

VA Office of Inspector General

OFFICE OF AUDITS AND EVALUATIONS



Veterans Benefits Administration

*Inspection of
VA Regional Office
Lincoln, Nebraska*

September 8, 2015
15-02614-434

ACRONYMS

OIG	Office of Inspector General
RVSR	Rating Veterans Service Representative
SMC	Special Monthly Compensation
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VARO	Veterans Affairs Regional Office
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VSC	Veterans Service Center

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Report Highlights: Inspection of the VA Regional Office, Lincoln, NE

Why We Did This Review

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has 56 VA Regional Offices (VAROs) and a Veterans Service Center in Wyoming, that process disability claims and provides services to veterans. In May 2015, we evaluated the Lincoln VARO to see how well it accomplishes this mission. We sampled claims we considered at increased risk of processing errors, thus these results do not represent the overall accuracy of disability claims processing at this VARO.

What We Found

The Lincoln VARO did not accurately process one of the three types of disability claims we reviewed. Overall, staff did not accurately process 8 of the 66 disability claims (12 percent) reviewed. As a result, 12 improper payments were made to 1 veteran totaling \$12,650. During our May 2015 benefits inspection, VARO staff incorrectly processed 7 of the 30 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations we sampled. These results showed slight improvement from our previous inspection in 2012, where 8 of 30 cases sampled contained processing inaccuracies. We determined VARO staff accurately processed traumatic brain injury claims for two consecutive benefits inspections. In the current inspection, staff processed all 30 cases we sampled correctly; in the 2012 inspection, 24 of the 25 cases were accurate. One of the six Special Monthly Compensation and ancillary benefits claims completed by VARO staff in calendar year

2014 contained an error. However, a systemic trend was not found.

VARO staff established the correct dates of claim for 30 cases reviewed in the electronic record. However, 7 of the 30 benefits reduction cases we reviewed had processing delays. Generally, the errors we identified during our 2015 review related to prioritization of workload. But for the workload restrictions imposed by VBA's Central Office and the Central Area, the Lincoln VARO had the potential to be compliant in all areas we inspected.

What We Recommended

We recommended the Lincoln VARO Director ensure staff conduct a review of the 81 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations remaining from our inspection universe. We also recommended the VARO Director ensure benefits reductions cases are prioritized to minimize improper payments.

Agency Comments

The Director of the Lincoln VARO concurred with all recommendations and the planned corrective actions are responsive. We will follow up as required.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent E. Arronte".

Brent E. Arronte
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for
Audits and Evaluations

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INTRODUCTION

Objective

The Benefits Inspection Program is part of the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) efforts to ensure our nation's veterans receive timely and accurate benefits and services. The Benefits Inspection Divisions contribute to improved management of benefits processing activities and veterans' services by conducting onsite inspections at VA Regional Offices (VAROs). These independent inspections provide recurring oversight focused on disability compensation claims processing and the performance of Veterans Service Center (VSC) operations. The objectives of the inspections are to:

- Evaluate how well VAROs are accomplishing their mission of providing veterans with access to high-quality benefits and services.
- Determine whether management controls ensure compliance with VA regulations and policies; assist management in achieving program goals; and minimize the risk of fraud, waste, and other abuses.
- Identify and report systemic trends in VARO operations.

Where we identify potential procedural inaccuracies, we provide this information to help the VARO understand the procedural improvements it can make to ensure enhanced stewardship of financial benefits. We do not provide this information to require the VARO to adjust specific veterans' benefits. Processing any adjustments per this review is clearly a Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) program management decision.

In addition to this oversight, inspections may examine issues or allegations referred by VA employees, members of Congress, or other stakeholders.

Other Information

- Appendix A includes details on the Lincoln VARO and the scope of our inspection.
- Appendix B outlines criteria we used to evaluate each operational activity and a summary of our inspection results.
- Appendix C provides the Lincoln VARO Director's comments on a draft of this report.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Disability Claims Processing

Claims Processing Accuracy

The OIG Benefits Inspection team focused on evaluating the accuracy in processing the following three types of disability claims and determined their effect on veterans’ benefits:

- Temporary 100 percent disability evaluations,
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI) claims, and
- Special monthly compensation (SMC) and ancillary benefits.

We sampled claims related only to specific conditions that we considered at higher risk of processing errors. As a result, the errors identified do not represent the universe of disability claims or the overall accuracy rate at this VARO.

