your department received any Title VI-related complaints during the past two years? If yes, please describe each complaint, how each complaint was investigated, and how each complaint was resolved (or, if not yet resolved, the complaint's current status).

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs has not received any Title VI complaints in the past two years.

PROCESS

Complaints against the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs must be filed within 180 calendar days of the alleged discrimination. Internal complaints must be filed with the Title VI Coordinator. External complaints must be filed with the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights.

A Report of Investigation will be completed no later than 30 calendar days after the complaint is received. If the complaint has been resolved, a Resolution of Complaint will be completed by the complainant and attached to the documentation of the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved, an Appeal of Finding will be completed and forwarded to the Title VI Coordinator for an appeal with the TDVA Commissioner.

If any complainant wishes to appeal a finding or the proposed remedy by the agency, they should do so within the next 30 calendar days following receipt of the findings. If the appeal is filed beyond the required 30 calendar day period, the TDVA Commissioner may proceed if the investigations can be concluded and leave sufficient time for a complainant to file externally. If after appealing to the TDVA Commissioner, a complainant remains unsatisfied with the findings or the proposed remedial action, then she/he can file externally with the Tennessee Human Rights Commission or the Office of Civil Rights.

24. Please provide a breakdown of current department staff by title, ethnicity, and gender.

TITLE	SEX	ETHNIC GROUP
ADMIN ASSISTANT 1	F	African American
ADMIN ASSISTANT 1	F	African American
ADMIN ASSISTANT 1	F	White
ADMIN ASSISTANT 2	F	White
ADMIN SERVICES ASSISTANT 2	F	White
ADMIN SERVICES ASSISTANT 2	F	White
ADMIN SERVICES ASSISTANT 3	F	Other
ADMIN SERVICES ASSISTANT 4	F	White
ADMIN SERVICES ASSISTANT 5	F	African American
ADMIN SERVICES ASSISTANT 5	M	White
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER 1	F	Hispanic
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER 1	M	White
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	American Indian or Alaska Native
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	African American
CEMETERY CARETAKER 1	M	White
CEMETERY DIRECTOR	M	White
CEMETERY DIRECTOR	M	African American
CEMETERY DIRECTOR	M	White
COMMISSIONER 1	F	Asian
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER 1	M	White
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	M	White
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	M	White
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	M	Hispanic
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	M	White
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR SUPERVISOR	M	African American

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR SUPERVISOR	M	White
EXECUTIVE ADMIN ASSISTANT 1	M	White
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY 1	F	White
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY 1	F	White
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY 3	F	White
GROUNDS WORKER 3	M	White
GROUNDS WORKER 3	M	African American
SECRETARY	F	White
SECRETARY	M	Other
SECRETARY	F	White
SECRETARY	F	White
SECRETARY	F	White
SECRETARY	F	African American
TRAINING OFFICER 1	M	White
VA CEMETERY DIRECTOR	M	White
VA CEMETERY DIRECTOR	M	White
VA CEMETERY DIRECTOR	M	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	F	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	F	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	F	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	F	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 2	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	Other
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	F	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	F	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	F	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	African American
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	White
VETERANS' BENEFITS REP 3	M	White
VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	White
VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	White

VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	White
VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	African American
VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	African American
VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	African American
VETERANS' CLAIMS SPECIALIST 1	M	White

FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
26	61	87

WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC	ASIAN	AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN	OTHER
51	29	2	1	1	3

25. Please list all department contracts, detailing each contractor, the services provided, the amount of the contract, and the ethnicity of the contractor/business owner.

Contract Type	Ethnicity	Vendor Name	Description	Max. Amt
SVC (ID) type Contract	Other	State of Tennessee	32300-10014 Shared Services	\$ 32,000.00
DGS - Agency Term	Caucasian	Avatara LLC	Grid Support System, West TN V	\$ 1,678,643.47
DGS - Agency Term	UNK	Provident Security Inc	Alarm Monitoring, Veterans Cem	\$ 720.00
		Appalachian Fire Alarm Solutions		
DGS - Agency Term	Caucasian	LLC	Alarm Monitoring, Veterans Cem	\$ 720.00
DGS - Agency Term	Other	Stop Alarms Inc	Alarm Monitoring, Veterans Cem	\$ 1,068.00
DGS - Agency Contract				
M/Y	Caucasian	Image Matters Inc	Multi-function B&W-Color Copie	\$ 9,611.00
DGS - Agency Term	Caucasian	DataSpec Inc	Vetraspec Software License Web	\$ 286,295.00
			091205 FUEL CARD TO PURCHASE	
SVC (FA) type Contract	UNK	Fleetcor Technologies	G	\$ 43,116,545.05

26. (If applicable) Describe how your department ensures that minorities are included in needs assessments or any other discussions regarding program needs.

WOMEN VETERANS COORDINATORS AND EVENTS

The number of Tennessee women Veterans has risen to 51,176 according to a report from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs posted in September 2012.

TDVA appointed a Women Veterans Coordinator and Women Veterans Coordinator Alternate in 2013 to improve outreach and awareness among Tennessee women Veterans. Coordinators will also communicate with Veteran Service Organizations to raise awareness about the need for Women Veteran Coordinators.

The department recognized a need to create a networking, educational and informational statewide event to help recognize and support women Veterans.

The inaugural event hosted by the department created a partnership with Women Veterans of America (WVA) Chapter 20 which a Veterans Service Organization in 2012. The department has now co-hosted two Women Veterans Summits which included speakers such as Dr. Betty Moseley-Brown from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Associate Director for VA Center for Women Veterans, State Senator and Marine Veteran Dolores Gresham and President of the Board of Directors of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. retired Brigadier General Wilma Vaught. The Summit has also named two Tennessee Women Veterans of the Year to include Tennessee State Veterans Homes Board Chair Mary Ross in 2012 and Harriett Howard who retired from the United States Navy after nearly 39 years of service.

LEP TRAINING

TDVA will promptly identify the language and communication needs of the LEP individual. If necessary, staff will use a language identification card (or “ I speak cards, “ available online at www.lep.gov) or posters to determine the language. In addition, when records are kept of past interactions with Veterans, the language used to communicate with the LEP individual will be included as part of the record.

27. (If applicable.) Please provide a breakdown of clients/program participants by ethnicity for each of the department’s programs covered under Title VI. (Note: This item will apply to federally funded programs operated directly by the department, as well as to federally funded programs operated by the department’s grantees/contractors.)

Not applicable

28. Describe any items related to the department that require legislative attention and your proposed legislative changes.

To decrease confusion and improve consistent services and recognition, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs would like to raise awareness about the importance of a consistent definition of “Veteran”. The department uses Title 38 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 101-definitions, (2) the term ‘Veteran’ means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

The use of this consistent language will allow Veterans who receive medical or general discharges to be recognized and served according to federal regulations.

29. Should the department be continued? To what extent and in what ways would the absence of the department endanger the public health, safety or welfare?

