

## VAC Fact Sheet

- *Enabling legislation: Veteran's Military Assistance Act, 330 ILCS 45/1*
- The Superintendent is elected by the Commission

### *Services offered by the Veteran's Assistance Commission include:*

- Transportation (to VA hospitals, clinics & veterans centers)
- Job search assistance
- Emergency assistance for shelter, utility & food
- Before services can be provided a veteran must go through a comprehensive application process that requires some or all of the following: proof of all family income, most current discharge documents, job service document, Social Security, tax returns, and proof of the acceptance or denial from other government assistance agencies

### ***FY 2013 Operations:***

- In FY 2013 the Veteran's Assistance Commission of Cook County (VAC) was treated as an independent entity and not as a county department within the Bureau of Administration (BOA).
- Two employees hired by the county were retained and transferred to BOA to oversee functions of the VAC and to develop and coordinate the county's efforts in assisting veterans
- The salary of Superintendent Abundio Zaragoza was budgeted and paid out of BOA as well
- The remaining operating funds (\$206,576) for the VAC were budgeted in account 298 (Special or Cooperative Programs) for transportation and other assistance
- The \$206,576 was allocated in 1/4<sup>th</sup> increments at the beginning of each quarter in FY 13.

### ***FY 2014 Operations:***

- In FY 2014 the VAC has been treated as an independent stand-alone department in order to improve transparency and accountability
- The department was funded at \$400,000 for FY 2014
- This President's Budget Recommendation for disbursements to indigent veterans was \$324,903 which represented a significant increase over 2013 appropriations or actual expenditures
- VAC has spent \$292,044 out of an expected \$300,000 thru 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

<b>FY 2014 VAC Spending</b>				
	Expected Spend	Actual Spend	Variance	%
Qtr 1	\$ 100,000	\$ 82,614	\$ (17,386)	-17%
Qtr 2	\$ 100,000	\$ 82,574	\$ (17,426)	-17%
Qtr 3	\$ 100,000	\$ 126,856	\$ 26,856	27%
<b>Total through 3rd Qtr</b>	<b>\$ 300,000</b>	<b>\$ 292,044</b>	<b>\$ (7,956)</b>	<b>-3%</b>

### ***FY 2015 Proposal:***

- Superintendent Zaragoza submitted a proposal that totaled \$ \$1,003,713 including :
  - Requesting 8 total positions (including superintendent position) at a cost of \$427,600
  - \$215,280 in workers compensation benefits; departments of this size typically do not budget for nor experience workers compensation expense (actual cost all of benefits including workers comp for the 8 positions requested is \$195,854)
  - \$307,000 in disbursements to indigent veterans

- The President's FY 2015 Budget Recommendation for the VAC is \$400,000 and includes the salary of the superintendent, disbursements to indigent veterans of \$324,903 and expenses associated with operating the office. This represents the same level the VAC was funded at in FY 2014. The main difference between the department's request and the President's recommendation is the additional staffing and workers compensation requests (workers comp is not typically included in the budget of departments of this size)

***Surrounding Counties:***

***Will County VAC:*** Provides needed interim and/or emergency financial assistance paid exclusively to Honorably Discharged Military Veterans and their families, who reside in Will County, for basic living expenses. (FY 14 budget: \$781,000)

***Lake County VAC:*** Provides emergency aid and services to military veterans and their families residing in Lake County who qualify for this assistance under the guidelines established by Public Aid and the Lake County Veteran's Assistance Commission (VAC). The Lake County VAC also provides assistance with claims and advocacy for veterans and/or their family members seeking benefits from the Veterans Administration. (FY 14 budget: \$414,488)

***Kendall County VAC:*** Provides services to veterans, widows of veterans and certain dependents of veterans. These benefits fall into three categories; County, Federal, and State. In order to receive the County benefits the veteran's most recent discharge must be "honorable" except for the indigent burial. (FY 14 budget: \$344,184)

***McHenry County VAC:*** The Commission is dedicated to ensuring that no Honorably Discharged living veteran, or surviving spouse of a veteran, suffers from undue financial hardship. The Commission is also dedicated to the principal that all living veterans receive the healthcare to which they are entitled and that deceased veterans are buried with honor and dignity. The goal of the VAC of McHenry County is to work closely with clients and other agencies to provide and coordinate services and assistance which will help eligible veterans and/or their families overcome obstacles and become more independent. (FY 14 budget: \$667,499)

- *Unlike Cook County, some VAC's are funded by means of a tax levy specifically for veterans' assistance. However, state statute limits authority for that levy to counties with a population of less than 3 million people.*
- *Historically, Cook County's VAC budget does not indicate indirect funding such as rent, as does, for example, Will County, whose VAC budget includes a building and rent expense of about \$185K per year. Cook County's indirect expense for VACCC office space is approximately \$170k per year. Office space for the VACCC is provided by Cook County.*