



The U.S. Army Physical Disability Agency

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USAPDA Update to the Recovering Warrior Task Force

October 2013



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Outline

- Improving Performance FY 12 – FY 13
 - Snapshots in Time
 - Progress
 - How we got there
- Informal Reconsiderations and Formals



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Questions on Performance (1 of 2)

- What is the Army doing to improve timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of the IDES (e.g. Lean Six Sigma, Lean Enterprise, P360, Baldrige)? Give examples of process improvements that resulted from these initiatives.

Short answer: Multiple studies, analysis, etc. over the course of the last year. Findings and recommendations implemented across the enterprise – details in subsequent slides.

- Average active Army IDES days are above the goal of 295. What is being done to address the lower performing IDES sites?

Short answer: Army is meeting standards in stages it controls. Performance will ebb and flow from month-to-month. If a negative trend is identified we meet with that team, identify areas for improvement and take appropriate action.



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Questions on Performance (2 of 2)

- The RWTF noted a drastic improvement in informal PEB (IPEB) timeliness for the Army between June 2012 and July 2013 (DoD goal of 15 days). What was done to improve IPEB timeliness? Are there best practices that may be useful across the Department?

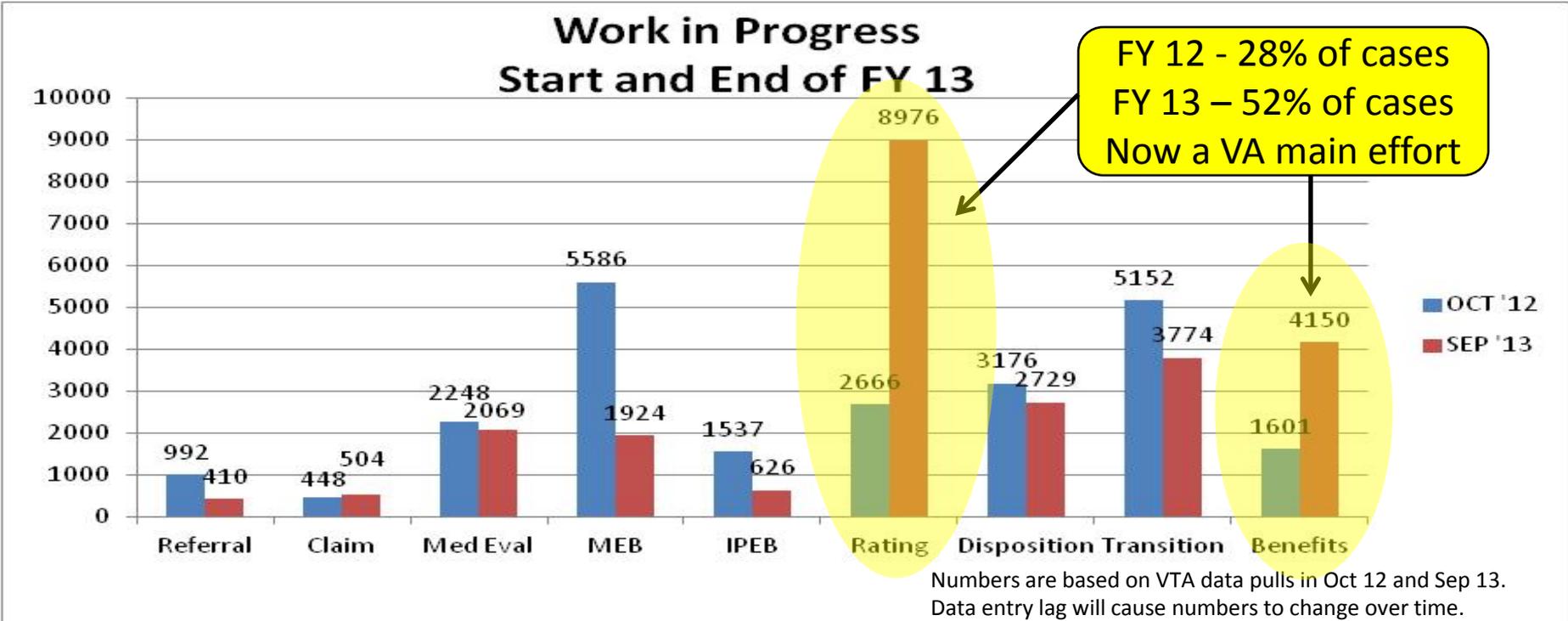
Short answers:

