



KOOTENAI COUNTY

VETERANS SERVICES



November 5, 2020

To: Kootenai County Board of County Commissioners

Subject: KOOTENAI COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES OFFICER (KCVSO) ANNUAL REPORT FY2020

1. The following report is produced annually (Oct-Sep) by the KCVSO to document Veterans Services activities and provide other statistical information concerning veterans and services in Kootenai County, Idaho.
2. An important note, the data in this report is not fully representative of the KCVSO activities. Many of the services and activities that are performed by this office are not necessarily quantifiable. For example, the KCVSO and the Assistant interacts regularly with individuals, groups and agencies (private and public) during and after normal hours, many of which are unscheduled and impromptu, and not formal in nature.
3. This is an evolving report and services provided are constantly developing with changes in the Department of Veterans Affairs and other State and local agencies that administer services and benefits to Veterans. Comparing data in this report with previous fiscal years may not be a direct comparison. As an example, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 completely changed operating procedures.
4. The onset of COVID-19 caused a brief significant drop in request for services which rebounded in the following weeks. Unlike many services provided in the county, and/or other businesses that were forced to close and/or reduce services, the KCVSO kept operating at 100%; however, not without major changes in normal operating procedures. Pre-COVID-19, the KCVSO and co-located state Veterans Services Officers would meet with Veteran clients face-to-face roughly 90% of the time. As a result of COVID-19 mitigation practices, 95% of client services are now performed via phone and other electronic means. In office visits are meant for document collection, electronic signature capture and other miscellaneous services that allow the client to quickly conduct business and exit the facility to limit contact with office staff and other clients.
5. As a result of COVID-19, other KCVSO office standard operating practices were changed to meet federal, state and local guidelines to limit transmission and protect the public. The added time ensuring cleanliness of the office and utilizing the phone for a primary means of conducting daily business has increased the time and effort to complete claims and other processes. Calls received by clients are longer in duration and more complex. During 2020, there was a significant uptick in emotionally charged clients with greater needs and in the severity of those needs. As a result, this significantly added to the stress of providing social services in the form of Veteran Services.

6. Community Outreach was suspended at the start of COVID-19. As a result, this added more stress on clients who were housebound, admitted to a care facility and/or technologically challenged in some way. Typically, technologically challenged clients are older clients that are not accustomed to using or owning computers, cell phones and other electronic devices. Lastly, community outreach in the form of attending veteran service organization meetings, providing training in the community, and face-to-face networking was all but stopped as well, except in rare cases.

7. During the 2020 fiscal year, the Veterans Services Office observed a significant number of new Veteran clients relocating to the area which is consistent with the region's exponential growth in general.

8. Lastly, VA total expenditures in Kootenai County have increased substantially over the last year by \$14.2 million, up from \$124 million to \$138 million. Furthermore, Compensation and Pension expenditures made up \$11.1 million of the VA's increase in expenditures that equated to a 17% increase. Compensation and Pension expenditures are monies that are given directly to the Veteran as nontaxable income as a result of the KCVSO claims process.

9. Points of contact for this report are Thomas Freeman (KCVSO) and Terri Dickerson (Assistant to the KCVSO) at 208 446-1098.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "F".

Thomas Freeman
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FISCAL YEAR REPORT OCT 2019 – SEP 2020

Compiled By:

Kootenai County
Veteran Services Office

**Thomas Freeman
Veteran Services, Director**

“Veterans’ Helping Veterans’



VA Dollars Brought Back to the County Through Claims

Number of Veterans geographically in KC = 14,631 ⁽¹⁾

Kootenai County Veterans Service Officer Office Staff = 2

VA Expenditures By Type of Claim ⁽²⁾

Compensation/Pension: \$74,955,000

Education/Voc Rehab: \$5,994,000

Insurance and Indemnity: \$786,000

Medical Care: \$57,181,000

TOTAL \$138,916,000

(1) Population from ID Dept. of Labor 2020 report. Population growth reporting usually lags behind actual - Est. 2020 County Vet Population 15 -16,000

(2) VA Expenditures (2019) derived online from the VA's National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. <https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Expenditures.asp> (see expenditures table)



AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF VETERANS SEEN AND MOST COMMON CLAIM FILED IN THOSE GROUPS ⁽³⁾

WWII 9% (Hearing Loss/Pension)

KOREAN 10% (Hearing Loss/Pension)

Vietnam 37% (Hearing Loss/Agent Orange Presumptives)

Gulf War/OEF/OIF 28% (PTSD/Sustained Injuries/Education)

Peace Time 16% (Hearing Loss/Sustained Injuries)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ⁽⁴⁾

Shut-in Visits - Average (2) per week

VA briefings To Area Agencies - Average (2) per month

Attendance at Service Organizations - Average (2) per month

(3) Data was derived from VetraSpec Reports. VetraSpec is a licensed secure online software solution management system used for Veteran claims built for Veteran services officers and state departments.

(4) As of March 2020, Community Outreach was suspended due to COVID-19 precautions



Comparison from FY 2019 and FY 2020 ^(5,6)

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Scheduled Appt.	926	869
Walk-in	3117	1607
TOTALS	4043	2476

<u>AVERAGE PER MONTH</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Scheduled Appt.	92	73
Walk-in	260	134

Aver. Length Appt Initial claim	60-130 minutes
Aver. Length Walk-In Apt.	5-15 minutes
Aver. Request for records	5 minutes
Aver. Returned Call Time	10-45 minutes

(5) Data on this page was derived from internal Kootenai County Veterans Services Office records – daily sign-in sheets and calendar entries

(6) KCVSO Office consisted of (1) County VSO and (1) State VSO. In January, the state added an additional State VSO position to North Idaho, working out of the KCVSO Office, with a total of 2 State VSOs and (1) County VSO.



Comparison from FY 2019 and FY 2020 (cont.)

<u>RECORDS</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u> ⁽⁷⁾
New Clients Added	253	261
Records Edited	3118	2442
<u>Forms Prepared</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u> ⁽⁷⁾
	2945	2552
<u>Phone Calls Returned</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u> ⁽⁸⁾
	1560	2551

(7) VetraSpec Reports. VetraSpec is licensed secure online software solution management system used for Veteran claims built for Veteran service officers and state departments.

(8) Phone logs from Oct 2019 to Sep 2020.