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PROSTHETIC AND
SENSORY AIDS
SERVICE

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THE PROSTHETIC REPRESENTATIVE

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A small corps of 86 dedicated employees has become the most important "key" in the VA Prosthetic and Sensory Aids program. These men are our prosthetic representatives.

Early in 1946, it was decided that some one person in each major field station must be given the specific job of carrying the new VA prosthetics program directly to disabled veterans. Such responsibility could not be given to the already overworked doctors, and clerical personnel could not be expected to assume the required responsibilities. In addition, because of the tremendous public relations impact of this special group of seriously disabled veterans, it was felt that the person responsible for the prosthetics program at a field station should be one who could thoroughly understand and appreciate the problems of overcoming a physical handicap. It was therefore established as policy that all employees appointed to such field positions must have a permanent disability and must have successfully demonstrated their ability to wear and use a major prosthetic device.

Because it was initially thought that the duties of these employees would be primarily limited to

furnishing information to veterans requiring prosthetic appliances, the positions were established as contact representatives (prosthetic), utilizing the existing standards for contact representative, and the positions were first assigned to the Contact Divisions of VA regional offices.

It soon became evident that this organizational assignment did not permit the full utilization of these employees, since their greatest value could be realized only by having them closely associated with the medical staff. To correct this deficiency, on July 8, 1947, all contact representatives (prosthetic) were transferred to Medical Divisions in regional offices; a Prosthetic Applicants Unit under supervision of the Chief, Professional Section, was established in each regional office Medical Division, and a Prosthetic Appliances Section was set up in the medical service of each branch office.

With the elimination of branch offices in 1950, the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service established positions for prosthetic field supervisors in each of the newly established area medical offices. These employees are now classified as prosthetic representatives and assigned as area chiefs, Prosthetic and Sensory

Aids Service, in each of the seven area medical offices except St. Louis, where the position is presently vacant.

The area chief, Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service, is fully responsible to the area medical director for the effective and efficient supervision of all Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service programs and activities located within the jurisdictional limits of the area medical office. In its broadest aspects, this position involves area-wide responsibility for stimulation, evaluation, and coordination of these operational elements in serving the needs of veterans. This position also includes area-wide responsibility for protecting the interests of both the VA and its beneficiaries. To fulfill this duty, the area chief must ascertain and assure that the highest possible quality of service and workmanship is maintained by the numerous dealers, or other sources, through which a multitudinous variety of orthopedic appliances, prosthetic appliances, sensory aids, anatomical restorations, equipment for the blind, and medical accessories is obtained.

To continue reading, please visit <http://www.rehab.research.va.gov/jour/64/1/1/72.pdf>.



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