HISTORY

In 1921, an Ex-Serviceman's Bureau was established. Due to the inability of the small agency to provide adequate service for the increase of Veterans after World War II, in 1945 the General Assembly created the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs to provide statewide services. The department was placed under the Governor's office in 1959 as a staff division and once again established as a department in 1975. The General Assembly authorized the department to establish State Veterans Cemeteries in 1987. Legislation was approved in 1988 to establish state veterans homes under the direction of a board of directors appointed by the Governor. In 1991 the department was mandated to train and accredit county-employed Veterans Service Officers.

CONTINUED RELEVANCE

The history of why the Tennessee Department of Veterans remains a foundation of focus for the department. The influx of Veterans continues as more service members come back to the United States after multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The needs of younger Veterans include increased awareness of employment, education and retraining resources as well as federal benefits and health care for service-related injuries. The continued needs of Tennessee's aging Veterans also continue to be a priority of the department.

Federal laws and benefits change constantly and Tennessee Veterans need a group of knowledgeable and highly qualified state experts to help keep them updated on benefit eligibility. For example in 2010, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced Veterans who served in Vietnam from January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 or in or near the Korean demilitarization zone between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971 may be eligible for disability compensation due to exposure to Agent Orange. Vietnam Veterans of America is partnering with TDVA, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and Senator Bob Corker's office to conduct an Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting in July 2013.

Although the department remains small, the need for a liaison to connect Veterans with federal and state resources, educational programs across the state, retraining or vocational resources and Veteran Service Organizations, there would be a frustrating disconnection in communication and services for more than 500,000 Veterans and 1.5 million family members. TDVA has increased outreach momentum through a newly redeveloped website, innovative online pre-registration resources for three State Veterans Cemeteries and continues to cultivate

and strengthen federal, state and local partnerships to offer a big picture perspective of Veteran and dependent resources.

The department will continue to develop the partnership with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development to improve unemployment among Veterans.

TDVA has started a relationship and will continue to develop a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Developments (ECD) to connect Veteran business owners with resources to establish and grow their businesses. ECD's resources for Veteran business owners are included on the new TDVA Resources page on the department's website.

TDVA is currently in the process of creating an educational resource page to help Veterans quickly access educational resources and contacts at each of Tennessee's colleges, universities and technical schools. The department has contacted the Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee System to begin the process.

The department has also created a casualty database and is in the process of creating a constituent inquiry database to improve customer service.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>SECTION</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
1	OVERVIEW
2	FEDERAL PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES
3	ORGANIZATION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICE/CIVIL RIGHTS COORDINATOR
4	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS
5	DEFINITIONS
6	DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES
7	LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)
8	COMPLAINT PROCEDURES
9	COMPLIANCE REVIEWS/COMPLIANCE/NON-COMPLIANCE REPORTING
10	TITLE VI TRAINING
11	PUBLIC NOTICE AND OUTREACH
12	EVALUATION PROCEDURES
13	RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

OVERVIEW

In 1921, service work for Veterans and their dependents in the State of Tennessee was first recognized as a duty of the state to its Veteran population when the state legislature passed a bill establishing an Ex-Servicemen's Bureau. Due to the inability of the small agency to provide adequate service for the subsequent increase of Veterans after World War II, it was considered necessary to provide for full-time statewide coverage. The Veterans Service Organizations of the state supported legislation in the General Assembly in 1945, which resulted in the creation of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs. In 1959, the department was placed under the Governor's Office as a Staff Division. In 1975, legislation was enacted which once again established the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs (TDVA) exists to serve those who have served their state and Country in the Armed Forces. A Veteran is defined as any person who served on active duty in the United States military and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

The department is organized to accomplish the mission of serving Tennessee's Veterans, their families and survivors with dignity and compassion, and being their principal advocate in ensuring they receive the care, support, benefits, and recognition for service to our Nation. We believe Veterans are special people who deserve our efficient, productive and compassionate advocacy in return for their service to our Country.

Tennessee Code Annotated Sections 58-3-104 through 58-3-108 define the standardization of services to Veterans, their families and survivors. Tennessee Code Annotated Sections 46-1-101 through 46-1-104 define the statutory obligations of the department to provide State Veterans Cemeteries in each of the three grand divisions of Tennessee. Two cemeteries were opened in Knoxville. The first opened on August 10, 1990 and the second opened in September, 2011. A Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery opened in Memphis on January 16, 1992 and the Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery opened in Nashville on January 1, 1993.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

The TDVA Field Division, through its network of 12 field offices across the state, serve Veterans, their families and survivors by representation and assistance in obtaining benefits and entitlements from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal, state and local agencies.

The TDVA Claims Division provides technical, in-depth review of evidence and development of issues, presents oral testimony at hearings as the Veterans' representative. Additionally, assistance is provided for employment referrals, Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling and Referrals, outreach briefing to military personnel being discharged, and counseling assistance for destitute Veterans, their families and survivors.

The TDVA Cemetery Division is responsible for interment of eligible Veterans and their families, as well as perpetual care and development of cemetery property. The cemeteries provide a beautiful, serene and dignified final resting-place for Veterans and eligible dependents.

VISION

Our Veterans, their families, and survivors will be fully aware of all benefits and entitlements for which they qualify; can easily obtain representation and assistance needed to file fully developed claims; will have a Veterans Home and Veterans Cemetery located within a reasonable commute; are fully recognized, appreciated, and supported by communities that understand the price of freedom.

MISSION

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs mission is to serve Veterans, their families and survivors with dignity and compassion; to be the Veterans advocate by representation and assistance in obtaining benefits, entitlements and recognition they earned in service to our Country and to promote community awareness of the sacrifices that Veterans have made.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs will not discriminate against or harass any individual in providing services or administering any program or activity. This policy applies whether or not the program receives federal financial assistance. Reasonable accommodations will be made to allow participation by disabled persons in any TDVA program or activity.

