



Biennial Report to the Oregon Legislative  
Assembly

September 26, 2014

Department of Human Services  
Veterans Outreach

July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2014

## **Background**

Senate Bill 241, passed by the Oregon Legislative Assembly in the 2011 regular legislative session and enacted through ORS 408.505, requires state agencies to ask if a customer or client is a veteran and to provide information from the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) and reintegration team within the Oregon Military Department to veterans. In addition, in each even-numbered year, agencies must report to the legislature on the effectiveness of measures undertaken to make information available regarding veterans' benefits and services.

### **Overview of the Department of Human Services**

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is Oregon's principal agency for helping Oregonians achieve wellbeing and independence through opportunities that protect, empower, respect choice and preserve dignity, especially for those who are least able to help themselves.

In 2009 the Oregon Legislature transferred many of the health related functions to the newly created Oregon Health Authority. In 2013, Oregon Health Authority removed Medicaid eligibility from the Self Sufficiency Programs (SSP) and limited the Aging and People with Disabilities (APD) program to Non-MAGI Medicaid only. Today, DHS primarily serves children, adults and families, and aging and people with disabilities.

Benefits and services are delivered through more than 100 field offices throughout the state. In addition, information and referral to community resources to address specific needs such as housing, or another agency that serves specific populations such as veterans, are a regular part of providing services to assist individuals and families in reaching self-sufficiency.

### **Outreach to Veterans**

Oregon Revised Statute 408.505 requires agencies to provide materials to inform individuals how to contact the ODVA and the reintegration team within the Oregon Military Department to request information about veterans' benefits and services.

Website links. Oregon.gov websites are standardized in the information and home-page layout. The ODVA logo and web-link appear at the bottom of each Oregon.gov website. Viewers of the DHS websites can, from any page,

click on the ODVA link to inquire about benefits and services for Veterans, their spouses and their dependents.

Materials. DHS stocks the ODVA Outreach Magazine (MSC 0407) in our Forms and Distribution center. These magazines are available for branch offices to place in their lobbies and for staff to give directly to applicable clients. Since January 2014, more than 3,000 ODVA Outreach magazines have been distributed to our branch offices.

Applications for Benefits. The Aging and People with Disabilities Application form (SDS 0539A) contains a question to determine if the applicant or their spouse is or was a veteran. The Self-Sufficiency Programs Application for Assistance (DHS 0415F), used when individuals or families are applying for benefits, previously contained a veteran question until the Medical program questions were removed in October 2013. At that time this question was inadvertently removed from the DHS 0415F. It is being added back to the DHS 0415F at the next application release. Currently the only reference in the DHS 0415F is a question regarding receipt of Veterans Benefits. The Self-Sufficiency assessment form used with individuals in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for case planning purposes contains a question that indicates whether the individual is a veteran. This form is currently being revised and the question will be modified to ask more directly whether the individual has served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The electronic On-Line Application for SNAP benefits is still in the pilot phase and DHS is completing requirements to modify the electronic application to ask “Is (person name) a current military service member or veteran of military services?”.

These questions, while not required for DHS program eligibility, are to obtain information about the people served to determine what national, state or local resources they may be entitled to or could benefit from. Asking this question of applicants helps to begin the conversation regarding other resources available to meet their specific needs.

In addition, Aging and People with Disabilities has been participating in a national effort to utilize the Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) to identify Medicaid recipients that could be eligible for a veteran benefit. Aging and People with Disabilities is working in collaboration with

ODVA and county Veteran Service Officers to determine the most efficient and effective way to reach out to these individuals and ensure they are receiving the benefits they are eligible for. APD is now reviewing these pilot efforts and is collaborating with other DHS programs as well as the Oregon Health Authority to disseminate information to the Medicaid recipients identified through the PARIS match.

Management from The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) also met with representatives from ODVA in the summer of 2014 to discuss collaboration opportunities in working with veteran OVRs participants. Management shared this information with field staff and have an ongoing expectation that OVRs counselors work with ODVA whenever possible while serving veterans.

## **Summary**

DHS continues to provide applicants and recipients with information regarding state and local resources, including ODVA, which are available to assist individuals and families in becoming safe and self-sufficient. However due to the inadvertent changes to the DHS 0415F SSP is required to add this question back to the application.

## **DHS Contact**

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