Finding 1

Lincoln VARO Needs To Improve the Processing of One Type of Disability Claims

The Lincoln VARO did not consistently process temporary 100 percent disability evaluations accurately. Overall, VARO staff incorrectly processed 8 of the total 66 disability claims (12 percent) we sampled. As a result, 1 veteran received 12 improper monthly payments totaling approximately \$12,650.

Table 1. Lincoln VARO Disability Claims Processing Accuracy for Three High-Risk Claims Processing Areas

Type of Claim	Claims Reviewed	Claims Inaccurately Processed: Affecting Veterans’ Benefits	Claims Inaccurately Processed: Potential To Affect Veterans’ Benefits	Claims Inaccurately Processed: Total
Temporary 100 Percent Disability Evaluations	30	0	7	7
TBI Claims	30	0	0	0
SMC and Ancillary Benefits	6	1	0	1
Total	66	1	7	8

Source: VA OIG analysis of VBA’s temporary 100 percent disability evaluations paid at least 18 months; TBI disability claims completed from July 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014; and SMC and ancillary benefits claims completed in calendar year 2014.

**Temporary
100 Percent
Disability
Evaluations**

VARO staff incorrectly processed 7 of 30 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations we reviewed. VBA policy requires a temporary 100 percent disability evaluation for a veteran's service-connected disability following a surgery or when specific treatment is needed. At the end of a mandated period of convalescence or treatment, VARO staff must request a follow-up medical examination to help determine whether to continue the veteran's 100 percent disability evaluation.

For temporary 100 percent disability evaluations, VSC staff must input suspense diaries in VBA's electronic system. A suspense diary is a processing command that establishes a date when VSC staff must schedule a reexamination. As a suspense diary matures, the electronic system generates a reminder notification to alert VSC staff to schedule the medical reexamination. VSC staff then have 30 days to process the reminder notification by establishing the appropriate control to initiate action.

When the VARO obtains evidence that a lower disability evaluation would result in a reduction or discontinuance of current compensation payments, VSC staff must inform the beneficiary of the proposed reduction in benefits. In order to provide beneficiaries due process, VBA allows 60 days for the veteran to submit additional evidence to show that compensation payments should continue at their present level. On the 65th day following due process notification, action is required to reduce the evaluation and thereby minimize overpayments.

Without effective management of these temporary 100 percent disability ratings, VBA is at an increased risk of paying inaccurate financial benefits. We determined that VARO staff incorrectly processed 7 of 30 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations we reviewed. All of these cases had the potential to affect veterans' benefits. Details on these errors follow.

- In four cases, VARO staff did not timely reduce benefits after receiving medical evidence that showed the veterans' conditions no longer supported the temporary 100 percent disability evaluations. In these cases, benefits payments were not affected because the expiration of the due process period was set to take place during our file review. However, if final reduction actions are further delayed, the temporary 100 percent evaluation continues despite medical evidence showing the medical condition improved.
- VARO staff delayed scheduling a required VA medical reexamination despite receiving a reminder notification that the reexamination was due. We could not determine whether the temporary 100 percent disability evaluation should continue because the veteran's claims folder did not contain the medical

reexamination report needed to reevaluate the case. At the time of our review, approximately 2 months had elapsed from the time the reminder notification generated to schedule the reexamination.

- A Rating Veterans Service Representative (RVSR) correctly completed a deferred rating decision to adjust a future reexamination date; however, VARO staff did not establish the new suspense diary in the electronic record as required. As this was a deferred rating decision, rather than an actual rating decision or authorization, the input of the new suspense diary is an action that would have to be manually completed by staff.
- An RVSR incorrectly continued a temporary 100 percent disability evaluation for chronic lymphocytic leukemia; however, this condition warranted a permanent 100 percent disability evaluation. In this case, the RVSR did not establish entitlement to the additional benefit of Dependents' Educational Assistance as required by VBA policy.

The majority of the processing inaccuracies occurred when VARO staff delayed finalizing benefits reductions after receiving evidence that veterans' conditions had improved. VARO management agreed with our assessments in all seven cases.

Interviews with VARO management revealed the delays reducing benefits for temporary 100 percent disability evaluations occurred because other claims processing activities had higher priority. VARO management stated it focused on rating-related cases due to the national prioritization, directed by VA's Central Office and Central Area. The VA Central Office and Central Area directed VAROs to prioritize older rating compensation cases, which did not include taking timely action to reduce benefits for temporary 100 percent disability evaluations. We provided VARO management with 81 claims remaining from our universe of 111 after completing our sample review of 30 claims for its review to determine whether similar action is required.