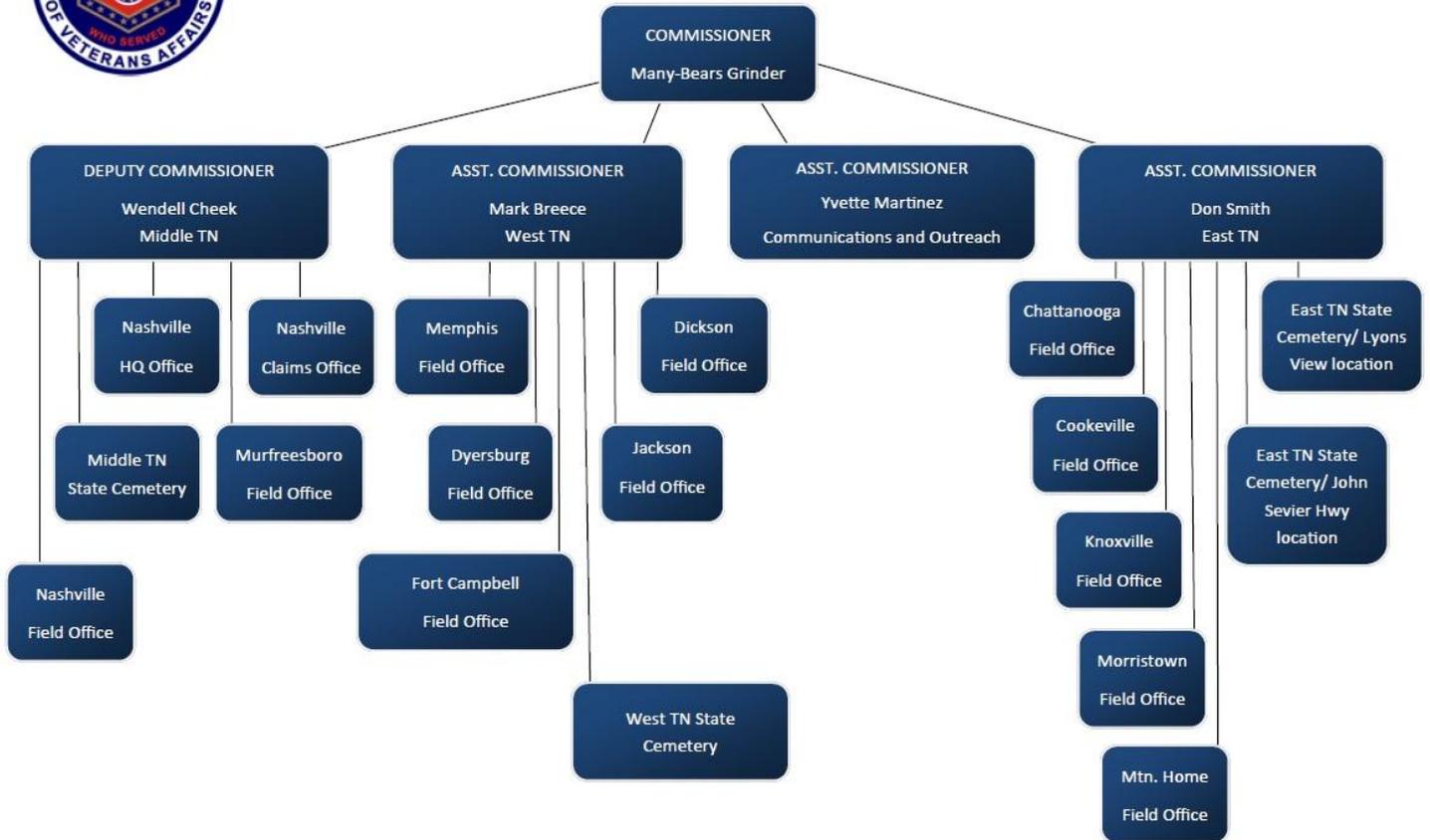
Currently, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs does not have any assurances to provide to the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012



TDVA Organizational Chart



Updated 07/2012



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

FEDERAL PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES

Burial Expenses Allowance for Veterans (CFDA 64.101) is received through the Cemetery Division for burial reimbursement of Veterans interred in the Tennessee State Veterans Cemeteries. Claims are submitted to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for each individual Veteran at the time of interment and are paid based on the individual Veterans eligibility.

The federal dollars collected are used to reduce state appropriations to operate the Cemetery Division.

\$857,700.00 federal funds were collected for Veteran burials in Tennessee State Veteran Cemeteries in fiscal year 2011 – 2012.

\$10,109,000.00 Improvement and Expansion Grants have been requested from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2012-2013 for three Tennessee State Veterans Cemeteries.

\$3,784,000.00 requested for Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery
\$ 432,000.00 requested for East Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery
\$5,893,000.00 requested for West Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery

TDVA does not have any sub-recipients of these federal funds.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CIVIL RIGHTS COORDINATOR

La Donna Copeland – Budget Officer/Title VI Coordinator
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-1010
(615) 741-2931

TDVA Title VI policies, data, files, training, and Implementation Plan are prepared, implemented, and maintained by the TDVA Budget Officer and Title VI Coordinator.

The Title VI Coordinator reports to Deputy Commissioner Wendell Cheek. The Title VI Coordinator job responsibilities include but are not limited to departmental compliance, planning, developing, ensuring all employees are properly trained and tested annually on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, gathering and maintaining data from the field offices and cemeteries that are related to any and all Title VI issues/complaints to include complaint resolution, and preparation and submission of the TDVA Annual Implementation Plan.

The Title VI Coordinator will receive internal or external Title VI complaints and ensure investigation, response, and any other related actions are completed within established time frames.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Ethnic data is collected when contacts are made in person for our services. Data Collection is accomplished by sign-in logs (Appendix A), which provide data necessary to compile statistical reports (Appendix B). Voluntary completion of information is requested from our clients. The data is used for compliance reporting. Retention of records is in accordance with standards set by the Records Management Division of the Tennessee Department of General Services. The information collected is used for compliance and monitoring purposes.

Identification of potential beneficiaries is obtained by our public notification and awareness programs specified in those sections of this plan related to these matters.

TDVA employee composition by race is shown in (Appendix C).

Census data for Veterans, families and survivors is not available from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

COMPLAINTS

TDVA did not refer any Title VI complaints to another state or federal department/agency for fiscal year 2011 – 2012.

There were no lawsuits filed alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin under any federally funded program or activity for fiscal year 2011-2012.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

Appendix A - Sign-In Logs

<small>Persons with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 who must submit data for use in identifying and participating in our programs to our Social Security (Optional)</small>	Date	Last Name	First Name	M.I.	Date of birth	City of Residence	D	R	V	P	African American	American Indian	Hispanic	White	Other	WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Laos/Vietnam Cambodia	Panama Canal	SEI/ DIF	Other	



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

Appendix B - Title VI Statistical Reports

Title VI
 July 2011-June 2012

District	Ethnic Data Group	Census	Number served	Percent Served	Period of Service									
					WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Leb/ Grenada	Panama	Persian Gulf	OEF/OIF	Other	did not mark
Chattanooga	African American	5278	565	11%	0	79	94	559	3	1	150	42	195	32
	American Indian	187	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic	243	9	4%	0	1	1	3	0	0	3	1	1	3
	Other	41	2	5%	0	2	1	4	0	0	1	0	3	0
	White	51109	1090	2%	1	433	262	866	0	0	130	101	126	125
		56858	1666	3%	1	515	358	1432	3	1	284	144	325	160
Cookeville	African American	391	2	1%	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
	American Indian	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic	64	2	3%	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Other	18	0	0%	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	White	24484	155	1%	0	104	46	156	5	4	34	39	30	22
		24957	159	1%	0	104	47	160	5	5	34	40	31	23
Dickson	African American	2504	44	2%	0	5	5	27	0	0	26	3	4	3
	American Indian	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Hispanic	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0%	0	0	2	8	0	0	1	1	5	0
	White	32168	400	1%	0	96	124	466	0	0	52	43	41	13
		34672	444	1%	0	101	131	501	0	0	79	47	51	16
Dyersburg	African American	2649	221	8%	0	7	13	229	0	0	53	55	128	0
	American Indian	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Hispanic	0	3	0%	0	0	0	6	0	0	1	2	2	0
	Other	0	0	0%	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
	White	23280	794	3%	0	92	131	800	0	0	84	91	369	2
		25929	1018	4%	0	99	144	1038	0	0	139	150	499	2
Jackson	African American	2874	432	15%	0	32	78	386	6	4	85	53	228	6
	American Indian	112	1	1%	0	0	1	5	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Hispanic	98	2	2%	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0
	Other	0	1	0%	0	5	4	4	1	0	0	1	31	1
	White	22368	595	3%	0	227	183	391	13	3	49	64	323	10
		25452	1031	4%	1	264	266	786	20	7	136	119	584	17



