

# Gratiot County

## Department of Veterans Affairs

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Rodolfo R. Diaz-Pons, Director POB 68 125 E. Newark St. Ithaca, MI 48847 (989) 875-5258/FAX-5209

June 23, 2015

RE: Full Time Veterans Office

Gratiot County  
Board of Commissioners  
Ithaca, MI 48847

Dear Commissioners,

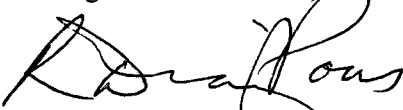
The enclosed Power Point Presentation and Excel Spreadsheet outline our Department Budget proposal for FY 16. This proposal was presented to the Veterans Committee on June 18, 2015. It is now being forwarded to the County Board per instructions from Commissioner Renneberg.

The essence of the presentation is the creation of a full time veteran's office in FY16 with enhanced service to Gratiot County veterans. This limited expansion in FY 16 will lead to the creation of a "Budget Footprint" sufficient to fund a VA accredited, full time Veterans Service Officer upon my anticipated departure in March 2018.

I am available to brief the Board if necessary.

A complete set of Minutes will follow by separate correspondence.

Serving those who served,



Rodolfo R. Diaz-Pons  
Lieutenant Colonel, USA-Retired  
Director

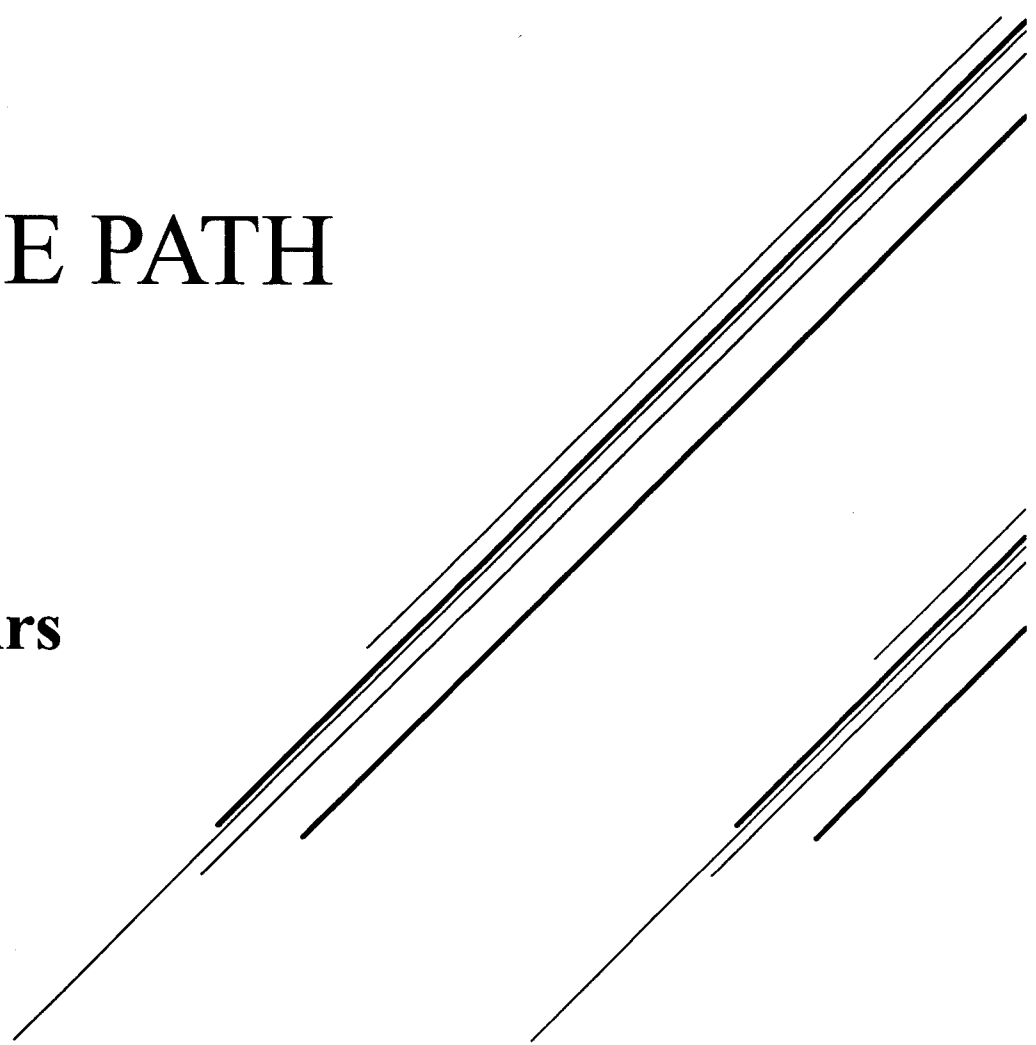
DEPT EXPANSION/PERS/OPNS	FT/PT	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	RMKS
<b>GCDVA Full Time Office</b>							
<b>Expenditure Line</b>	<b>Purpose</b>						
101-682-702.00	Inc Dept Head Salary	\$28,703.00	\$28,703.00	\$28,703.00	\$11,960.00	\$38,480.00	New Director in FY19
101-682-702.10	Trans Dept Head Salary	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$22,447.00	\$0.00	Transition in FY18
101-682-703.00	Secretary	\$14,092.00	\$28,184.00	\$28,184.00	\$11,743.00	\$0.00	F/T Sec in FY 16/No Sec in FY19
