

O R A N G E C O U N T Y



V E T E R A N S
S E R V I C E O F F I C E

2016: A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT



DIRECTOR'S
MESSAGE

It is my honor and privilege to assist the nearly 130,000 veterans and their respective family members residing in Orange County.

This report showcases the dedication, commitment, and hard work of our stellar team of steadfast professionals, who remain ever mindful of our goal of ensuring Orange County upholds its commitment to being a veteran-friendly county.

Our noteworthy accomplishments highlighted in this year's report are many, but I must underscore the following; over 17,000 clients served, almost 4,500 claims submitted, \$15.7 million dollars in veterans benefits brought into Orange County through claims submitted by our office, and over 1,000 clients assisted at outreach events.

Our main office is located at the County Operations Center (Grand/McFadden) in Santa Ana. We also provide monthly service at the Mission Viejo Community Center, Saddleback College and the Laguna Hills Senior Center.

Please visit our website at www.veterans.ocgov.com for more information regarding various programs and services.

Thank you to all veterans who honorably served our Country and to their families for their sacrifices.

Sincerely,

Renee Ramirez

Director, Orange County Community Services/Veterans Service Office



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ORANGE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE (OCVSO) 2016: A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT

JANUARY

The OCVSO expands the “Vets Serving Vets” program. Since established, the OCVSO has employed seven post 9/11 veterans. The program helps veterans gain valuable practical application of vital hard and soft skills while building their resume. Thus far, this endeavor has resulted in over 1,000 hours of free labor and a cost savings of approximately \$20,000 to the County of Orange.

FEBRUARY

The OCVSO creates a recognition memorial tribute to honor the 51 Orange County residents who have died post 9/11 while serving our Country. The tribute plays daily in a display window in front of the OCVSO’s main office. To date approximately 5,000 people have viewed the tribute. Plans to make the tribute available online are forth coming.

MARCH

The OCVSO begins providing claims processing and benefits counseling at Saddleback College on a monthly basis. Since inception, 25 veterans have been assisted on campus. The OCVSO also has three monthly service outstations located throughout the county (Mission Viejo (2) and Laguna Hills). Through these three outstations, a total of 250 clients were served in 2016.

APRIL

For the first time in the OCVSO’s history, all Veterans Claims Officers obtained multi-accreditations. This accomplishment increased staff’s ability to assist clients who carry a specific Power of Attorney. Prior to this achievement, clients had to be referred elsewhere for service/assistance.

MAY

All Veterans Claims Officers obtained full access to the Veteran Benefits Management System. In order to gain access, staff had to go through a rigorous background investigation. Access to this federal database, gives the OCVSO the ability to problem solve and fact find more efficiently through a centralized database, which benefits the client in processing their claim in a more expedited manner.

JUNE

For six consecutive months (January – June), wait times were 55 minutes or less. This is an average reduction of one hour from the previous 5 years. In 2016, the office assisted over 17,000 clients and participated in over 25 outreach events.

JULY

The OCVSO was selected by the California Department of Veterans Affairs as a pilot county for processing claims via their D2D software program. The D2D process is cost efficient, simple and shortens the time involved in transporting claims to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for processing. Claims are submitted electronically in lieu of traditional faxing or mailing methods.

AUGUST

The OCVSO implemented a fully automated phone system. This allows for better tracking of client needs and assists the staff in returning phone calls in a timely manner. In 2016, the office received over 8,275 phone calls. On average voicemail messages were returned within one working day. In addition, 99% of all calls were answered by a “live” operator.

SEPTEMBER

The Orange County Veterans Service Officer participated in the US Navy’s “Leaders to Sea” Program hosted by the Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. This program is designed to recognize people who are active and influential in government. He was specifically acknowledged for his devotion to excellence in post military life.

OCTOBER

The OCVSO implemented a fully electronic intake kiosk system. The system is designed to capture and track data that otherwise would be difficult to obtain. This unique software tracks clients’ visit from start to finish. It includes several reports such as how long the client waited to be seen, age of the veteran, how they were referred to the office, what services they are seeking, what city they are from, how long they were assisted by a staff member and follows up with an emailed customer satisfaction survey. Since implementation 1,500 clients have successfully used the system.

NOVEMBER

The OCVSO successfully completed the first full year of participating in the California Department of Veterans Affairs/DMV Driver’s License Designation Program. This initiative allows California veterans to obtain a “Veteran” designation on their California ID or Driver’s License. The designation makes it easier for businesses to confirm a veteran’s status when offering discount to service members. During 2016, the OCVSO processed almost 2,800 DMV Veteran Status Verifications. Almost 32% of those issued statewide were processed by the OCVSO, which is a remarkable achievement, considering Orange County has the 5th largest veteran population in the state.

DECEMBER

The OCVSO opens “We got your 6” closet, with the assistance of a high school senior. The closet supplies clients in need with clothes, toiletries, food, blankets and much more. Approximately 25 people have utilized this service since implementation.