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

Appendix B - Title VI Statistical Reports

Title VI
 July 2011-June 2012

District	Ethnic Data Group	Census	Number served	Percent Served	Period of Service									
					WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Leb/ Grenada	Panama	Persian Gulf	OEF/OIF	Other	did not mark
Knoxville	African American	3322	312	9%	0	60	23	348	0	0	38	32	151	10
	American Indian	340	1	0%	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic	0	7	0%	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	4	0	1
	Other	12	5	42%	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	1	2	1
	White	81332	1933	2%	63	878	598	2070	5	3	214	259	833	13
		85006	2258	3%	64	942	625	2423	5	3	254	296	986	25
Memphis	African American	25752	2480	10%	4	96	167	2173	11	16	239	224	1957	10
	American Indian	0	0	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic	0	8	100%	1	2	2	9	0	0	2	5	8	0
	Other	0	4	100%	0	1	2	7	0	0	0	0	7	0
	White	56785	762	1%	2	107	114	887	12	10	60	103	288	3
		82537	3254	4%	7	206	285	3076	23	26	301	332	2260	13
Morristown	African American	449	19	4%	0	3	6	20	0	1	5	0	0	0
	American Indian	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic	0	0	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	19	0	0%	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	White	20546	552	3%	1	159	144	631	0	0	98	74	0	0
		21014	571	3%	1	162	150	652	0	1	103	74	0	0
MT. Home	African American	958	248	26%	0	7	9	129	0	0	90	31	179	34
	American Indian	1	2	200%	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	1
	Hispanic	0	15	0%	0	0	0	16	0	0	3	4	10	1
	Other	1	10	1000%	0	4	3	8	0	0	3	20	43	2
	White	44639	3408	8%	36	506	757	2925	10	0	926	731	1742	276
		45599	3683	8%	36	517	769	3079	10	0	1025	786	1975	314
Murfreesboro	African American	2811	94	3%	0	5	5	107	1	1	29	18	28	8
	American Indian	1	4	400%	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Hispanic	203	6	3%	0	0	0	8	0	0	2	4	1	0
	Other	17	4	24%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1
	White	44932	574	1%	0	37	73	677	1	3	110	110	141	25
		47964	682	1%	0	42	78	797	2	4	143	133	172	34



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

Appendix B - Title VI Statistical Reports

Title VI
 July 2011-June 2012

District	Ethnic Data Group	Census	Number served	Percent Served	Period of Service									
					WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Leb/ Grenada	Panama	Persian Gulf	OEF/OIF	Other	did not mark
Nashville	African American	10599	915	9%	1	15	52	789	28	1	345	242	391	66
	American Indian	257	7	3%	0	1	0	7	0	0	1	1	1	0
	Hispanic	510	55	11%	0	3	4	38	1	0	16	14	10	3
	Other	135	61	45%	0	5	5	50	0	0	34	25	19	6
	White	60738	1778	3%	2	101	278	1836	63	4	516	324	408	77
		72239	2816	4%	3	125	339	2720	92	5	912	606	829	152
Clarksville	African American	4502	256	6%	0	0	0	4	0	0	38	328	75	6
	American Indian	117	2	2%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
	Hispanic	728	79	11%	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	118	15	0
	Other	747	44	6%	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	53	22	1
	White	14206	454	3%	0	0	3	8	0	2	22	808	50	4
		20300	835	4%	0	0	3	12	0	3	63	1309	163	11
Knox Cem	African American		26		0	21	16	21	0	0	3	0	7	3
	American Indian		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other		0		0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
	White		184		0	144	103	146	0	0	5	4	25	3
			0		0	165	119	168	0	0	9	4	32	6
Memp Cem	African American		226		0	155	130	224	0	0	11	11	56	1
	American Indian		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Hispanic		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other		0		0	10	8	14	0	0	2	3	0	0
	White		134		0	105	87	154	0	0	5	9	28	2
			0		0	270	225	392	0	0	18	23	85	3
Nash Cem	African American		70		0	28	42	59	0	0	5	0	26	31
	American Indian		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic		1		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Other		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	White		133		1	60	58	82	0	0	12	1	26	36
			204		1	88	100	141	0	0	17	1	52	68



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

Appendix B - Title VI Statistical Reports

Title VI
 July 2011-June 2012

District	Ethnic Data Group	Census	Number served	Percent Served	Period of Service										
					WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Leb/ Grenada	Panama	Persian Gulf	OEF/OIF	Other	did not mark	
State percentages															
WIDE	African American	62089	5588	9%	5	513	640	5076	49	25	1117	1039	3426	210	
TOTALS	American Indian	1015	17	2%	1	2	2	18	0	0	7	3	5	1	
	Hispanic	1846	186	10%	2	6	9	84	1	0	33	154	49	10	
	Other	990	131	13%	0	30	27	104	1	1	43	107	134	12	
	White	476587	12495	3%	106	3049	2961	12095	109	29	2317	2761	4430	611	
	Includes cemetery totals.	542527	18417	3%	114	3600	3639	17377	160	55	3517	4064	8044	844	



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

Appendix C

Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Composition by Race (FY 2011 - 2012)

Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Black	Other	Hispanic	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Employees	Males	Males	Males	Males	Females	Females	Females	Females	White	White	Black	Black	Other	Other	Hispanic	Hispanic
87	37	22	1	2	17	5	2	1	54	62%	27	31%	4	4%	2	2%



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

DEFINITIONS

Beneficiaries

Describes persons to whom assistance, services or benefits are ultimately provided.

Complaints

A verbal or written allegation of discrimination which indicates that any federally assisted program is operated in such a manner that it results in disparity of treatment to persons or groups of persons because of race, color or national origin.

Compliance

The fulfillment of the requirements of Title VI, other applicable laws, implementing regulations and instructions to the extent that no distinctions are made in the delivery of any service or benefit on the basis of race, color or national origin.

