



OFFICE *of*  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

Date : September 11, 2014

Reply to: Office of Inspector General (OIG)

Subject : Management Letter No. 14-18, Customer Service Weaknesses at the National Personnel Records Center

To : Jay Trainer, Executive of Agency Services (A)

The purpose of this management letter is to bring to your attention customer service concerns and potential weaknesses expressed to us by veterans contacting the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). Over the past few months, the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) hotline has seen an increase in the number of complaints received from veterans encountering problems trying to obtain their records from the NPRC, and insisting they were unable to receive satisfactory customer service regarding their requests. Veterans indicated (1) they received no response to the status of their requests, (2) they were unable to make a formal complaint, or (3) their requests were either processed partially, incorrectly, or not at all. Additionally, many veterans complained their requests took an extremely long time to process.

Veterans noted frustration when trying to contact the NPRC's Customer Service Center. Veterans can contact the Center via telephone or email, but indicated they were unable to reach representatives, experienced long wait times, or their emails were unanswered. When we reviewed the Daily Call Center – Queue Summary Report for the period of October 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014, we noted 176,136 calls were not queued when the Center was contacted. A call not queued means the system never was able to even intake the call, thus the caller was not able to get through at all. In fact, only 104,096 calls were received and queued by the system during the period. However, even of these calls, 36,243 (35%) were abandoned before any conversation took place. We have also been informed some veteran email requests going back to January 2014 have yet to be answered.

Veterans are also not receiving complete information about their requests. For instance, when one veteran requested medical records from a specific military treatment facility from the NPRC, a form letter was sent indicating the records could not be located. However, while those specific records could not be found, NARA's systems indicated records for that veteran from that facility for that time period did exist. Yet this important information was not communicated in the original form letter to the veteran. When we asked an NPRC customer service representative if they could send the veteran a letter expressing these facts, we were informed the representative was not allowed to by their supervisor. We were informed the veteran was denied benefits because he could not provide the necessary medical records.

When the OIG contacted NPRC senior management, it was apparent they were still actively trying to help this particular veteran. However, there appears to be a gap between the attitude and direction of senior management and the actual service provided in day to day operations. Thus the communication employees receive from their department managers may not always align with senior management expectations. During our discussions with NPRC senior management, we indicated NPRC's form letters may need to be customized when there is additional information available that may help a veteran. Senior management agreed.

We also received complaints of veterans receiving other's records, including disclosures of personal information. The OIG previously reported on erroneous disclosures by the NPRC, but the condition still exists. In FY 2013 the NPRC serviced 1,132,525 million requests with senior management indicating there were 162 known reports of erroneous release. However, this does not take into account individuals not reporting back to NARA when they receive someone else's records. While the reported releases equate to a 99.99% accuracy rate for the NPRC, any improper release of personal data should be of concern to management.

We suggest you consider the following to help address the customer service weaknesses at the NPRC:

- Identify a plan to reduce the number of calls not queued, abandoned, and emails not answered.
- Identify a plan to adequately staff the Customer Service Center.
- Provide more detailed guidance and allow customer service representatives the opportunity to provide accurate details on requests, including the ability to make changes to form letters.

It is imperative for veterans to receive the best customer service when contacting the NPRC. We look forward to your prompt response on how you are going to address these critical weaknesses. The Customer Service and Call Center Operations may be included in a future audit plan.

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this letter, please contact me. As with all OIG products, we will determine what information is publicly posted on our website from this management letter. Should you or management have any redaction suggestions based on FOIA exemptions, please submit them to my counsel within one week from the date of this letter. Should we receive no response within this time frame, we will interpret that as confirmation NARA does not desire any redactions to the posted report.



JAMES SPRINGS  
Acting Inspector General

cc: David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States (N)  
Jay Bosanko, Chief Operating Officer (C)