

Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: August 13, 2014

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

Subj: Request Close-out, Hotline Referral (2013-02987-SD-0154), Alleged Over-Evaluation of Mental Disabilities at the VARO in Providence, RI

To: For the Record

Request the close-out of the subject hotline referral. The Office of Audits and Evaluations (OAE) was unable to substantiate the allegations. On September 5, 2013, OAE accepted the subject referral and assigned it to our San Diego Inspections Division. OAE staff reviewed claims folders and interviewed leadership and staff at the Providence VARO from June 23 to June 27, 2014.

The complainant alleged Decision Review Officers (DROs) were incorrectly evaluating mental disabilities at the Providence VARO. Specifically, the allegation states that DROs were using subjective statements provided by veterans' during their Compensation medical examination instead of objective evidence provided by examining physicians.

The Benefits Inspection team reviewed a statistical sample of 26 completed mental disability claims. We could not find any mental disabilities to be over-evaluated. Further, we interviewed DROs and management regarding this allegation. The DROs explained they use the entire medical examination report, to include subjective and objective evidence, when determining the proper evaluations to assign for each mental disability. Management indicated, and we reviewed, the recent Compensation Service site visit results that noted concerns about the under-evaluation of certain disabilities.

OAE did not find data or testimonial support to give credence to the allegations.

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