



LASALLE COUNTY VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2023

A Annual Overview of the Lasalle County VAC Events, Claims and Programs.



ADVOCATING FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

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LASALLE COUNTY VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

OFFICE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission (VAC) assists Veterans and their Families find and apply for any benefits they may be eligible for.

IMPACT STATEMENT

By assisting the Veterans and Families with benefits, the LaSalle County VAC brings in compensation payments to those who are eligible. This in turn allows for the Veterans and Families to stay in their communities and helps the area in which they reside thrive.

FISCAL YEAR 2023 RESULTS

In fiscal year 2023, the LaSalle County VAC netted over \$7.3 million dollars in benefits paid directly to our Veterans and Families. The office also assisted in paying over \$21,000 in rent/utility payments for Veterans in need. Overall, the office has increased payouts to Veterans by over \$1.5 million dollars compared to FY2022.

PARTNERSHIPS

The LaSalle County VAC not only assisted Veterans and Families financially, we also hosted, created and held events/programs that benefited our Veterans as well. This year we again partnered with AllenForce, Hines VA Medical Center, Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E), Hines Caregiver Team, Hines Mental Health Team and MidWest Shelter for Homeless Veterans. We have secured a partnership with a local horse ranch for a future program and a food pantry to assist those that may need help with more non-perishable items.

FUTURE GOALS

The goal of the LaSalle County VAC has always been, and will continue to be, that of assisting our Veterans and their Families in every way possible. Our office has provided great benefits for the county and our Veterans this past year and we will continue to do so for years to come.

STAFF



Christa Hammers- USAF Veteran

Superintendent

- Employed at LCVAC since 2017
- Acquired CVA in 2022
- Superintendent since June 2022
- IACVAC Liason to IDVA



Lissa Olson

Assistant Superintendent

- Employed at LCVAC since 2019
- IVAC Ambassador
- Secretary of IACVAC
- IVAC Volunteer of the Year 2023



James Sturtevant, USN Veteran

Veterans Service Officer

- Employed at LCVAC since 2022
- Accredited 2022



Emily Hackler

Veterans Service Officer (Outreach VSO)

- Employed at LCVAC since 2022
- Accredited 2023
- Daughter of Veteran



Kelli Reitgraf

Administrative Assistant

- Employed at LCVAC since January 2023
- Niece of Veteran

Measuring Progress

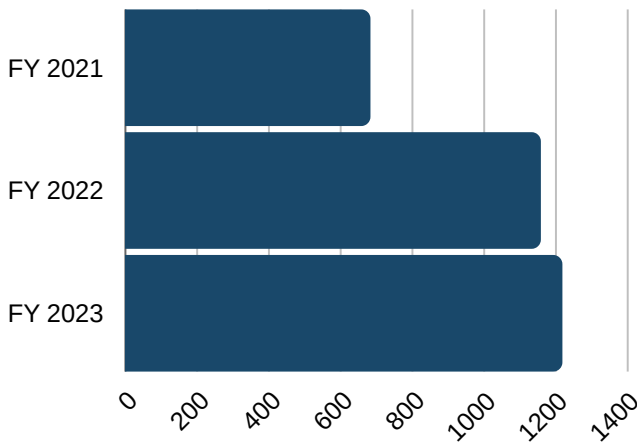
Claims processing has now reached a 12-16 month wait time from start of the claims process until decision is made with Veterans Affairs. With that, our office was still able to secure over \$7.3 million dollars in benefit payouts for our Veterans and Families. Below is a break down of number claim type submitted by the last 3 fiscal years and the total payout to Veterans/Families for that year.

FY 2023	FY 2022	FY 2021
Total Forms: 2,325	Total Forms: 1,529	Total Forms: 975
Compensation: 439	Compensation: 303	Compensation: 282
Pension: 43	Pension: 44	Pension: 22
Survivors Pension: 4	Survivors Pension: 6	Survivors Pension: 5
Appeals: 146	Appeals: 233	Appeals: 98
Healthcare: 102	Healthcare: 28	Healthcare: 37
TOTAL PAYOUT: \$7,347,603.80	TOTAL PAYOUT: \$5,832,997.81	TOTAL PAYOUT: \$2,492,678.47

Office Visits and phone calls are one of the many ways we connect with our Veterans/Families. These numbers have increased significantly since our move to Peru (just South of the LaSalle VA Clinic). Our Veterans have repeatedly stated that our location is much more convenient and friendly than our place in Ottawa. We also offer outreach for our Veterans/Families that may not be able to drive. Below is the office visit, phone call and walk-in numbers for the past 3 fiscal years, along with our outreach numbers for each location- Marseilles, IL has been added for FY24.