101-682.703.10	Per Diem (Vet Cmte)	\$1,500.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	Cmte increased to 5 members
101-682-704.10	Bonus Pay	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
101-682-712.00	Long Term Disability	\$0.00	\$55.00	\$122.00	\$130.00	\$137.00	
101-682-715.00	Social Scty Matching	\$2,653.00	\$3,527.00	\$3,527.00	\$3,527.00	\$2,386.00	
101-682-715.10	Medicare	\$621.00	\$825.00	\$825.00	\$825.00	\$558.00	
101-682-716.00	Healthcare	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$16,343.00	\$16,343.00	\$16,343.00	Healthcare Waived, FY16
101-682-716.10	Retiree Healthcare	\$0.00	\$750.00	\$750.00	\$750.00	\$750.00	
101-682-717.00	Life & AD&D	\$0.00	\$67.00	\$67.00	\$67.00	\$67.00	
101-682-717.10	RetireeLife	\$0.00	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$10.00	
101-682-718.01	Rtmt Direct Contribution	\$0.00	\$1,409.00	\$1,409.00	\$1,409.00	\$1,924.00	
101-682-719.00	Workmans Comp	\$75.00	\$136.00	\$136.00	\$136.00	\$112.00	
101-682-721.00	County Dental/Opt Reimb	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	
101-682-727.10	Office Supplies/Postage	\$1,400.00	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00	
101-682-815.00	Membership/Subscriptions	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	MACVC/NACVSO
101-682-860.00	Travel	\$450.00	\$450.00	\$450.00	\$900.00	\$450.00	MACVC/MVAA VA Certification
101-682-942.00	Rent	\$7,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	GCDVA in Courthouse 10/1/15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$57,094.00</b>	<b>\$70,313.00</b>	<b>\$84,723.00</b>	<b>\$74,444.00</b>	<b>\$65,417.00</b>	
<b>NOTE: Budget Footprint for FY 16-18 accomodates F/T Dir (No Sec) in FY 19</b>							