- We have constantly shared what worked for us with the other Services and OSD; some process changes we implemented were borrowed from other Services (e.g. 2-member board)
- Some initiatives/process changes do not readily translate from one MTF to another, or one Service to another (e.g. complexity-based MEBs).
- We have met with other Services DES leadership, other Service PEBs, OSD-WCP, and selected Treatment Facilities to share lessons learned including the requirements documents, data dictionaries and system designs for eMEB and ePEB to consider as we move towards development of a future Joint/DoD system for DES.



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- IDES is integrated – success / challenges with one stakeholder effect the others
- Oct 12, the Army had 16,443 (70%) of IDES cases in stages under its control
- Sep 13, the Army has 6,963 (30%) of IDES cases in stages under its control
- Dramatically increased capacity moved the backlog from the Army to the DRAS
- DRAS is where the Army was at the start of FY 13
- Recent shut down prevented the Army from moving all Soldiers to exams -- negatively impacts VA timeliness in Med Eval Stage; referrals slowed because MSCs were furloughed



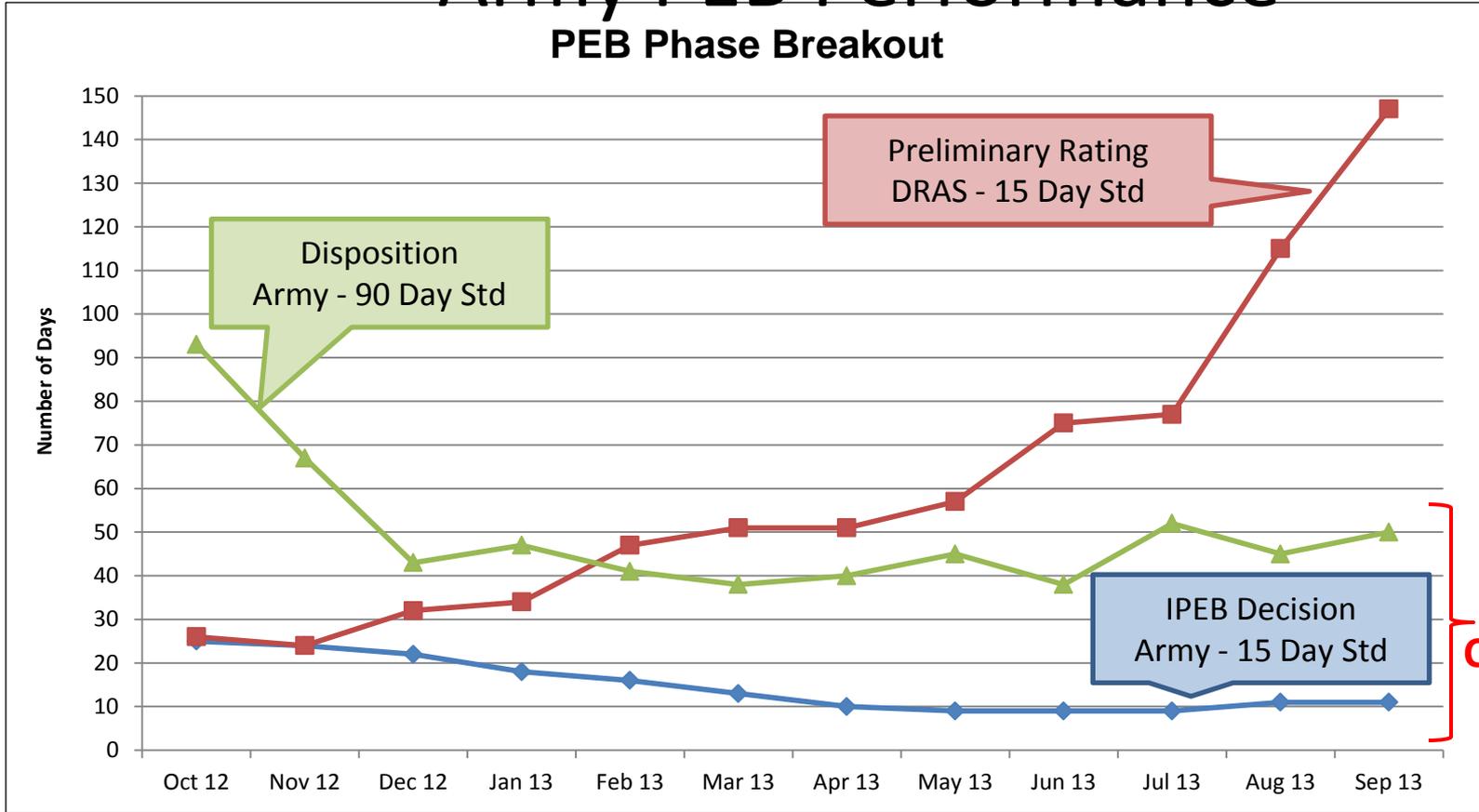
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Army PEB Performance