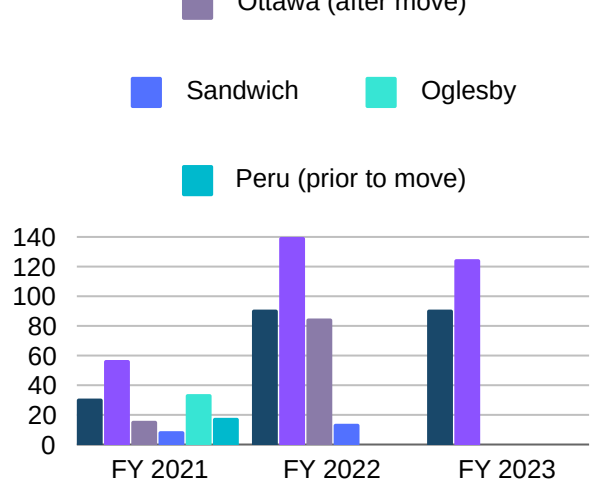
Office Visits per Fiscal Year

In Person Visits - Main Office

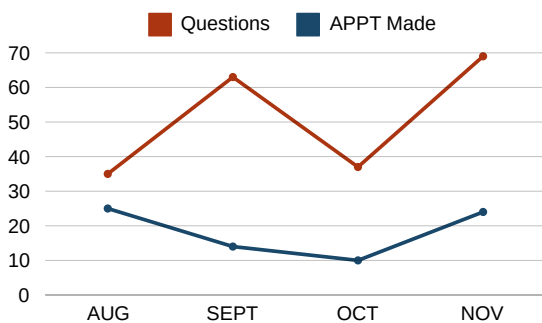


Peru Location: August 2021 - Current
Ottawa Location prior.

In Person Visits - Outreach

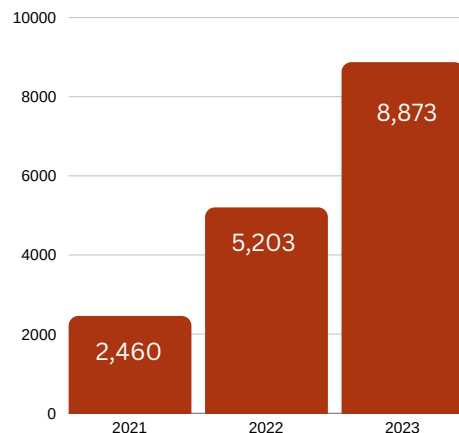


Marseilles Added for FY24.



Total Number of Walk-Ins Aug-Nov 2023: 277

Our office just started tracking the number of walk-in clients/questions a month in August 2023.



Number of Phone Calls Per FY

Events/Programs

Not only does the LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission assist Veterans and Families with finding and applying for benefits- we also host, create and partake in events for our Veterans to connect with resources and build programs to assist our Veterans with needs that may otherwise go unmet.

Fiscal Year 2023 Events:

- VA S.A.V.E
- Hines Caregiver
- Hines Healthcare
- MidWest Shelter for Homeless Veterans
- VR&E
- Vietnam Veteran Honor - Peru Library (Phil Valle)
- Suicide Prevention Walk
- Triple Service Afterhours-Comfort a Hero Program
- Travelling Wall- Peru
- Congresswoman Lauren Underwood, Town Hall
- Central States Tournament (Highlighted 14 Veterans)
- Veterans Expo 2023 (Partnered with TBM Air Show)
- Operation Green Light (Gave out over 150 lights)
- Veterans Giving Tree (Over 400 gifts to 90 LaSalle Veterans Home Residents)
- Christmas Window Painting (decorated windows at LaSalle Veterans Home)
- Vets Visit with Santa (Vietnam Veteran gifted time dressed as Santa for photos)



We also would like to thank all who donated to our office this year:

- Veteran Wade Dawson
- Veteran William Marks
- OSB Community Bank
- Veteran Michael Hooper
- Wave for Charities
- Love's Truck Stop

Contributions go towards our Events and Programs.

Education

We continue to push further education with our staff so we can stay up to date with the new legislature and best practices for our clients. Our office has had one new Veterans Service Officer (VSO) complete the Basic course and get accredited through NACVSO and our Administrative Assistant took the Basic to the Basics course that familiarized her with the verbiage and forms we use in office- to better assist our clients. We also continue to attend annual training courses and meetings - both state and nation-wide. Our office has attended the Illinois Association of County Officials (IACO) Conference, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) Conference, Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions (IACVAC) Trainings, and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) Trainings this past year and will continue to do so in the future.

Financial Aid

The LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission not only offers claims assistance, programs and events- we also assist Veterans in their time of need. Whether it is a one-time event or monthly occurrence. In FY 2023, our office has paid claims for direct financial aid totaling \$21,824.32 via vouchers to vendors. These payments are to assist Veterans with either rent/mortgage or utilities payments. It is this office's aim to not only see these Veterans and make sure they are receiving every benefit they are eligible for, but also connect them with other community resources that may be able to further assist them.

Community resources our office has worked with:

- Business Employment Skills Team (BEST), Inc - resume writing
- North Central Area Transit (NCAT)- rides for appointments
- TriCounty - Bill pay/clothing/food vouchers
- MidWest Shelter Freedom Commissary - household goods
- LiHeap- Bill payments (utilities)
- Social Security- Benefit payments/Unemployable Veterans
- Ottawa Food Pantry- Assist Veterans with non-perishable food items

Looking Ahead

The LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission will continue to strive to do everything we can for our Veterans and Families. It is our aim to keep education and knowledge a priority to best assist any client. In the future it is our mission to keep our office effective and make sure that anyone who walks in our doors leaves more understanding of benefits and resources available to them. We will continue to hold events, create programs and reach out to our Veterans/Families that may not be able to make it into our main office. It is our honor to serve our Nation's hero's and their families, and we will continue to expand our services in the hopes of filling needs of even a greater number of Veterans.





Advocating for Veterans & Their Families

815-433-1761
www.lasallecountyvac.com

Prepared by: Christa Hammers, Superintendent
December 28, 2023