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Washington County Develops Veterans Service Software

Innovative, efficient software could be shared statewide to save taxpayer resources

West Bend, WI – Navigating federal and state bureaucracy is tough – even for county officials. The Washington County Veteran Services Office is tasked with assisting Veterans through the bureaucracies, while tracking key data. Faced with continued use of an outdated system or costly software purchase, the county instead built a new software solution to better serve the county's 9,000 population of Veterans. All 72 counties and 11 Tribes in Wisconsin are mandated to assist and track Veterans. The county showcased the software to area counties on Friday, April 26 in hopes to share the platform.

The new system serves as a centralized customer-relationship management tool for Veterans and adds functionality through improved case management tracking mechanisms, improved tracking of dependents, and directly integrating various forms required by the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“Our office guides Veterans through tedious forms and lengthy procedures from the federal and state governments to attain benefits,” said Kurt Rusch Veterans Service Officer for Washington County. “The forms are time consuming and require specific information. Our office exists to track Veterans through the process; unfortunately, a decades old software was inefficient for Veterans and our staff.”

That's where the new software is a great help. The county maintains over 25,000 Veteran records and works with Veterans on a wide array of benefits throughout their lifetime: VA Home Loan Program, education, healthcare, compensation and pension are just some benefits that may be available to Veterans. The federal and state programs have varying levels of eligibility, which do change periodically.

“The most challenging part of this project,” added Applications Developer Michelle Von Haden, who created the software, “was the breadth and depth of it. There's so many pieces. In the end, our software will help Washington County Veterans immediately, and I hope across the state as well.”

The software took roughly 480 hours to develop but the county hopes to recoup some of this development cost by sharing the program. As federal and state requirements change, this new software will provide flexibility. Veterans can “opt-in” to a new e-mail system, and they can volunteer in case of a Washington County emergency. With their approval, we will use their military experience in order to match skillsets to potential needs.

“Innovation and creating efficiencies that improve service delivery in government is something that we take seriously in Washington County,” added County Administrator Joshua Schoemann. “This is an incredible example of great work being done in our county daily.”

For more information about this program or any assistance related to Veterans, contact 262-335-4457.

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