

**For Immediate Release – County of Berks – Press Release**

***Berks County Veterans Affairs Office Relocating to Spring Township***

**Reading, PA— 08/22/2024** — In response to an unprecedented increase in compensation claims and the growing need for private, trauma-informed care, the Berks County Veterans Affairs (BCVA) office is set to relocate to a new facility at 20 Commerce Drive, Wyomissing, during the week of September 16, 2024. The move comes at a pivotal time as BCVA experiences a record-breaking surge in successful compensation claims, positioning the office as the #2 rated county in Pennsylvania for veteran compensation claims and revenue return.

According to the latest statistics released by the Pennsylvania Department of Veteran and Military Affairs, the BCVA is on track to return a remarkable \$40,968,213.16 to Berks County veterans. This achievement underscores the office's commitment to ensuring that veterans receive the benefits they deserve. The significant uptick in compensation claim applications is partially attributed to the PACT Act of 2022, which has led to an increase in claims related to PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma (MST).

“The rise in compensation claims has highlighted the urgent need for increased privacy in our operations,” said Jay Ostrich, Director of Berks County Veterans Affairs. “Our new facility has been designed with five completely private offices for our Veteran Service Officers, providing Berks veterans the security to privately discuss their injuries and trauma. This ‘Trauma-Informed Care’ model is essential to decreasing veteran stressors and triggers, while simultaneously increasing the trust and open communication needed to handle sensitive and traumatic information. In the end, this move is all for our hometown heroes—they deserve nothing but the best.”

The relocation will be executed with minimal disruption to services. BCVA aims to be closed to the public for only two business days, with continuity of services being maintained remotely during this brief transition period.

“We are tremendously blessed to have more than 125 years of uniformed military service within our office, which means we have seasoned troops who understand how to improvise, adapt, and overcome obstacles to continue any mission with excellence,” Ostrich added.

The new facility offers several improvements, including extensive free parking, convenient handicap parking at the office entrance, and closer proximity to the federal Berks VA Clinic. The enhanced accessibility and convenience are expected to greatly benefit veterans, particularly seniors and those dealing with the heavy burden of injuries and trauma.

“Because so many of our veterans who visit our facilities are seniors and heroes who are often carrying the heavy burden of injuries and trauma, we believe strongly that the change in venue will bring a higher level of convenience and peace of mind to speed their healing,” Ostrich concluded.

BCVA remains steadfast in its mission to serve those who have served, and the new facility is a testament to this ongoing commitment.

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