PEB Phase Breakout



PEB Phase

Army Control

Key to Success:

- Properly Resourced
- Standardized Processes
- Implemented ePEB and SAFE-file transfer



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Improving Performance

No Silver Bullets...

- Leadership
 - Recognize the Problem, Commit to Fixing it, Identify and Implement Measures of Performance, Accountability
- Proper Resourcing
 - Surge, Adapt, Put Systems in Place, Reassess
- Hard Work
 - Get After it



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Key Improvements Based on Studies and Task Forces

- Process Improvement Studies done across the Enterprise
- Numerous Looks at IDES from mid FY 11 through FY 13 -- Task Forces, Inspector General reviews, individual command actions, Army Audit Agency study, RAND studies , L6S, etc.
- Key process improvements resulting/directed by studies, reviews, inspections
 - SecArmy directive made Army G1 lead agent for IDES – cleared up C2 ambiguity helped align authority, accountability, responsibility
 - Standardized NARSUM process and emphasized use of VA Exams and Soldier Treatment Record (e.g. MEDCOM Annex O, July 2012)
 - Improved understanding, synchronized efforts and standardized processes across the enterprise (e.g. MEDCOM-led IDES Guidebook, October 2012)
 - Improved Soldiers'-Counsel involvement to set expectations, clarify process (MEDCOM FRAGOs, Direction to PEBLOs)
 - Standardized checklist for case files to synchronize, reduce repetitive tasks, save time (USAPDA Directive to PEBs/MEBs)
 - Fully implemented 2-person boards and requisite implementation instructions
 - USAPDA is central point to produce/approve training at all command levels (Co-BCT)



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Other Key Improvements (1 of 2)

- Standardized adjudication methodology to improve how PEBs communicate decisions and focus Adjudicator training/certification (USAPDA internal directive)
- SecArmy Directed review and consolidation of DES guidance and regulations
 - Army Regulation work groups brought stakeholders to the table, which served to identify not only policy changes, but process changes that could be implemented in advance of new regulations
- RC-SMSC under Army G1 (USAPDA) provided means of better synchronizing the message to the Reserve Components and bring their issues to the top in a more timely manner
- Established and enforced standards of performance at both the MEBs and the PEBs (e.g. NARSUM production, PEB case vote rates)
- Analysis of performance metrics have informed Organizational/Structural changes tied to metrics



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Other Key Improvements (2 of 2)

- Training
 - MEB Provider/Advanced NARSUM Course conducted by USAPDA
 - Focused courses for Reserve Component Surgeons/Case Managers provided by USAPDA
 - IDES-focused Adjudicator Course
 - Implemented “mentorship” approach within USAPDA to integrate, train and lead adjudicators
- Information Technology Improvements
 - ePEB -- reduced admin work-load by 31%; standardized how adjudication was done; link to eMEB to reduce errors
 - ePROFILE – commanders can see their Soldiers and monitor as they move towards the DES
 - Use of electronic systems (SAFE) to transmit cases to/from the DRAS reduced paper, provides audit trail, reduces admin/transit times
 - AHLTA at PEBs to reduce paper, minimize case handling, maintain consistency with MEB and Soldier
 - IDES Dashboard – transparency and predictability for Commanders, Staff, Soldiers, IDES Stakeholders