Dependent

In the case of a deceased Veteran, the spouse of a Veteran or a child under 18 or up to age 23 if a full time student, a child disabled prior to age 18 regardless of their current age. A child is biological, step-child or adopted, the spouse, child or dependent parent established as such under Title 38, United States Code, while the Veteran was living or who otherwise, for United States Department of Veterans Affairs purposes, established such relationship under specific program requirements subsequent to the Veterans death.

Discrimination

To make any distinction between one person or group of persons and others, either intentionally, by neglect, or by the effect of actions or lack of actions based on race, color or national origin.

Federal Assistance

Federal funding, property or aid provided for the purpose of assisting a beneficiary.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Minority

A person or groups of persons differing from others in some characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment on the basis of race, color or national origin.

Plot Allowance

An allowance paid by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to the TDVA as payment for the interment plot of an eligible Veteran in any of our State Veteran Cemeteries.

Potential Beneficiaries

Those persons who may be eligible to receive federally assisted program benefits and services.

Public Notification

The process of publicizing information on the availability of programs, services and benefits to minorities and statements of non-discrimination. This is attained through the use of newspapers, newsletters, periodicals, radio, television, community organizations, grass roots and special needs directories, brochures/pamphlets, and social media.

Recipient

Any state, political subdivision of any state, or instrumentality of any state or political subdivision, any public or private agency, institution, organization, other entity or any individual in any state to whom federal financial assistance is tended, directly or through another recipient, for any program, including any successor, assignee, or transferee thereof, but not including any ultimate beneficiary under such program.

Survivor

In the case of a deceased Veteran, the spouse, child or dependent parent established as such under Title 38, United States Code, while the Veteran was living or who otherwise, for United States Department of Veterans Affairs purposes, established such relationship under specific program requirements subsequent to the Veterans death.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U S C 100d-4

Federal law prohibiting discrimination based on race, color or national origin. It covers all forms of federal aid except contracts of insurance and guaranty. It does not cover employment, except where employment practices result in discrimination against program beneficiaries or where the purpose of the federal assistance is to provide employment.

United Tennessee Veterans Association (UTVA)

UTVA is an affiliation of the Veteran Service Organizations in Tennessee. It was formed in response to suggestions to leaders of various Veteran Service Organizations to enhance services provided by the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs. Regular meetings shall be held during the months of March, June, September and December, at the time and place arranged by the UTVA Executive Officer. The TDVA Commissioner serves as Ex-Officio Executive Officer.

Veteran

A person who served in the active military, naval or air service and was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable, or who otherwise meets the definition of a Veteran as defined in Title 38, United States Code.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs specifically prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin in;

- the proof and establishment of claims, privileges, rights or other benefits claimants may be entitled to under federal, state and local governments and private agencies;
- representation at hearings by Claims Representatives;
- access to the services provided by the Cemetery Division;
- employment in any division of TDVA.

PROHIBITED PRACTICES INCLUDE:

- Deny any Veteran or dependent access to any service or program offered by this department. Specifically, all Veterans and dependents will be afforded equal opportunity and access to services without regard to race, color or national origin in the presentation, proof and establishment of claims, privileges, rights and other benefits they may be entitled to under federal, state and local governments and private agencies; all Veterans and dependents will be afforded equal opportunity and services without regard to race, color or national origin in the cemetery program.
- Deny any individual any services, opportunity, or other benefit which is different or is provided in a different manner from that which is provided to others under the program.
- Segregating individuals solely because of race, color, or national origin in any manner related to receipt of all services.
- Failing to make allowances for language or educational differences.
- Adopt methods of administration which would limit participation by any group of recipients or subject them to discrimination.
- Address an individual in a manner that denotes differences because of race, color or national origin (Appendix D).



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Employees are subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including termination charges if violation(s) of this policy is substantiated during an investigation.

The Title VI Coordinator and committee are responsible for preparation of plan documents, implementation, training, compliance review, resolution of complaints, reporting and maintenance of plan documents.

Each office manager is responsible for Title VI compliance of the employees under their direct supervision. The overall responsibility for departmental Title VI compliance is vested within the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs.

TDVA has no sub-recipients of funds; therefore, communication to sub-recipients is not applicable.

The Title VI brochure (Appendix E) is available to individuals entering our offices and the Equal Opportunity Poster (Appendix F) is in a visible location in all of our offices. Non-discriminatory practices and rights of beneficiaries, as well as contact information for filing complaints are clearly stated in this information. The Title VI Policy and Guidelines are available at any Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Office.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

POLICY STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

USE OF COURTESY TITLES

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs policy regarding use of courtesy titles is:

Employees will use courtesy titles, i.e., Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss, to address all clients without regard to race, color or national origin in both written and oral communications unless the client has specifically initiated instructions otherwise.

This policy is subject to the Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 Complaint Procedures and Remedies thereof.

Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder

Date



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012



The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, color, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, or in its policies in the admission of access to treatment, employment, its programs, services or activities.



Tennessee Department of
Veterans Affairs

312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 741-2931
www.tn.gov/veteran

Equal
Opportunity
is the
Law



Tennessee
Department of
Veterans Affairs



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Equal Opportunity

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to ensure the people of the United States equal treatment, rights and opportunities regardless of race, color or national origin. Title VI of that Act prohibits discrimination in federal funded programs.

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs requires a statement of compliance with the Civil Rights Act before entering into a contract or other agreement with any vendor.

Complaints must be filed in writing with the Title VI Representative at the location of the alleged discrimination or the central office of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs or with the Office of Civil Rights, 101 Marietta Tower, Suite 2706, Atlanta, GA 30323.

Our Policy

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs does not because of race, color or national origin;

- ⇒ deny any individual any service, or other benefit, for which he/she is qualified;
- ⇒ provide any individual any service, or other benefit, which is different or is provided in a different manner from that which is provided to others under the program;
- ⇒ subject any individual to segregated or separate treatment in a manner related to his/her receipt of service;
- ⇒ restrict an individual, in any way, in the enjoyment of services, facilities or any other advantage, privilege or other benefit provided to others under the program;

- ⇒ Adopt methods of administration which would limit participation by any group of recipients or subject them to discrimination;
- ⇒ Address an individual in a manner that denotes different because of race, color or national origin.



For more information contact:

TDVA Title VI Coordinator
Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 741-2931



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix F- EEO Poster

Equal Employment Opportunity is **THE LAW**

Private Employers, State and Local Governments, Educational Institutions, Employment Agencies and Labor Organizations

Applicants to and employees of most private employers, state and local governments, educational institutions, employment agencies and labor organizations are protected under Federal law from discrimination on the following bases:

RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, protects applicants and employees from discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), or national origin. Religion discrimination includes failing to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious practices where the accommodation does not impose undue hardship.

DISABILITY

Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, protect qualified individuals from discrimination on the basis of disability in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral, and other aspects of employment. Disability discrimination includes not making reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability who is an applicant or employee, barring undue hardship.