*Follow-Up to
Prior VA OIG
Inspection*

In our previous report, *Inspection of the VA Regional Office, Lincoln, Nebraska* (Report No. 12-00243-219, July 10, 2012), VARO staff incorrectly processed 8 of 30 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations (27 percent) we reviewed. The majority of errors occurred because VARO staff did not establish suspense diaries for future VA medical reexaminations of temporary 100 percent disability evaluations. In response to a recommendation in our report, *Audit of 100 Percent Disability Evaluations* (Report No. 09-03359-71, January 24, 2011), the Acting Under Secretary for Benefits agreed to review all temporary 100 percent disability evaluations and ensure each had a future examination date entered in the electronic record. As

such, we made no specific recommendation for improvement to the Lincoln VARO during our 2012 benefits inspection.

During our March 2015 inspection, we identified one error related to the VARO not establishing a suspense diary for a reexamination; however, this was due to human error. An RVSR correctly completed a deferred rating decision to adjust a future reexamination date, but VARO staff failed to manually input the new suspense diary. The majority of errors identified during this inspection occurred because VARO staff delayed finalizing benefits reductions.

TBI Claims

The Department of Defense and VBA commonly define a TBI as a traumatically induced structural injury or a physiological disruption of brain function caused by an external force. The major residual disabilities of TBI fall into three main categories—physical, cognitive, and behavioral. VBA policy requires staff to evaluate these residual disabilities. Additionally, VBA policy requires that employees assigned to the appeals team, the special operations team, and the quality review team to complete training on TBI claims processing.

In response to a recommendation in our annual report, *Systemic Issues Reported During Inspections at VA Regional Offices* (Report No. 11-00510-167, May 18, 2011), VBA agreed to develop and implement a strategy for ensuring the accuracy of TBI claims decisions. In May 2011, VBA provided guidance to VARO Directors to implement a policy requiring a second signature on each TBI case an RVSR evaluates until the RVSR demonstrates 90 percent accuracy in TBI claims processing. The policy indicates second-signature reviewers come from the same pool of staff as those used to conduct local station quality reviews.

VSC staff correctly processed all 30 TBI claims completed from July 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. We attribute the high accuracy rates for TBI disability claims processing to the VARO's stringent secondary review policy that required all TBI claims undergo a secondary review. Conversely, VBA policy allows RVSRs to independently evaluate these claims once a 90 percent accuracy rate has been obtained.

Follow-Up to Prior VA OIG Inspection

In our previous report, *Inspection of the VA Regional Office, Lincoln, Nebraska* (Report No. 12-00243-219, July 10, 2012), we also determined VARO staff generally followed VBA policy and accurately processed 24 of the 25 TBI claims we reviewed. Because Lincoln VARO staff followed VBA policy when processing TBI disability claims for two consecutive benefits inspections, we made no recommendations for improvement.

**Special Monthly
Compensation
and Ancillary
Benefits**

As the concept of rating disabilities evolved, it was realized that for certain types of disabilities, the basic rate of compensation was not sufficient for the level of disability present. Therefore, SMC was established to recognize the severity of certain disabilities or combinations of disabilities by adding an additional compensation to the basic rate of payment. SMC represents payments for “quality of life” issues such as the loss of an eye or limb, or the need to rely on others for daily life activities, like bathing or eating. Generally, VBA grants entitlement to SMC when the following conditions exist:

- Anatomical loss or loss of use of specific organs, sensory functions, or extremities
- Disabilities that render the veteran permanently bedridden or in need of aid and attendance
- Combinations of severe disabilities that significantly affect locomotion
- Existence of multiple, independent disabilities evaluated as 50 to 100 percent disabling
- Existence of multiple disabilities that render the veteran in need of such a degree of special skilled assistance that, without it, the veteran would be permanently confined to a skilled-care nursing home

Ancillary benefits are secondary benefits that VBA staff must consider when evaluating claims for SMC. Examples of ancillary benefits are:

- Dependents’ Educational Assistance under title 38 United States Code, Chapter 35
- Specially Adapted Housing Grants, which allow veterans with certain disabilities such as amputations or paralysis to purchase or renovate a barrier-free home
- Special Home Adaptation Grants, which help blinded veterans or those with upper-extremity handicaps to renovate a home
- Automobile and Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment Allowance

VBA policy requires staff to address the issues of SMC and ancillary benefits whenever they can grant entitlement. We examined whether VARO staff accurately processed entitlement to SMC and ancillary benefits associated with anatomical loss, loss of use of two or more extremities, or bilateral blindness with visual acuity of 5/200 or worse.