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Questions on Formals

- The RWTF is aware that Formal PEB (FPEB) timeliness for the Army has not been meeting the DoD goal of 30 days
 - Have the numbers improved in most recent months?
Yes – See subsequent statistical analysis
 - What has been done to improve FPEB timeliness?
Hired Gov't Physicians; increased formals/day; additional PEB counsel
 - What will be done to further improve FPEB timeliness?
Recruit and Retain MDs; Next round of Individual Augmentees to address TDRL, free experienced adjudicators for formals
 - What are the factors that contribute to the difference across PEB locations?
Critical shortage of MDs first at JBLM, then JBSA, Case volume, % of RC cases
 - What are the factors that contribute to AC/RC differences?
 - **Experienced disability attorneys early to set expectations; RC reluctance to believe the PEB cannot change the rating; incomplete RC medical and personnel records; RC Soldiers' failure to participate until late in the process**



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Questions on Formals

- Formal Statistics
 - How many resulted in changes to the informal PEB's findings?
 - Of the formals held between Feb 13 and Sep 13...
 - 47.4% of cases resulted in no change to rating/disposition
 - 38.7% of cases resulted in an increased rating or change in disposition
 - 10.3% went from a finding of UNFIT to FIT
 - 2.5% resulted in an administrative code change (e.g. combat code added/deleted)
 - .71% of cases resulted in a decreased rating
 - .35% went from a finding of FIT to a finding of UNFIT
 - How many resulted in appeals to USAPDA?
 - 17% of Formals were appealed to USAPDA



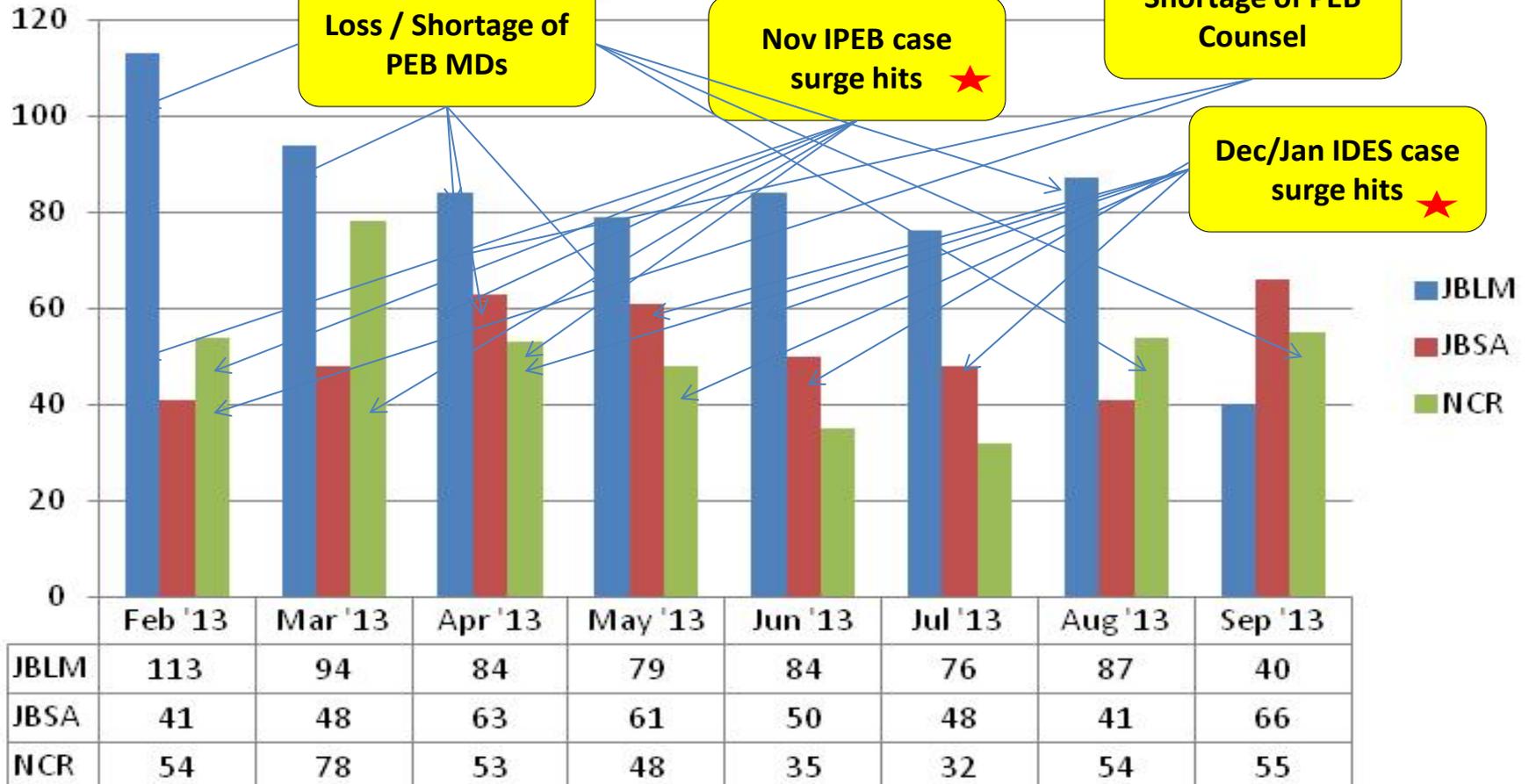
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Average Days for Formal