AGE

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as Amended, protects applicants and employees 40 years of age or older from discrimination based on age in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment.

SEX (WAGES)

In addition to sex discrimination prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, as amended, prohibits sex discrimination in the payment of wages to women and men performing substantially equal work, in jobs that require equal skill, effort, and responsibility, under similar working conditions, in the same establishment.

GENETICS

Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 protects applicants and employees from discrimination based on genetic information in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral, and other aspects of employment. GINA also restricts employers' acquisition of genetic information and strictly limits disclosure of genetic information. Genetic information includes information about genetic tests of applicants, employees, or their family members; the manifestation of diseases or disorders in family members (family medical history); and request for or receipt of genetic services by applicants, employees, or their family members.

RETALIATION

All of these Federal laws prohibit covered entities from retaliating against a person who files a charge of discrimination, participates in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposes an unlawful employment practice.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE DISCRIMINATION HAS OCCURED

There are strict time limits for filing charges of employment discrimination. To preserve the ability of EEOC to act on your behalf and to protect your right to file a private lawsuit, should you ultimately need to, you should contact EEOC promptly when discrimination is suspected:

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 1-800-669-4000 (toll-free) or 1-800-669-6820 (toll-free TTY number for individuals with hearing impairments). EEOC field office information is available at www.eeoc.gov or in most telephone directories in the U.S. Government or Federal Government section. Additional information about EEOC, including information about charge filing is available at www.eeoc.gov.

Should you feel you have been discriminated against, contact the TDVA Title VI representative LaDonna Copeland, 312 Rosa L. Parks Blvd., Nashville, TN 37243, (615) 741-2931.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

After review of the customer contact sheets for the fiscal year 2010 – 2011, we have determined the Veterans serviced for this period have not had a need for assisted language services. English has been their primary language.

TDVA policy for LEP is as follows:

TDVA will take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in our services, activities, programs and other benefits. The policy of the TDVA is to ensure effective communication with persons with LEP and their authorized representatives. This policy also provides for communication of information contained in vital documents, including but not limited to all VA forms associated with filing claims for VA benefits and obtaining Veterans health records. All interpreters, translators and other aids needed to comply with this policy shall be provided without cost to the person being served.

Language assistance will be provided through use of competent bilingual staff, staff interpreters, contracts or formal arrangements with organizations providing interpretation or translation services, or technology and telephonic interpretation services. All staff will be provided notice of this policy and procedure; employees that may have direct contact with LEP individuals will be trained in effective communication techniques, including the effective use of an interpreter.

TDVA will conduct regular reviews of the language access needs of our service population, as well as update and monitor the implementation of this policy and these procedures, as necessary.

PROCEDURES FOR LEP ASSISTANCE

1. Identifying LEP persons and their language

TDVA will promptly identify the language and communication needs of the LEP person. If necessary, staff will use a language identification card ("I Speak Cards") or posters to determine the language.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

2. Obtaining a qualified interpreter

Supervisors in each TDVA office are responsible for:

- (a)** Maintaining an accurate and current list showing the name, language, phone number and hours of availability of bilingual staff (AVAZA Language Services Corporation, 1-800-482-8292, 24 hours a day);
- (b)** Obtaining an outside interpreter if a bilingual staff or staff interpreter is not available or does not speak the needed language.

Some LEP individuals may prefer or request to use family or friends to provide interpretation services for them. If the TDVA staff feels the individuals the LEP chooses to use to interpret for them is incompetent or inappropriate for any reason, the services of Avaza will be utilized. **The following two pages are provided for Avaza Language Services Corporations services. (Appendices G & H)**

LEP services were provided by Avaza to the public by Veterans Affairs one time during July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. The language that our staff was confronted with was Spanish.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix G

AVAZA
Language Services Corp.

OVER-THE-PHONE INTERPRETING

Over-the-Phone (OTP) interpreting remains the most popular method of delivery for the interpreting industry. We believe that OTP services should be quick, flexible and managed to allow the best practices and minimize missed opportunities for our clients and the individuals that are Limited in English Proficiency (LEP).

Quality from the start...
Each of our Call Center Coordinators must initially complete at least 20 hours of training before they are ready to take calls. This enables us to better assist you in professionalism, accuracy, and precise monitoring. With these three attributes, we are able to gather detailed information and connect you to an interpreter in a matter of seconds.

Professional Training...
AVAZA interpreters follow nationwide standards of interpreting from the leading training organizations and curriculums. From ethics to practice, and confidentiality to compliancy, interpreter trainings are continuous, effective and integrated with call center processes and customer care trainings. In addition, AVAZA interpreters submit to the mandatory completion of the nation's leading medical interpreter training program (Bridging the Gap Medical Interpreter Training) and further professional development in healthcare.

Technology...
Providing quality language services over-the-phone requires scalability in telephony systems and/or server platforms that meet redundancy, reliability, security, and performance needs. While our systems engage in those fundamental needs, we continuously race to integrate the newest technologies that only support efficiency in the deployment of our services.

Delivery of Services...

- User-friendly
- Support in over 120 languages and dialects
- 24/7 access
- Qualified medical interpreters
- Proficiency in active languages
- Aggressive quality control
- Emphasis on clarity, customer care, and consistency
- Billing for usage only
- No monthly or annual fees

The best in over-the-phone language support, available 24/7, 365 days a year

© 2011 Avaza Language Services Corp

615.534.3400 | fax: 615.810.8506 | 800.482.8292
www.avaza.co

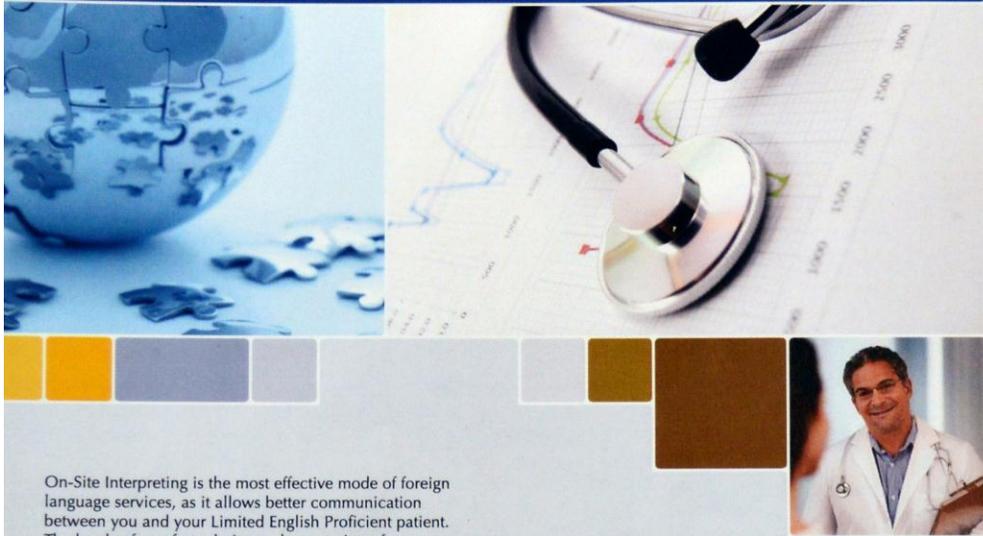


Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix H



ON-SITE INTERPRETING



On-Site Interpreting is the most effective mode of foreign language services, as it allows better communication between you and your Limited English Proficient patient. The levels of comfort, clarity, and conversion of messages are all enhanced due to the interpreter's presence. At AVAZA, we believe that careful coordination for interpreting on-site and the delivery of trained medical interpreters are integral in eliminating missed opportunities.