VARO staff incorrectly processed one of six veterans’ claims involving SMC and ancillary benefits. This error affected a veteran’s benefits

and resulted in approximately \$12,650 in overpayments over a 1 year period. VARO management concurred with this error.

In this case, an RVSR granted entitlement to the highest-level of SMC without the required medical evidence that this veteran needed skilled care on a daily basis. Although the RVSR had an examination performed for the veteran, this report did not show the veteran's condition required daily care from a licensed provider, such as a registered nurse or physical therapist.

Our case reviews and interviews with staff and management showed that this error was an isolated event; we found that the RVSR who made the error completed another case for the same benefit correctly. As such, we determined the VARO generally followed VBA policy for processing SMC claims because staff completed the five remaining SMC claims correctly. As a result, we made no recommendation for improvement in this area.

Recommendation

1. We recommended the Lincoln VA Regional Office Director conduct a review of the 81 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations remaining from our inspection universe as of March 5, 2015, and take appropriate action.

Management Comments

The Director did not initially provide concurrence with our recommendation but reported VARO staff completed its review of the 81 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations in June 2015. Upon follow-up with the Director, concurrence with the recommendation was received by email.

OIG Response

The Director's action is responsive to the recommendation.

II. Data Integrity

Dates of Claim

To ensure all claims receive proper attention and timely processing, VBA policy directs that staff use the earliest date stamp shown on the claim document as the date of claim. VBA relies on accurate dates of claim to establish and track key performance measures, including the average days to complete a claim. We focused our review on whether VSC staff followed VBA policy for establishing dates of claim in the electronic record.

VARO staff established correct dates of claims in the electronic records for all 30 veterans' cases we reviewed. As such, we determined VARO staff followed VBA policy when establishing claims in the electronic record and made no recommendation for improvement in this area.

III. Management Controls

Benefit Reductions

VBA policy provides for the payment of compensation to veterans for conditions they incurred or aggravated during military service. The amount of monthly compensation to which a veteran is entitled may change because his or her service-connected disability may improve. Improper payments associated with benefits reductions generally occur when beneficiaries receive payments to which they are not entitled because VAROs do not take the actions required to ensure correct payments for their levels of disability.

When the VARO obtains evidence that a lower disability evaluation would result in a reduction or discontinuance of current compensation payments, VSC staff must inform the beneficiary of the proposed reduction in benefits. In order to provide beneficiaries due process, VBA allows 60 days for the veteran to submit additional evidence to show that compensation payments should continue at their present level. If the VARO does not receive additional evidence within that period, RVSRs will make a final determination to reduce or discontinue the benefit. On the 65th day following due process notification, action is required to reduce the evaluation and thereby minimize overpayments.

On April 3, 2014, VBA leadership modified its policy regarding the processing of claims requiring benefits reductions. The new policy no longer includes the requirement for VARO staff to take “immediate action” to process these reductions. In lieu of merely removing the vague standard, VBA should have provided clearer guidance on prioritizing this work to ensure sound financial stewardship of these monetary benefits.

Finding 2

Lincoln VARO Lacked Oversight To Ensure Timely Action on Benefits Reductions

VARO staff delayed processing 7 of 30 cases involving benefits reductions—all 7 affected veterans’ benefits. These delays occurred due to a lack of emphasis on timely processing benefits reductions. As a result, VA made 17 improper payments to 7 veterans from August 2014 to March 2015, totaling approximately \$5,975.

Delayed Processing Actions

For the seven cases with processing delays, an average of approximately 2 months elapsed before staff took the required actions to reduce benefits. The most significant improper payment involved VSC staff proposing to reduce a veteran’s benefits in August 2014; however, the final rating decision to reduce benefits did not occur until December 2014, almost 2 months beyond the date when the reduction

of benefits should have occurred. As a result, the veteran received approximately \$1,815 in improper payments. VARO management agreed with the seven processing delays we identified.