# TRANSITION GLIDE PATH

## JUNE 2015 UPDATE

**Gratiot County**  
**Department of Veterans Affairs**

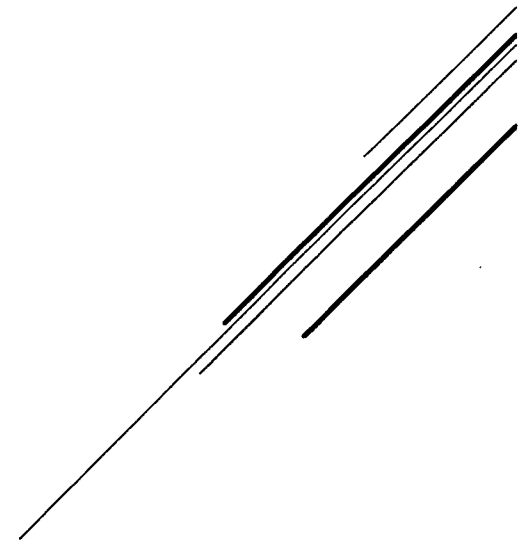
**Rodolfo R. Diaz-Pons**  
**Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Retired)**  
**Director**



**GRATIOT COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

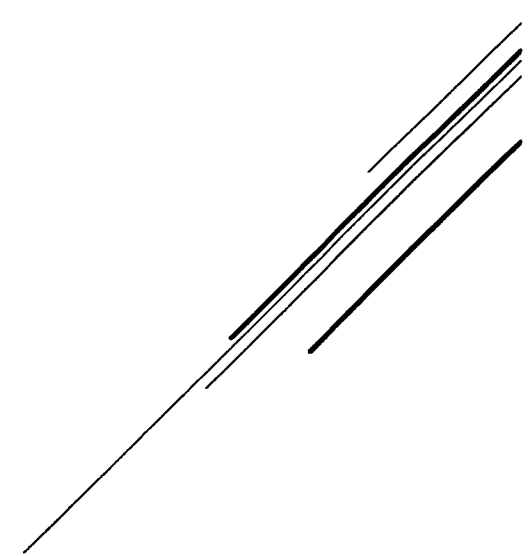
**“... To care for him who shall have borne  
the battle, and for his widow. . . and for his  
orphan.”**

**Abraham Lincoln**



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

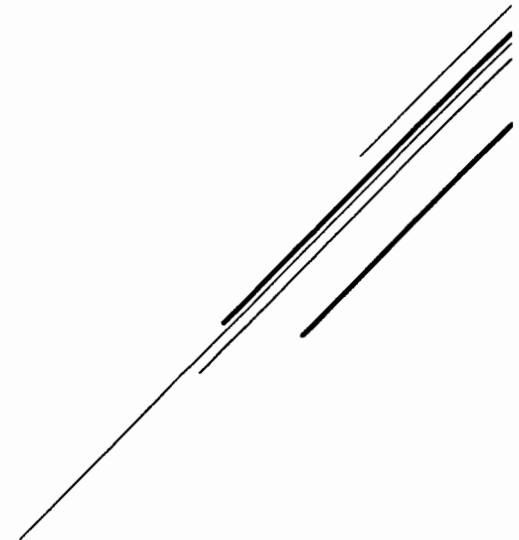
**MISSION:** Under the direction of the Gratiot County Veterans Committee and the County Administrator, the Gratiot County Department of Veterans Affairs provides assistance to veterans, their survivors, and dependents in identifying and applying for benefits for veterans and their families from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The GCDVA also assists with applications for State and County benefits.



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**MCL 35.624: “The county department of veterans’ affairs shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as shall be necessary in carrying out the provisions of this act and any and all other benefits to which veterans may be entitled as prescribed by the county department of veterans’ affairs.”**

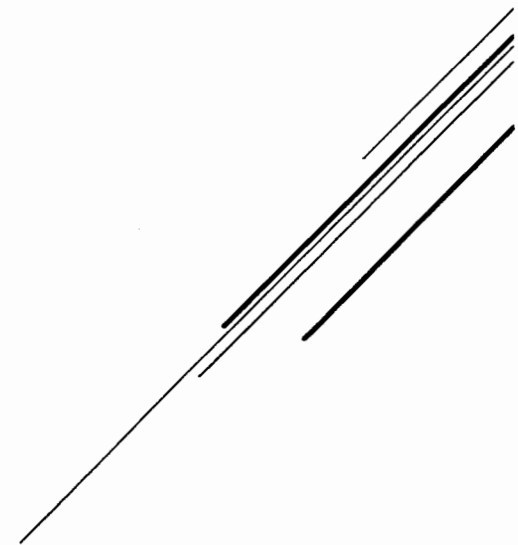
**NOTE: Briefing addresses Transition Glide Path**



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

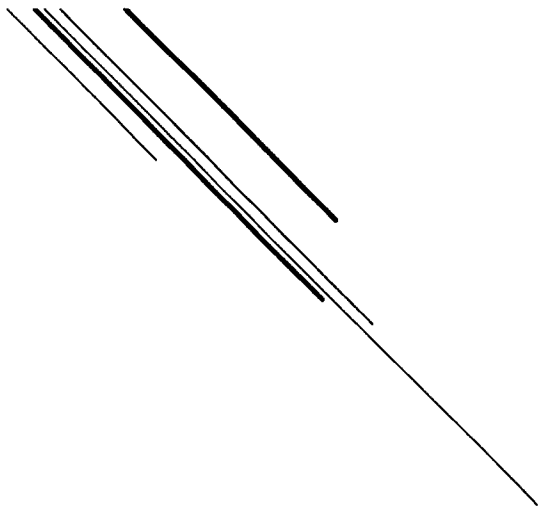
## The Need

- ▶ ***Military Drawdown*** continues following longest wartime period in American History. Entering poor economy, many with PTSD issues.
- ▶ ***Vietnam War Era*** veterans continue to enter retirement, seeking healthcare; seeking additional disability compensation; generating more NSC Pension claims. NOTE: Continues through 2022 when last 18 year old from 1975 turns 65 years old.
- ▶ ***World War II*** and ***Korean War*** veterans pass on, but widows often remain needing assistance
- ▶ VA claims system now stricter on application process, leading to more denials for those who do not have assistance with their application.
- ▶ Roughly two-thirds of estimated Gratiot County veterans are still not being assisted by GCDVA. Need more outreach, but too little time with present staff.
- ▶ NOTE: Gratiot County veterans population increased in FY 2014