Primary Factors Impacting Formal Timeliness

• Availability of MDs at the PEBs; and Lawyers at both MEB and PEB Offices of Soldiers' Counsel

★ Volume of IPEB cases -- Dependent upon DRAS Prelim rating timelines, formal requests hit the PEBs

~2.5-3.5 months after IPEB decision – With recent DRAS performance, this is now ~6-8 months ★

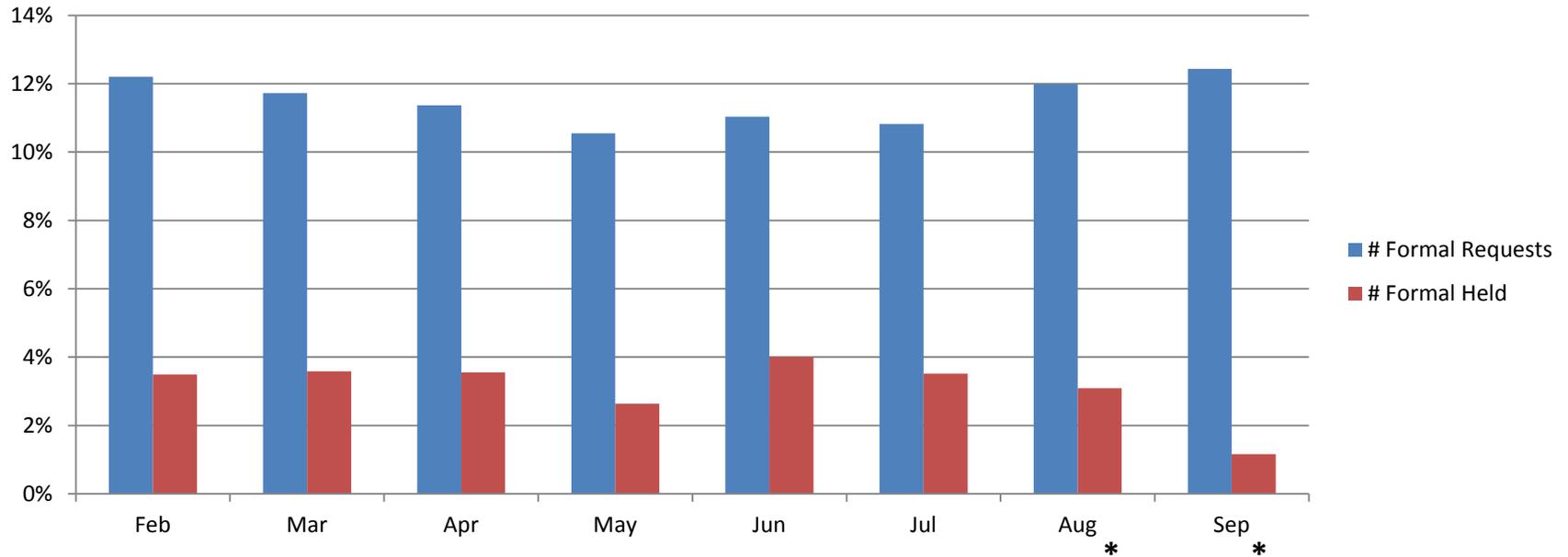


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Army Average Army Formal Rate