Generally, these delays occurred because VARO management did not consider benefits reduction cases a priority. Management stated it was directed by VBA's Central Office and the Office of Field Operations to reduce the current inventory of older pending disability claims. VARO management indicated it did not have the resources to meet the production goals and timely process other workload like rating reductions. Because of the processing delays, veterans received erroneous benefits payments.

It is a VBA management responsibility to address this issue, which entails millions of dollars in improper payments. Where VBA lacks sufficient staff to address properly its management responsibilities, it should make its case for an increase in full-time equivalents through the normal budget process. We concluded that providing oversight of benefits reductions is necessary to ensure sound financial stewardship and minimize improper benefits payments.

Recommendation

2. We recommended the Lincoln VA Regional Office Director implement a plan to ensure claims processing staff prioritize actions related to benefits reductions to minimize improper payments to veterans.

Management Comments

The VARO Director did not initially provide concurrence with our recommendation. However, the Director reported the Veterans Service Center workload management plan was modified to ensure staff prioritize benefit reduction claims processing actions after the due process period expired. Upon follow-up with the Director, concurrence with the recommendation was received.

OIG Response

The Director's action is responsive to the recommendation. We will follow-up as required.

Appendix A VARO Profile and Scope of Inspection

Organization The Lincoln VARO administers a variety of services and benefits, including compensation benefits; vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance; fiduciary; specially adapted housing grants; benefits counseling; and outreach to homeless, elderly, minority and women veterans; public affairs and loan guaranty.

Resources As of April 2015, the Lincoln VARO reported a staffing level of 318.9 full-time employees. Of this total, the VSC had 173.8 employees assigned.

Workload As of March 2015, VBA reported the Lincoln VARO had 6,862 pending compensation claims with 3,320 (48 percent) pending greater than 125 days.¹

Scope and Methodology VBA has 56 VAROs and a VSC in Wyoming that process disability claims and provide a range of services to veterans. In May 2015, we evaluated the Lincoln VARO to see how well it accomplishes this mission.

We reviewed selected management, claims processing, and administrative activities to evaluate compliance with VBA policies regarding benefits delivery and nonmedical services provided to veterans and other beneficiaries. We interviewed managers and employees and reviewed veterans' claims folders. Prior to conducting our onsite inspection, we coordinated with VA OIG criminal investigators to provide a briefing designed to alert VARO staff to the indicators of fraud in claims processing.

Our review included 30 of 111 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations (27 percent) selected from VBA's Corporate Database. These claims represented all instances in which VARO staff had granted temporary 100 percent disability evaluations for at least 18 months as of March 5, 2015. This is generally the longest period a temporary 100 percent disability evaluation may be assigned without review, according to VBA policy. We provided VARO management with 81 claims remaining from our universe of 111 claims as of March 5, 2015, for review. We reviewed 30 of 45 disability claims related to TBI (67 percent) that the VARO completed from July 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014. We examined 6 of the total 8 veterans' claims involving entitlement to SMC and related ancillary benefits (75 percent) completed by VARO staff in calendar year 2014. The remaining two cases were processed at other offices.

¹ All calculated percentages in this report have been rounded where applicable.

We reviewed 30 of 2,852 dates of claims (1 percent) pending at the VARO during the period from October 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014 pending as of March 5, 2015. Additionally, we looked at 30 of the 583 benefits reductions cases (5 percent) VARO staff completed from October 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.

Data Reliability

We used computer-processed data from the Veterans Service Network's Operations Reports and Awards. To test for reliability, we reviewed the data to determine whether any data were missing from key fields, included any calculation errors, or were outside the time frame requested. We also assessed whether the data contained obvious duplication of records, alphabetic or numeric characters in incorrect fields, or illogical relationships among data elements. Further, we compared veterans' names, file numbers, Social Security numbers, VARO numbers, dates of claim, and decision dates as provided in the data received with information contained in the 126 claims folders we reviewed related to temporary 100 percent disability evaluations, TBI claims, SMC and ancillary benefits, completed claims related to benefits reductions, and dates of claims.

Our testing of the data disclosed that they were sufficiently reliable for our inspection objectives. Our comparison of the data with information contained in the veterans' claims folders reviewed in conjunction with our inspection of the VARO did not disclose any problems with data reliability.

Inspection Standards

We conducted this inspection in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*.

Appendix B Inspection Summary

Table 2 reflects the operational activities inspected, applicable criteria, and whether or not we had reasonable assurance of VARO compliance.