GRATIOT COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

*Transition Glide Path*





# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## **“Keeping Our Options Open”**

2016- Full Time Office (-) Established

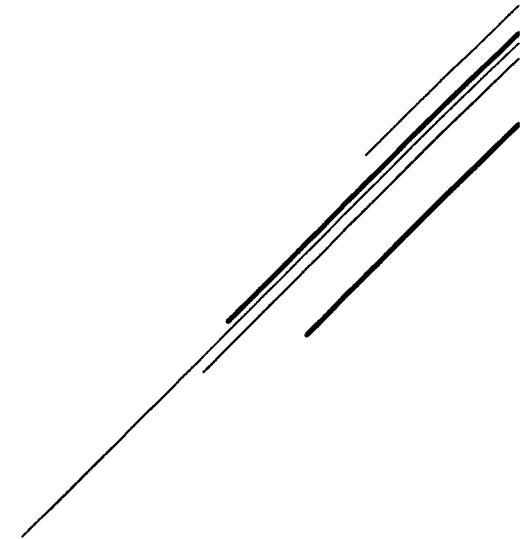
Preserves future options:

Phase I-Per Briefing establish “Budget Footprint” leading to F/T Director in the future

Phase II-Incumbent Secretary transitions to F/T Director,

or

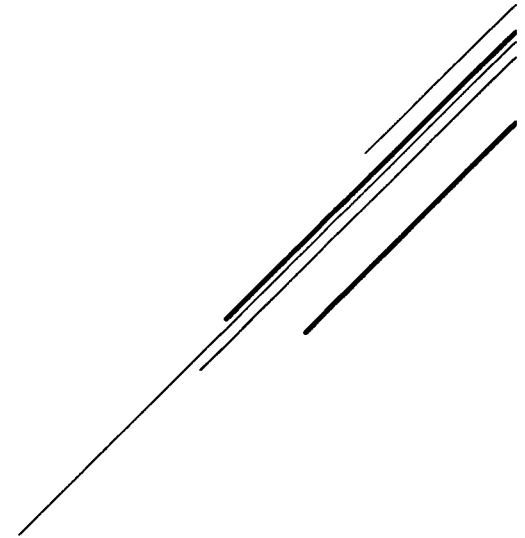
Phase II-External Search for F/T Director upon retirement of P/T incumbent.



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Incumbent Director Projected Departure:**

**March 1, 2018**



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## **Recommendation:**

**A. Establish "Full Time Office" in FY 16**

**B. Maintain F/T Secretary and P/T Director until incumbent Director retires. Then, continue with F/T Director, no Secretary.**

**NOTE: Director will train Secretary to assume Director position in future.**

**NOTE: Secretary is willing to be trained as an "Intern" and then considered for F/T Director in the future. Intern: "an advanced student or graduate, in a professional field, gaining supervised practical experience."**

**KEY NOTE: If Secretary position is not made F/T this fall, the likelihood is that the incumbent will seek a F/T position elsewhere, thereby losing the benefit of two years training and experience.**

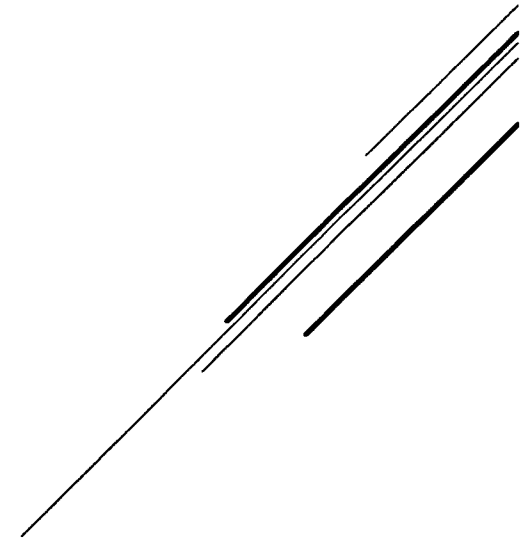
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# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## **Glide Path Department Budget Summary**

