

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER/TREASURER/TAX COLLECTOR
INTERNAL AUDITS DIVISION



VETERANS AFFAIRS:
INFORMATION SECURITY AUDIT

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Mission Statement

This office is committed to serving our customers by processing, safeguarding, and providing information regarding the finances and public records of the County. We perform these functions with integrity, independent judgment, and outstanding service. We are accurate, timely, courteous, innovative, and efficient because of our well-trained and accountable staff.

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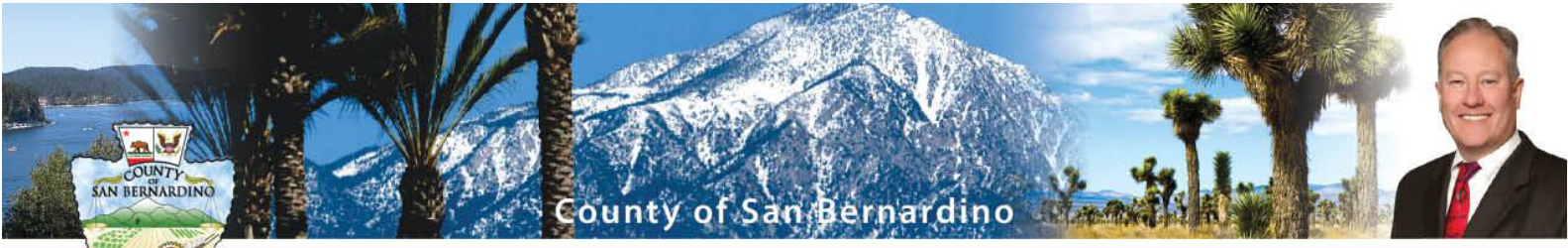
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Veterans Affairs: Information Security Audit

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February 17, 2022

Frank Guevara, Director
Veterans Affairs
222 W. Hospitality Ln., Third Floor
San Bernardino, CA 92415

RE: Veterans Affairs Information Security Audit

We have completed an audit of the Veterans Affairs Department (Department) Information Security. The objectives of this audit were to determine whether the Department maintains adequate policies and procedures over Personally Identifiable Information (PII), whether access controls are secure, and to determine whether data is protected from unauthorized personnel. We conducted our audit in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing established by the Institute of Internal Auditors.

Our audit determined that access and privacy controls over PII were in place and effective.

We sent a draft report to the Department and discussed the results of the audit with management on January 25, 2022.

We would like to express our appreciation to the personnel at the Veterans Affairs Department who assisted and cooperated with us during this engagement.

Respectfully submitted,

Ensen Mason CPA
Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector
San Bernardino County

B
Denise Mejico, CFE
Chief Deputy Auditor

Distribution of Audit Report:

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Grand Jury
San Bernardino County Audit Committee

Date Report Distributed: January 27, 2022

EM:DLM:MKC:oac

Background

The Department

The Department was created to assist local veterans and their families in obtaining veterans' benefits from federal, state, and local agencies. Formed in 1926, the Department is the oldest veterans' service office in the state of California and one of the oldest in the nation. Since the Department's inception, the Board of Supervisors has continued to recognize the need for professional veterans' advocates to provide claims assistance to the 175,000 veterans and their families who reside in San Bernardino County. In 2020, the Department received 25,457 requests for assistance by veterans and family members equating to \$67 million in new cash benefits, which was the highest in California.

Information Security

The Department has enhanced their access security by issuing Federal Personal Identity Verification Card (PIV) to their Veteran Service Officers (VSO). VSO employees undergo special screening and are qualified to assist veterans with their Veterans Administration-related affairs. The Department utilizes the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) to gain real-time access to each claimant's file. VBMS is a workflow and claims management software solution custom-built for the Veterans Administration. The system allows access to accredited representations to help the claim process run more efficiently. This allows them to review each pending claim's status and help advise veterans on how best to proceed with further documenting their claims so they can be approved as soon as possible.

Department Locations

The Department has seven locations throughout the County. Four of the seven locations including: Fort Irwin, Loma Linda, Twenty-Nine Palms, and Yucca Valley, are outstation offices that do not store PII and were not in use during COVID as clients were serviced through the phone. The sites visited during our fieldwork included the San Bernardino and Rancho Cucamonga locations.

Scope and Objectives

Our audit examined whether access and privacy controls over personally identifiable information (PII) were in place and effective.

The objectives of our audit were to:

- Determine whether the Department maintains adequate policies and procedures over Personally Identifiable Information.
- Determine whether access controls are secure, and data is protected from unauthorized personnel.

Methodology

In achieving the audit objectives, the following audit procedures were performed, including but not limited to:

- Reviews of Department policies and procedures
- Interviews of Department Staff
- Walk-throughs of access and privacy controls
- Observations of opening and closing procedures
- Verification of training certifications



Audit Finding and Recommendation

There were no findings for this audit.