

‘It’s What Service Members Need’

VFW service officers at Benefits Delivery at Discharge sites provide a simplified process for service members who are separating from the military

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Being the largest Navy base in the world, Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia is home to a vast number of sailors and Marines, and VFW’s Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) site on the base provides an essential service to those military members.

VFW National Pre-Discharge Claims Representative Abigail Heffernan said that a common concern among troops is how “daunting” the VA claims process is.

“Having BDD representatives on military bases can alleviate the stressor of getting VA claims done — and done right,” Heffernan said. “Filing a disability claim also provides supplemental income to service members during a very critical period in their transition from military life.”

Heffernan, a retired Navy career counselor, said that she mostly gets “word-of-mouth” referrals and gives briefings about the claims process during Transition Assistance Program (TAP) classes. Heffernan added that, as one of VFW’s BDD representatives, she undergoes service officer training every six months, all while processing about five claims per day.

Heffernan said that, even as a career counselor, she quickly realized during her transition out of the military that it was going to be more difficult than she anticipated.

“While in the Navy, I was responsible for preparing sailors for separation out of the military,” Heffernan said. “I felt that I was pretty good at my job and that I was well-prepared for my transition. But there were so many things that needed to be done and very little direction on how to do it. This is an example why BDD sites are so important. It’s what service members need.”

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