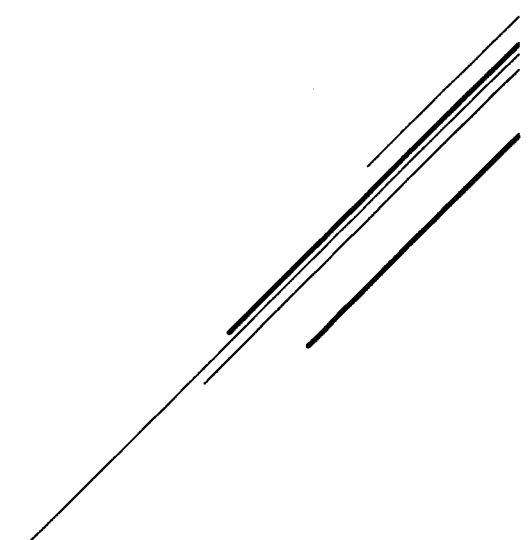
- ▶ See Enclosed Handout
- ▶ FY2015: \$57,094
- ▶ FY 2016: \$70,313
- ▶ FY 2017: \$84,723
- ▶ FY 2018: \$74,444
- ▶ FY 2019: \$65,417



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## Glide Path Budget Summary

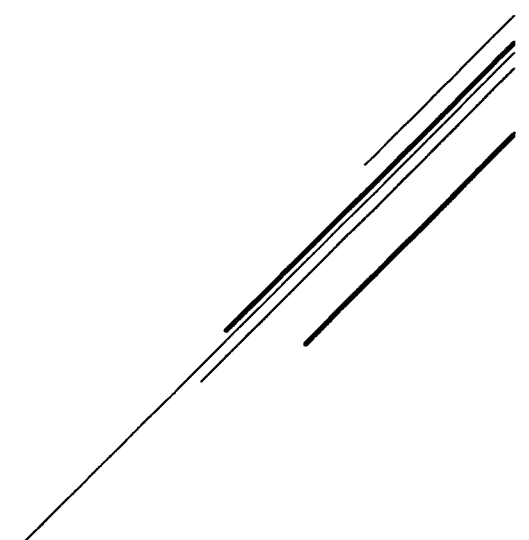
- ▶ FY 2017: \$84,723
- ▶ FY 2018: \$74,444
- ▶ FY 2016: \$70,313
- ▶ FY 2019: \$65,417-----}
- ▶ FY 2015: \$57,094



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## **Other Transition Items**

- Fund Travel/Per Diem to Lansing (MVAA) to obtain VA Accreditation
- Train incumbent Secretary to be new VSO;  
October 1, 2015 to February 28, 2018 (28 months)
- Incumbent Director departs effective March 1, 2018
- Internal or External Search for F/T VSO, with no Secretary effective March 1, 2018

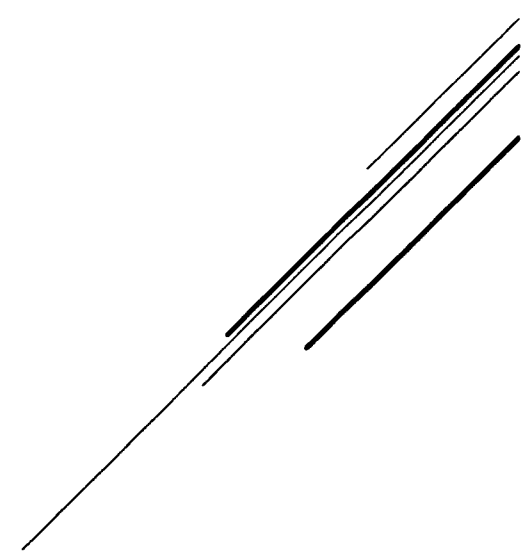


# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## New Office Scheduling Guidelines

**(with Full-Time Secretary)**

- Monday: "In-Take Appointments" w/Secretary; plus Walk-Ins
- Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday: Director focuses on Preparation of Fully Developed Claims for Compensation, NSC Pension, DIC, and Survivor's Pension; plus Walk-Ins
- "Intern" Training scheduled on Thursday afternoon
- Friday: In-Take Appointments w/Secretary (AM); Office Administration (PM); plus Walk-Ins.

