



Department of
Veterans Services

John R. Kasich, Governor
Chip Tansill, Director



May 24, 2016

Randall J. Meyer
Ohio Inspector General
30 East Broad Street
Suite 2940
Columbus, OH 43215-3414

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
2016 MAY 25 AM 9:28

Dear Mr. Meyer:

Thank you for your Report of Investigation, dated 3/17/16. We appreciate the diligence of the Inspector General's Office in looking into this matter.

In the two years since the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (DVS) self-reported our concerns to your office, the Ohio Veterans Home (OVH) has made several important changes to our operations and our relationship with Stein Hospice.

Numbered below are the department's responses to your recommendations:

1. "The Ohio Department of Veterans Services should. . . re-evaluate the dual employment/contractor status of doctors Williams and McHenry, and bring the relationship into compliance with the Ohio Ethics Commission (OEC) staff advisory opinion. . .

In 2010, DVS requested an OEC advisory opinion specifically to make certain that these employment relationships complied with the Revised Code and were in the best interests of the State of Ohio. We believed that the contracts with Doctor Williams, Doctor McHenry, and another physician not identified in the report of investigation were within the guidance provided by OEC. In light of the new IG recommendation, we have concluded that there is no way to comply with the OEC staff advisory opinion, and have decided to restructure the medical positions at the Ohio Veterans Home-Georgetown to eliminate the intermittent employee "dual status" of the doctors at that facility. We are currently working to hire two physicians who will serve as co-medical directors. These positions will either be salaried or contract, and will replace the services provided under the prior contract. A request for proposal was filed for applicants interested in working as contract physicians on April 29, 2016. A job posting for applicants interested in working as traditional state employees was posted on April 20, 2016.

2. "The Ohio Department of Veterans Services should. . . enter into a lease agreement and services agreement with Stein Hospice to ensure that Ohio Veterans Homes receives proper reimbursements for space and equipment. . ."

On April 1, 2014, OVH ended the relationship that provided IT access, equipment, and data privileges at both Sandusky and Georgetown. On May 1, 2014, Stein Hospice vacated the space that had been provided for their operations at the Sandusky home. On June 1, 2014, OVH assumed full control over the space that had been provided for Stein operations at the Georgetown home. Since June, 2014, there has been no arrangement that would require such a lease or services agreement.

3. "The Ohio Department of Veterans Services should. . . consider implementing safeguards that will prevent physician self-referrals. . ."

Since 2014, residents who are eligible for hospice care have been made aware of this in writing and, when they have chosen hospice, residents have made that election in writing from a list of all available hospice providers. All appropriate staff have been trained on the proper procedures to follow for hospice referral. Every hospice referral is now reviewed and approved by our medical director, who has not had any outside employment relationships with any hospice provider.

The Department of Veterans Services and the Ohio Veterans Homes will continue to provide the best possible care for our veterans. We believe that the second and third recommendations were fully addressed by the actions that we implemented after reporting our concerns in 2014. The personnel concerns in the first recommendation will be fully resolved once our new co-medical directors are in place at the Georgetown home.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this response.

Sincerely,



Chip Tansill
Director