



# Department of Veterans' Services

**Guidelines for Establishing Veterans' Services  
Districts Under Chapter 115**

**&**

**Training and Certification of Veterans' Services  
Officers**

# **Guidelines for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts Under Chapter 115**

- Districts established by Sections 10, 11 and 14 of MGL Chapter 115 and regulated by 108 CMR 12.00
- “A Guide for Establishing Veterans’ Services Districts Under Chapter 115” issued by DVS in 2011 as a binding directive pursuant to MGL c. 115, §§ 2 and 14
- Currently there are 24 districts comprised of 128 municipalities in Massachusetts
- Goal of the Guidelines is to promote efficient and cost-effective processing and administration of Chapter 115 benefits by consolidating veterans’ services operations
- The decision to seek approval for a Veterans’ Services District is made by the City Council or Board of Selectmen

# Guidelines for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts Under Chapter 115

- The Secretary, with assistance from Department's Director of Compliance and Training, reviews and approves applications to form districts
- That application must be submitted by the Mayor or Board of Selectmen of the municipalities seeking to form a district
- No set format for the application; may be done by letter with supporting information
- REQUIRED information per 108 CMR 12.02 (2)
  - Names of each municipality seeking to form district
  - Population of each municipality
  - Position title of each person to be employed
  - Location of central office for the district
  - Location of satellite office(s), if any
  - Hours of operation for the office(s)

# Guidelines for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts Under Chapter 115

- Initial approval of a District is for a 1 year period
- Re-application must be made every 2 years thereafter OR if change in required information has occurred
- Currently, should the Secretary determine that the District is not in compliance with applicable statute, regulation, or Guidelines, he may dissolve the District
- Dissolved District may reapply after correcting the issue
- Under proposed Chapter 14, if municipalities, including those in a District, do not comply with the requirements of Chapter 115 or Title 108 of the CMR, there may be a finding of non-compliance by the Secretary, which in turn shall result in the reduction of the 75% reimbursement allowance to 50%

## **Guidelines for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts Under Chapter 115**

- Under MGL c. 115, § 11, every District has a Board made up of the Mayor or Selectman (or designees) of every municipality within the District
- Decisions concerning hiring of personnel to staff the District, their salaries and expenses, and the apportionment of those costs between the municipalities within the District are made by the Board, not DVS

## **Training and Certification of Veterans' Service Officers**

- VALOR Act II was signed into law as Chapter 62 of the Acts of 2014; now found at MGL c. 115 § 3B
- The Department of Veterans' Services was required to develop and administer a training program for veterans service officers. The department must test knowledge of chapter 115, employment, education, health care, retirement, and other veterans' benefits and resources provided by the federal government.
- Training shall be offered annually and shall be administered by the secretary of veterans' services and approved by the Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association and Massachusetts Municipal Association.

## Training and Certification of Veterans' Service Officers

- New Chapter 14 of 108 CMR is the regulatory chapter that relates to training and certification
- The public hearing on new Chapter 14, along with the revisions to existing chapters, is scheduled for February 10, 2015, 10:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m. at DVS offices in Boston
- Proposed regulations are on the DVS website or please email [claudia.b.mckelway2@state.ma.us](mailto:claudia.b.mckelway2@state.ma.us) and I will send you a red-lined copy of the proposed revisions

## **Training and Certification of Veterans' Service Officers**

- New VSOs must attend mandatory training within 6 months of appointment and then take the certification exam; Currently employed VSOs will have 6 months from the effective date of new Chapter 14 to take the exam
- All VSOs must attend annual mandatory training
- Following the initial examination and successful certification, VSOs must take and pass the certification examination every 3 years
- DVS currently is working on the content of the certification examination and the means by which it will be administered
- Candidates must obtain a passing score of 70%
- Candidates will have 3 opportunities to pass the examination
- If the VSO fails to pass the examination after 3 attempts, his or her city, town or district will be considered non-compliant with MGL c. 115, §§ 3 and 6, and will be subject to a reduction in the reimbursement allowance from 75% to 50%