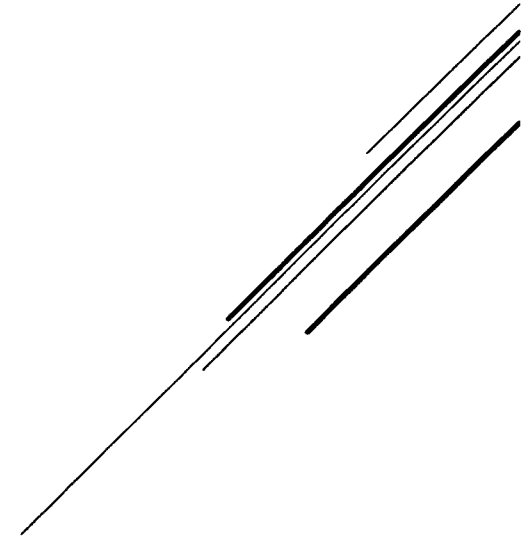


# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## New Office Scheduling Guidelines

### **“In-Take Appointments”**

- In-put Veteran into VetraSpec
- Order DD214 (if necessary): MVAA or NPRC
- Order Military Records/Awards from NPRC (SF180)
- “Intent to File” (VA 21-22 and VA 21-0966)
- Letter to Physician and Disability Benefits Questionnaires
- County Burial Benefit application
- Veterans Relief Fund application



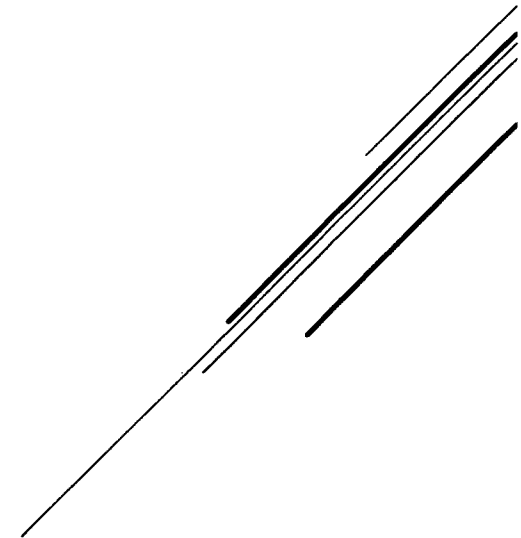


# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## New Office Scheduling Guidelines

### **“Routine Public Service Functions”**

- Answer Phone calls
- Walk ins
- Referral to other appropriate government agencies
- Provide appropriate VA forms; Publications; Referral Numbers
- Provide State Property Tax Rebate Paperwork and guidelines
- Contact Veterans Service Organizations on behalf of veterans
- Follow-through on VA claims decisions: Review Decision; determine need to appeal; contact appropriate veterans.
- Appointment Reminder phone-calls/contact those who missed appointments

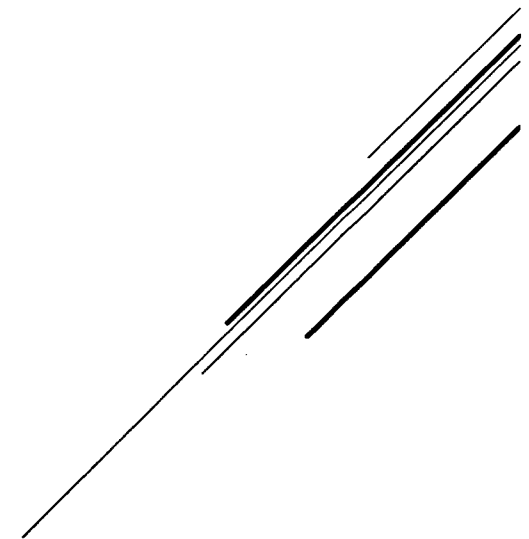


# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## New Office Scheduling Guidelines

### **“Office Administration”**

- Answer Phone calls
- Walk-ins
- File Management (Filing; Destruction Schedule)
- VetraSpec Input of Past Files/Destruction of unnecessary paper files
- USPS preparation
- Budget Review/Input bills
- “Compliance” Reports

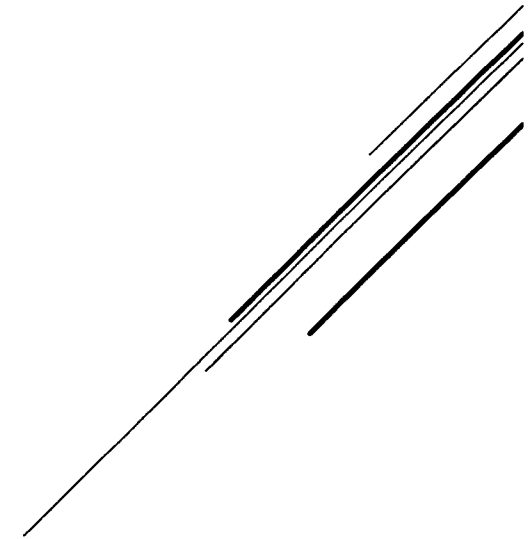


# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## New Office Scheduling Guidelines

