VA still faces challenges with MST claims, coordination of care for survivors

An estimated 57% of denied claims for military sexual trauma (MST) between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, 2019, were not processed correctly, according to a Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (OIG) report released in August. The OIG cites noncompliance with six recommendations made during a similar review in 2018 to improve the MST claims process and ensure accuracy, resulting in an 8% increase in processing errors between the two sampled reporting time frames.

The report notes many of the errors found in the 2018 OIG review stemmed from Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) claims processors missing MST markers, failing to obtain required records before completing claims, and not requesting exams when appropriate.

“From initial claim to final adjudication by the VA, MST cases are complex and unique,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “It is imperative that the VA unify its policies and procedures and put the best interest of veterans at the heart of its approach to improving this process.”

As of May, and recommended by the 2018 report, all MST claims will be handled by specially trained VBA processors at five offices across the U.S. A VA spokesperson also stated that following the report, the VA began to take necessary actions to meet its responsibility to care for those veterans who have
been affected by MST.