

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: State Veterans Service Officer

Class Code: 10542

Pay Grade: GH

A. Purpose:

Provides assistance and services to veterans, their spouses, their family members, and county and tribal veterans' service officers by counseling, interviewing, obtaining records, and researching evidence to respond to veteran's inquiries and support veteran's benefits claims and appeals; and interprets statutes, rules, regulations, policies and appellate rulings to ensure effective and expedient service in securing benefits, services, or programs.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The State Veterans Service Officer advocates for veterans, provides counseling and research assistance, explains available veterans' benefits, develops and/or explains how to prepare claims and appeals, and reviews and challenges determinations made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Veterans' Services Claims Examiner examines veterans' benefits claims for accuracy and completeness, examines award letters, provides assistance in preparation of claims, and compiles statistical information.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions that may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Interviews and counsels veterans, their spouses and/or their families to assist them in understanding and obtaining the benefits they are entitled to receive.
 - a. Explains the benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs programs and other state or local programs.
 - i. Service Connected Disabilities, Veterans and Widows Pension, GI Bill Educational Programs, Burial Benefits, Dependents and Survivors Programs, VA Hospital Care, Tri-Care, Champ VA, Medicare, Medicaid, and nursing home eligibility.
 - ii. State veterans bonus program.
 - iii. Tribal benefits programs for Native American veterans.
 - b. Obtains or provides direction on how to obtain the necessary information.
 - c. Completes or assists in the completion of forms or applications for benefits.
2. Requests and reviews veteran's military service and medical history to develop and submit claims for veterans, their spouses and/or their families.
 - a. Reviews medical reports, discharge papers, and other supporting documentation.
 - b. Evaluates evidence and contacts physicians, nurses, laboratory staff, and other medical professionals to clarify information, resolve issues on service to be provided to veterans and for explanations of diagnoses and services provided.
 - c. Determines what additional information is needed for a claim.
 - d. Prepares a timeline documenting and detailing actions associated with a particular claim.
 - e. Finalizes the claim to demonstrate the link between documented medical problems and service incurred disabilities.
 - f. Maintains case files and the Veterans Information Management System database for assigned cases.

- g. Tracks and monitors veterans' claims and provides appropriate follow up when necessary.
3. Develops the initial appeal documentation for denied claims to ensure that veterans', their spouses' and/or their families' needs are being met.
 - a. Reviews VA rating decisions to determine if the rating is correct or if the decision should be appealed and reviews individual cases with the VA rater identifying VA laws and possible errors or omissions on the part of the VA rater.
 - b. Reviews rulings made by the VA Board of Appeals and the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to determine how recent rulings might impact the appeal being prepared.
 - c. Maintains the claim timeline documenting and detailing actions associated with a particular appeal on the claim.
 - d. Forwards the initial appeals packet to the staff member preparing the narrative presentation of the facts for the appeal and quality controlling the appeal packets.
 4. Provides technical assistance to and trains county and tribal veterans' service officers to ensure veterans', their spouses' and/or their families' needs are being met.
 - a. Trains how to prepare benefit claims.
 - b. Provides updates on procedural changes.
 - c. Provides Interpretations of new or revised laws, regulations, policies, decisions, and appellate rulings.
 - d. Provides interpretations of medical diagnoses and explains the presumptive association with possible ancillary claim issues.
 - e. Assists County Commissioners and Tribal Officials with the recruitment, interviewing, selection, hiring, and retention of County and Tribal Veterans' Service Officers; provides input to those supervisors on veterans' service officers performance and makes recommendations to the County and Tribal officials for termination of the veterans' service officers.
 5. Represents veterans and/or their spouses and families when claims for benefits are presented to the VA or hearing examiners to ensure the claims are properly handled and to help the veterans explain their issues.
 6. Provides information to veterans, their spouses, and/or their families on education programs and on-the job training benefits with the state approval agency, employers, and educational facilities to ensure veterans', their spouses', and/or their families' opportunities for services and benefits are known.
 7. Speaks to organizations or individuals at public gatherings or individually to explain veterans' benefits/programs and the procedures for obtaining additional information, filing claims, and initiating appeals to ensure the public is aware of the laws and regulations affecting veterans' benefits/programs and veterans' rights.
 8. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

Reports to a Military & Veterans Program Manager or a Division Director and receives work direction from a Military & Veterans Program Manager. Provides work direction and interprets laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and appellate rulings to county and tribal veterans' service officers.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to develop a claim for benefits when there is a lack of supporting documentation available in a veteran's service record. This is difficult because of the need to have all pertinent information relevant to the claim for benefits as the VA has placed the burden of proof for benefits on the veteran. Also puts together an initial appeal for situations where the VA denies the veteran's claim. This is challenging because the appellate process results in nearly daily changes in rulings on claims and appeals.

Typical problems include dealing with veterans who are economically depressed or are suffering mental or physical impairments related to military service, dealing with situations that are at the crisis level, following up on evidential information from medical records, obtaining testimony from other veterans, determining what action is needed to resolve denied benefits, obtaining cooperation from county commissioners in staffing and maintaining a County Veterans Service office, and explaining a veterans current medical eligibility criteria.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Decisions made include whether additional information needs to be obtained from a veteran, a veterans' spouse and/or the veterans family members; whether there is sufficient documented evidence to submit a claim; determines the options to present to veterans, their spouses, and/or their families concerning appeal development; on which appellate rulings the appeal should be based; where to refer a veteran for other related services; the interpretation of applicable laws, regulations, policies, procedures and the information provided by medical records and diagnoses; what special training is needed for county and tribal veterans' services officers; and what benefits apply to veterans, their spouses and/or their family members.

Decisions referred include problem or difficult claims, approval of claims for appeal, and the development and administration of policies and procedures.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with veterans, their spouses and/or their family members, county and tribal veterans' services officers, other agencies, and veterans' organizations to give and receive information; daily contact with VA staff to clarify actions and claims; daily contact with nursing homes and health care centers to provide assistance and ensure veterans' needs are being met.

H. Working Conditions:

Works in a typical office, travel will be required.

I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- federal laws and regulations and agency policies and procedures;
- groups and individuals receiving services;
- documents relative to military service and medical treatment in the armed forces;
- medical terminology; causes and effects of several disabilities related to service in the armed forces;
- the physical, environmental, chemical and biological, and materiel hazards associated with service member work environment in the various branches of the several services;

- personal finances;
- interviewing and counseling methods.

Ability to:

- deal tactfully with others;
- interpret laws, regulations, policies and appellate rulings;
- document and report information orally, in writing, and electronically;
- prepare for and present veterans' issues and explain claims and appeals;
- conduct interviews with veterans, their spouses, and their family members;
- relate information obtained through the interview with the type of job duties under training or combat conditions to determine the relationship between hazard exposure and medical diagnoses;
- obtain complete and accurate information;
- establish and maintain effective relationships with veterans and veteran organizations;
- travel;
- communicate information clearly and concisely.