### **Intern Training Program**

- Thursday PM
- Answer/Return Phone calls
- Walk-ins
- GCDVA Training Book ("Keys to Success in Veterans Claims")-TBP
- Twenty-Two Module NACVSO Training Program
- DAV Chapter Service Officer Certification Program
- MVAA Training Guide (if available)
- Using the United States Code/Code of Federal Regulations (Manual and On-Line)
- Court Decision Review and Reference

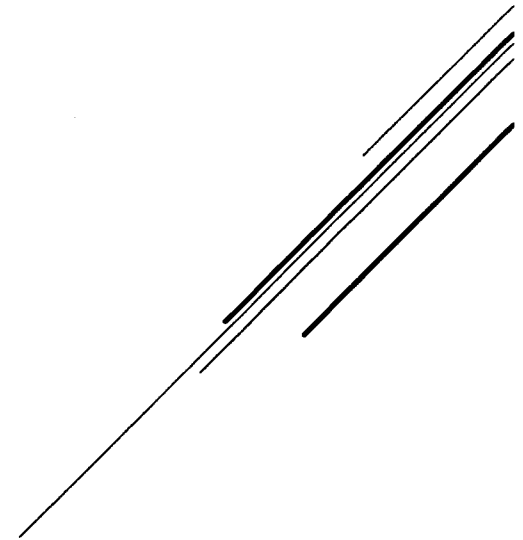


# GRATIOT COUNTY

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Likely Outcomes if Transition Plan is not Approved

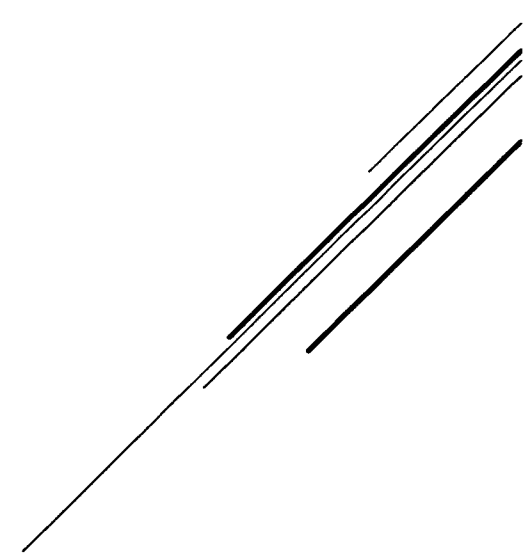
- Incumbent Secretary will depart to full-time position elsewhere
- “Full-Time Office” will vanish, since there is no justification for a F/T Secretary who is untrained
- Short Term Office Efficiency will decline as new Secretary is trained
- Likelihood of in-house training program diminishes as time moves on.
- Gratiot County will fail to provide the best possible services to its veterans.



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## ► Department Performance Measures-2014 Data

- Compensation and Pension is the “Pacing Item”
- USDVA paid \$11,521,000 in C&P to Gratiot County veterans in FY 2014 (most recent data available)
- Gratiot County ranks first in the region in C&P average.
- Gratiot County ranks sixteenth in the state in C&P average.
- Gratiot County ranks sixth among Lower Peninsula Counties
- Gratiot County has led the region for the past 9 years
- Gratiot County has exceeded the state avg since 2007.
- Gratiot County has exceeded the national avg since 2011.



COUNTY 2003	VET POP	COMP/ PENSION	VETERAN C/P Avg	RANKING	REMARKS
GRATIOT	3,538	\$2,430,000	\$687	4	(-\$56)
Saginaw	17,788	\$13,208,000	\$743	1	
Monroe	5,762	\$4,071,000	\$707	3	
Midland	7,312	\$5,000,000	\$684	5	
Isabella	4,388	\$3,146,000	\$717	2	
Clinton	5,342	\$2,655,000	\$497	8	
Shiawassee	6,543	\$4,024,000	\$615	6	
Ionia	5,242	\$2,907,000	\$555	7	
State of MI	845,833	\$587,155,000	\$694	AboveGC	(+\$7)
USA	25,051,473	\$27,980,221K	\$1117	AboveGC	(+\$430)