Table 2. Lincoln VARO Inspection Summary

Operational Activities Inspected	Criteria	Reasonable Assurance of Compliance
Disability Claims Processing		
Temporary 100 Percent Disability Evaluations	Determine whether VARO staff properly reviewed temporary 100 percent disability evaluations. (38 CFR 3.103(b)), (38 CFR 3.105(e)), (38 CFR 3.327), (M21-1 MR Part IV, Subpart ii, Chapter 2, Section J), (M21-1MR Part III, Subpart iv, Chapter 3, Section C.17.e)	No
Traumatic Brain Injury Claims	Determine whether VARO staff properly processed claims for service connection for all disabilities related to in-service TBI. (FL 08-34 and 08-36) (Training Letter 09-01)	Yes
Special Monthly Compensation and Ancillary Benefits	Determine whether VARO staff properly processed SMC and correctly granted entitlement to ancillary benefits. (38 CFR 3.350, 3.352, 3.807, 3.808, 3.809, 3.809a, 4.63, and 4.64), (M21-1MR IV.ii.2.H and I)	Yes
Data Integrity		
Dates of Claim	Determine whether VARO staff accurately established dates of claim in the electronic records. (38 CFR 3.1 (p) and (r)), (M21-4, Appendix A and B), (M21-1MR, III.ii.1.C.10.a), (M21-1MR, III.ii.1.B.6 and 7), (M21-1MR, III.ii.2.B.8.f), (M21-1MR, III.i.2.A.2.c) (VBMS User Guide), (M21-4, Chapter 4.07), (M23-1, Part 1, 1.06)	Yes
Management Controls		
Benefits Reductions	Determine whether VARO staff timely and accurately processed disability evaluation reductions or terminations. (38 CFR 3.103(b)(2)), (38 CFR 3.105(e)), (38 CFR 3.501), (M21-1MR.IV.ii.3.A.3.e), (M21-1MR.I.2.B.7.a), (M21-1MR.I.2.C), (M21-1MR.I.ii.2.f), (M21-4, Chapter 2.05(f)(4)), (<i>Compensation & Pension Service Bulletin</i> , October 2010)	No

Source: VA OIG

CFR=Code of Federal Regulations, FL=Fast Letter, M=Manual, MR=Manual Rewrite

Appendix C VARO Director's Comments

Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: July 16, 2015

From: Director, VA Regional Office Lincoln, Nebraska

Subj: Inspection of the VA Regional Office, Lincoln, Nebraska

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

1. The Lincoln VARO's comments are attached on the OIG Draft Report: *Inspection of the VA Regional Office, Lincoln, Nebraska*.
2. Please refer questions to Margaret Bunde (402) 420-4239.

Jason Rogers

Assistant Director
Lincoln Regional Office

Attachment

Response to OIG Benefits Inspection of the Lincoln VA Regional Office

The OIG draft report on the Benefits Inspection of the Lincoln VA Regional Office in May 2015 contained two recommendations. Lincoln's response to the two recommendations is contained here.

Recommendation 1: We recommended the Lincoln VA Regional Office Director conduct a review of the 81 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations remaining from our inspection universe as of March 5, 2015, and take appropriate action.

Response: The Lincoln RO completed its review in June of the remaining 81 temporary 100 percent evaluations. All contain an established diary, are under current EP control, or have had appropriate actions completed.

Lincoln requests this recommendation be closed.

Recommendation 2: We recommended the Lincoln VA Regional Office Director implement a plan to ensure claims processing staff prioritize actions related to benefits reductions to minimize improper payments to veterans.

Response: An addendum to the VSC workload management plan was published that requires the non-rating team VSRs to notify their Coach of any EP 600s for which suspense dates are expiring and that require a final rating. The Coach will then assign the EP 600s to RVSRs in the VSC. Additionally, the VSRs in the claims processing lanes have been reminded of the importance of using proper claim labels that will help us in identifying the necessary actions.

Lincoln requests this recommendation be closed.

Appendix D **OIG Contact and Staff Acknowledgments**

OIG Contact	For more information about this report, please contact the Office of Inspector General at (202) 461-4720.
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Acknowledgments	Nora Stokes, Director Kelly Crawford Kyle Flannery Suzanne Love Michelle Santos-Rodriguez Lisa Van Haeren Nelvy Viguera Butler Mark Ward
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