Professional Training...
AVAZA Interpreters follow standards and curriculums of interpreting from nationwide training organizations. We put emphasis on medical interpreter training and patient care. Our interpreters are required to take continuous training which include: Concentration in health care terms and practices, constant perception in interpreting behavior and overall professional development.

Our Goal...
Our belief is that the most successful interpreted sites leave the provider confident in the relay of information and allow the patient to have meaningful access to care. Simply put, we allow communication to exist in a manner that once we leave, both the patient and provider feel as though there was no interpretation at all.

Delivery of Services ...

- User-friendly
- Support in over 120 languages and dialects
- 24/7/365 access
- Qualified/Certified medical interpreters
- Mastery in active languages
- Emphasis on patient care
- 92% closure on last minute requests

Remember, one unit of time working with an interpreter equals to four units of time working without one.

615.534.3400 | fax: 615.810.8506 | 800.482.8292
www.avaza.co

© 2011 Avaza Language Services Corp.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

According to federal and state regulations, a complaint alleging discrimination against the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs must be filed no later than 180 calendar days after the alleged discrimination occurred as an internal complaint with TDVA, or as an external complaint by contacting the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights, 101 Market Tower, Suite 2706, Atlanta, GA 30323 or the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, Andrew Johnson Tower, 710 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 100, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243, (615) 741-5825, www.tn.gov/humanrights.

The supervisor with each office has the responsibility of making the complaint procedures available to clients and offering assistance with completion of the complaint. Complaints should be filed in writing, preferably on the Complaint Form (Appendix I). If the complainant is unwilling to complete the form, they may submit a letter stating the detailed circumstances of the complaint. The Title VI Coordinator has the responsibility for receiving, acknowledging, investigating, and reporting the findings.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the TDVA Title VI Coordinator will send a Letter Acknowledging Receipt of a Complaint (Appendix J) to the complainant. A Report of Investigation (Appendix K) will be completed no later than 30 calendar days after the complaint is received. A letter advising complainant that the complaint is or is not substantiated will be sent within 30 calendar days after the complaint was received. If the complaint has been resolved, a Resolution of Complaint will be completed by the complainant and attached to the documentation of the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved, an Appeal of Finding (Appendix L) will be completed and forwarded to the Title VI Coordinator for an appeal with the TDVA Commissioner.

When an appeal is filed, the TDVA Commissioner has broad latitude to review an appealed case and make a finding. Procedures can include, but are not limited to, discussing the complaint with the complainant, the alleged offender, all involved individuals, and the initial reviewer to determine the facts. When an appeal is concluded a copy of the finding will be sent to the complainant.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 Implementation Plan
 September 2012

If any complainant wishes to appeal a finding or the proposed remedy by the agency, they should do so within the next 30 calendar days following receipt of the findings. If the appeal is filed beyond the required 30 calendar day period, the TDVA Commissioner may proceed if the investigations can be concluded and leave sufficient time for a complainant to file externally. If after appealing to the TDVA Commissioner, a complainant remains unsatisfied with the findings or the proposed remedial action, then she/he can file externally with the Tennessee Human Rights Commission or the Office of Civil Rights.

Steps and Time Frame for Title VI Complaint Procedures

	Action	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1	Receive Complaint internally/externally	Title VI Coordinator - Letter to Acknowledge Complaint	Immediately
2	Investigation by Title VI Coordinator, Committee and/or Human Rights Commission	Title VI Coordinator - Letter of Finding	30 days from receipt
3	Resolution Letter or Appeal of Finding (Appendix M)	Complainant	30 days from Letter of Finding
4	If Required - Response to Appeal	Title VI Coordinator	30 days from appeal
5	If Required - Appeal to Commissioner (Appendix N)	Complainant	30 days from response
6	Response to Appeal	Commissioner	30 days from appeal
7	External Appeal - TN Human Rights Commission or Office of Civil Rights	Complainant	Can be filed at any time within 180 days of allegation(s)



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix I

Complaint Under The Civil Rights Act of 1964

Please use additional sheets if needed

Title VI Coordinator
Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-1010

I, _____ hereby file an official complaint
under the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Please describe your complaint. Explain when, where, what occurred, any witnesses to
the alleged discrimination, the person or persons name you are complaining about.

Complainant's Name: _____

Address: _____

Complainant's Contact Information: _____

If you do not have a telephone, please give a contact number where you can be
reached: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Received by: _____ Date: _____



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix J

LETTER ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT OF A COMPLAINT

(Date)

Complainant's Name
Address

Dear _____,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your complaint dated _____
alleging discrimination under Title VI of The Civil Rights Act of 1964.

I, **(Title VI Coordinators Name)** will contact you within 30 days of receipt of your
complaint to share the results of the investigation.

If you have additional information you wish to convey or questions concerning
this matter, please feel free to contact me at (615) 741-2931.

Sincerely,

Title VI Coordinators Name
Title VI Coordinator



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix K

Report of Investigation of Complaint

I, **(Title VI Coordinators name)** serving as Title VI Coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, have investigated the complaint filed on _____, by _____ alleging discrimination which was in violation of the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The results of the investigation are as follows:

- A violation did occur. A copy of the investigation is attached.
- A violation did not occur. A copy of the investigation is attached.
- The complainant withdrew the complaint using the withdrawal form. A copy of the withdrawal is attached.

Signature _____ Date _____
(Title VI Coordinator)

Reviewed and Approved by

Signature _____ Date _____
(Commissioner)



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix L

LETTER ADVISING THE COMPLAINT IS/IS NOT SUBSTANTIATED

Letter will be customized as necessary

Date

Complainant's Name
Address

Dear,

The matter(s) referenced in your complaint of (date), alleging (type) discrimination have been investigated.

Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in any programs receiving federal financial assistance. The facts gathered during the course of the investigation of your complaint have been analyzed. The results of the investigation (did/did not) indicate that the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had in fact been violated.

I must advise you that your complaint (has/has not) been substantiated, and this complaint (is/is not) closing this matter in our files. Further action (will/will not) be taken.

If you are not pleased with the outcome of this complaint, you have the right to appeal this decision with 30 days of the date of this letter. If you wish to appeal please contact me at (615) 741-2931 and request an Appeal of Finding form.