REGIONAL/STATE/NATIONAL C/P AVG

COUNTY 2013	VET POP	COMP/ PENSION	VETERAN C/P Avg	RANKING	REMARKS
GRATIOT	2,837	\$10,453,000	\$3,685	1	(+\$768)
Saginaw	13,948	\$40,687,000	\$2,917	2	
Monicahm	4,926	\$13,604,000	\$2,762	3	
Midland	6,926	\$16,514,000	\$2,624	4	
Isabella	3,538	\$8,820,000	\$2,493	5	
Clinton	4,817	\$11,533,000	\$2,394	6	
Shiawasee	5,528	\$12,827,000	\$2,320	7	
Ionia	4,509	\$8,933,000	\$1,981	8	
State of MI	660,773	\$1,675,388K	\$2,535	Below GC	(-\$1,150)
USA	21,882,153	\$63,574,737K	\$2,905	Below GC	(-\$780)

REGIONAL/STATE/NATIONAL C/P AVG

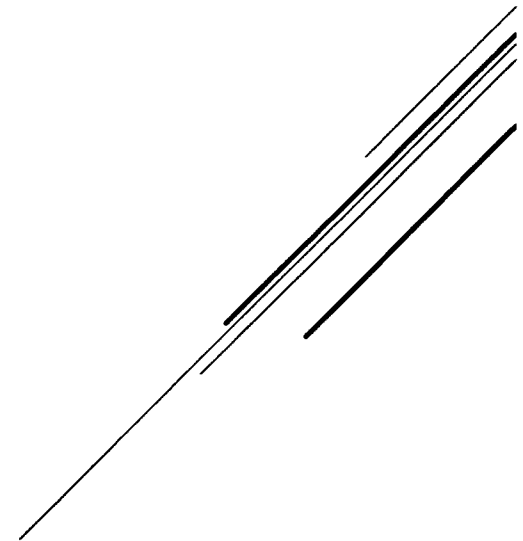
COUNTY 2014	VET POP	COMP/ PENSION	VETERAN C/P Avg	RANKING	REMARKS
GRATIOT	2,933	\$11,521,000	\$3,928	1	(+\$485)
Saginaw	13,882	\$47,795,000	\$3,443	2	
Montcalm	4,860	\$15,837,000	\$3,259	3	
Midland	6,217	\$18,662,000	\$3,002	4	
Shiawassee	5,590	\$15,905,000	\$2,845	5	
Clinton	5,013	\$13,376,000	\$2,668	6	
Isabella	3,635	\$9,684,000	\$2,664	7	
Ionia	4,611	\$10,951,000	\$2,375	8	
State of MI	658,469	\$1,983,447K	\$3,012	Below GC	(-\$916)
USA	21,894,286	\$75,265,436K	\$3,438	Below GC	(-\$490)

REGIONAL/STATE/NATIONAL C/P AVG



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- ▶ **Results do not happen in a vacuum**
- ▶ **Strongly recommend that the County Board approve the Transition Glide Path.**
- ▶ **Strongly recommend that the County Board approve a “Full Time” Veterans Office, commencing with Phase I during FY 2016.**



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## ► Closing Thoughts

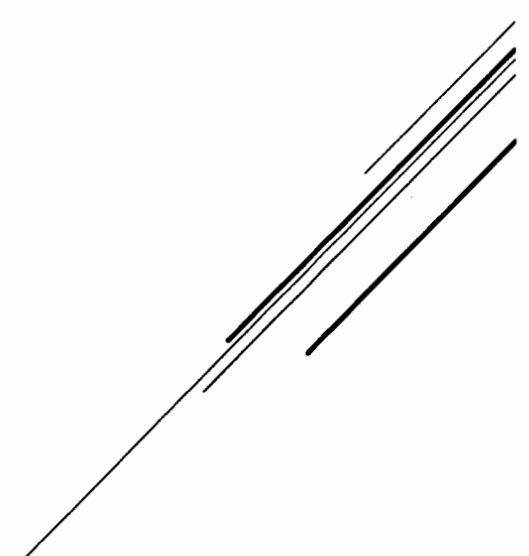
-The volunteer soldiers of a free republic deserve the gratitude of their fellow citizens

-The United States of America has very generous veterans benefits —which are earned benefits for services rendered.

-The future of the all volunteer force will depend in part on how well the nation honors the promises that were made to previous generations of veterans

-The Veterans of Gratiot County deserve a full-time, well educated, VA certified, fully trained, highly competent Veterans Service Office to assist them in filing and winning their claims for service connected disability benefits, pension, and other benefits to which they are entitled.

-The 99% who have not served in the military should provide such an office for the 1% who defend this nation.



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## ► Review and Discussion