Sincerely,

Title VI Coordinators Name
Title VI Coordinator



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix M

RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINT

Date _____

Title VI Coordinator
Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-1010

I, _____, filed a complaint on (date) alleging that discrimination occurred which was in violation of the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The complaint has been resolved to my satisfaction and no further matters requiring your attention is necessary.

Signed _____ Date _____



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

Appendix N

Appeal of Finding

Date _____

Title VI Coordinator
Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-1010

I, _____, wish to appeal the finding of
the (type) discrimination complaint that I filed on (date).

I am appealing the findings of my complaint for the following reason(s)

Signed _____ Date _____



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

COMPLIANCE REVIEWS

N/A - This department has no sub-recipients; therefore, compliance reviews are not conducted.

COMPLIANCE/NON-COMPLIANCE REPORTING

N/A - TDVA does not furnish or share Title VI compliance reports to any other state or federal entities.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

N/A – TDVA does not have any Title VI federal reporting requirements that impact the department as a recipient of federal funds.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

TITLE VI TRAINING

Training for the department this fiscal year 2011 – 2012 was presented to all TDVA employees as an on line power point presentation (which is on file with the Title VI Coordinator). At the conclusion of the on line training presentation a review was generated and required of all employees to pass. After passing the review each employee received a Certificate of Completion (copies on file with the Title VI Coordinator and in each employees personnel file). Employees that did not successfully pass the review were required to take the training again and also the review to be eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion.

100% of the employees with TDVA have completed the required training for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. All employees successfully passed the review.

TDVA employees hired after the initial training are provided the on line training presentation and review by their supervisors. This is completed within 30 days of their hire date. This proof of training is also maintained by the Title VI Coordinator.

TDVA will continue to provide Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 training to all employees on an annual basis. Future annual training will be conducted between April 1 and June 15 of each year for the department.

Total staff of TDVA – 87

Total number of sub-recipients and/or contractors – 0

Actual number of staff trained – 87

Actual percentage of staff trained – 100%



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

PUBLIC NOTICE AND OUTREACH

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, non-discrimination policy serves the department well in reaching its objective of non-discrimination. It may be found on the TDVA website, TDVA brochures as well as informational and training tools.

TDVA uses a variety of means to make certain that Veterans, their families and survivors are encouraged to participate fully in departmental programs. This includes but is not limited to participation in the United Tennessee Veterans Association (UTVA), outreach programs, networking with Veteran Service Organizations and County Service Officers.

UTVA is an affiliation of Veteran Service Organizations in Tennessee. It was formed in response to suggestions from leaders of various Veteran Service Organizations in order to enhance the services provided by the Tennessee Department of Veteran Affairs.

The purpose of the UTVA, as listed in its Articles of Agreement reads;

- to provide communication, cooperation and unity among the affiliated organizations in matters relating to Veterans and their dependents and survivors;
- to provide a cooperative and effective relationship among all agencies and organizations (federal, state, local, private and public) which provide services to Veterans, their dependents and survivors;
- to promote an understanding among the general public of the problems and needs of Veterans and their dependents and survivors;
- to strengthen the non-partisan political effectiveness of Veterans and their dependents and survivors in matters relating to their general welfare and specific needs as well as matters of significant importance to the military defense of the United States.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

The UTVA enhances the services of TDVA as relative to those services that are mandated. T.C.A. §58-3-106 provides for the establishment of branch offices and field service officers "...of their assigned service area. The UTVA is a vehicle through which to channel communication, cooperation, and unity among Veteran Service Organizations, and with the TDVA on a statewide (departmental) level. Furthermore, this statute provides that field representatives of the department, shall not discriminate for or against any Veteran Service Organization"

UTVA is a unique group which provides a positive attempt to bring the resources of Veteran Service Organizations and their Auxiliary Organizations toward a unified effort to "serve the interest" of all Veterans, dependents and survivors of Veterans throughout the State of Tennessee. UTVA is chaired by the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veteran Affairs. Agency and Veteran Service Organization member representatives are appointed by their organizations.

TDVA has an active outreach program. The goal of this program is to provide information on benefits and services to all Veterans, their families and survivors in both urban and rural areas of the state with particular emphasis on underserved Veterans, their families and survivors.

TDVA sends representatives to speak and meet with various service organizations at both state and national conventions held in Tennessee.

TDVA coordinates outreach efforts with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Tennessee State Labor and Workforce Development Minority Veterans Representatives, County Service Officers, Veteran Service Organizations and local civic leaders in each county. At each outreach event, we encourage Veterans to discuss their situation as it relates to federal benefits.

TDVA prepares a notice or flyer for each outreach event which is forwarded to organizations assisting with the event at the local level. Use of the local media is used to the maximum extent possible to inform the public of such events. TDVA partners with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure a sufficient number of applications and pamphlets can be distributed during the outreach program.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

TDVA representatives located in each of the VA Medical Centers within the state interview and assist potential claimants on a walk-in basis. They also screen daily admissions to determine if contact should be made with certain Veterans and family members concerning possible eligibility for VA benefits.

TDVA offers Quarterly and Annual Training for TDVA employees and County Service Officers. TDVA Veterans Benefits Representatives and County Service Officers are encouraged to arrange and support Veteran outreach events.

Outreach events enable TDVA employees and County Service Officers to provide services for Veterans at Tennessee State Veterans' Homes, in rural areas, state prisons and non-profit events committed to assisting Veterans.

TDVA compliant procedures, non-discrimination policy and Title VI policy are available to employees, clients, constituents and the public on the TDVA website. The TDVA Title VI Implementation Plan is available upon request from the Title VI Coordinator.

TDVA does not currently have any internal or external advisory boards, and does not have any oversight of contracts or grants.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

N/A - This department does not have any sub-recipients and/or contractors.

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs will continue to make strides toward improving its Title VI program. Some of the areas that the department will focus on over the next fiscal year include: compliance audits, training and data collection.

COMPLIANCE AUDITS – The Title VI Coordinator has developed a new Title VI compliance audit schedule. Beginning January, 2013, all contract agencies that provide services on behalf of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs (TDVA) will be audited by a TDVA representative.

TRAINING – Title VI training will be ongoing in the department via in-service training of both field and cemetery employees. The Title VI Coordinator will work with the TDVA Human Resources Director to develop a module on Title VI to be included in the new employee orientation.

DATA COLLECTION – The Title VI Coordinator will continue to explore data collected by the agency in order to identify data related to Title VI that could be utilized in next year's Title VI Implementation Plan.



Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Implementation Plan
September 2012

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS:

TDVA Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder, the TDVA Executive Staff and Ms. La Donna Copeland- Title VI Coordinator ensures TDVA compliance through new hire orientation, Title VI training and test, posting of the Title VI material and compliant site visits.

Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-1010
(615) 741-1959

Date

La Donna Copeland – Title VI Coordinator
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue
Tennessee Tower
13th Floor
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-1010
(615) 741-2931

Date