*Rates in Sep artificially low as dispositions are still pending

- Percentage of Soldiers who request formals averages just less than 11% across the Army DES population (IDES, TDRL, Non-Duty)
- Less than 4% of Army's Informal PEB cases actually execute their formal board



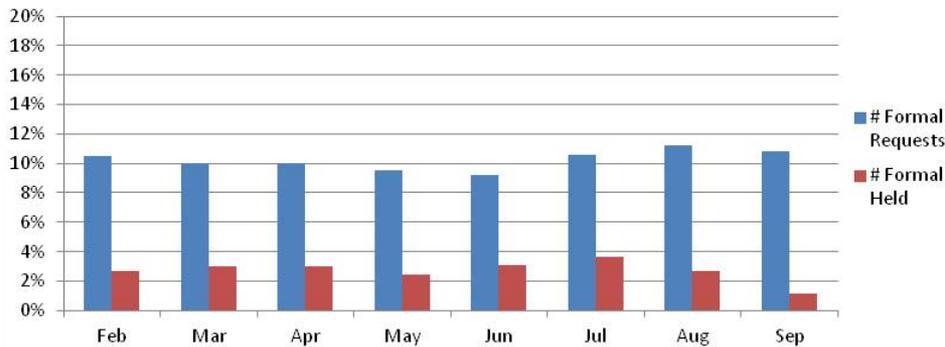
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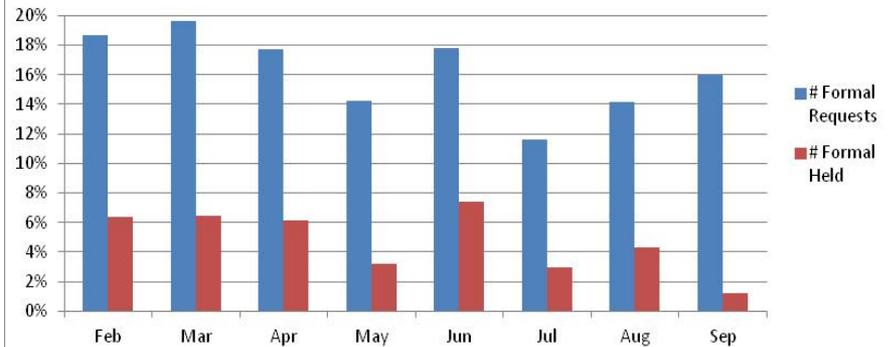


Army Formal Rate by Component

Formal Rates - AC



Formal Rates - RC



- Includes all Case Types (IDES, TDRL, NDR)
- RC Requests for Formal almost 2X AC rate; Actual percentage of RC cases that appear before a formal also 2X AC rate
- Higher RC rate attributed to more RC Soldiers desiring to be found fit, or believing more conditions should be added:
 - RC Soldiers often question why they are unfit when they can perform during IDT periods, but would be unable to perform if mobilized
 - RC Soldiers sometimes do not understand they can only be compensated for LOD injuries
 - Soldiers' counsel often helps RC Soldiers better understand the process, but RC do not always avail themselves of Soldiers' Counsel until late in the process



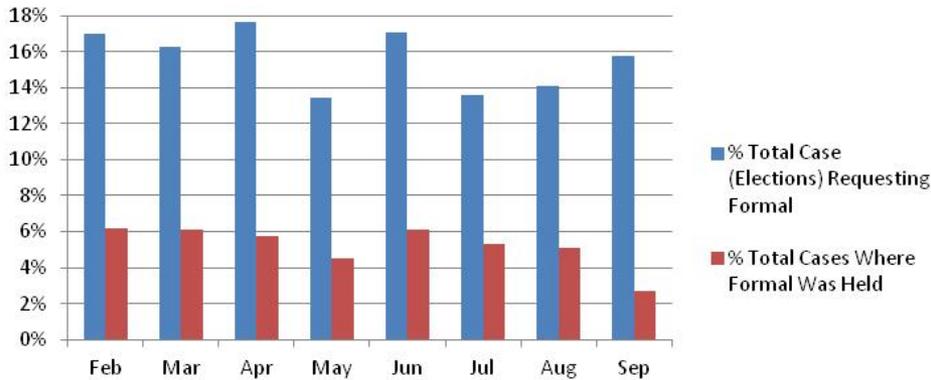
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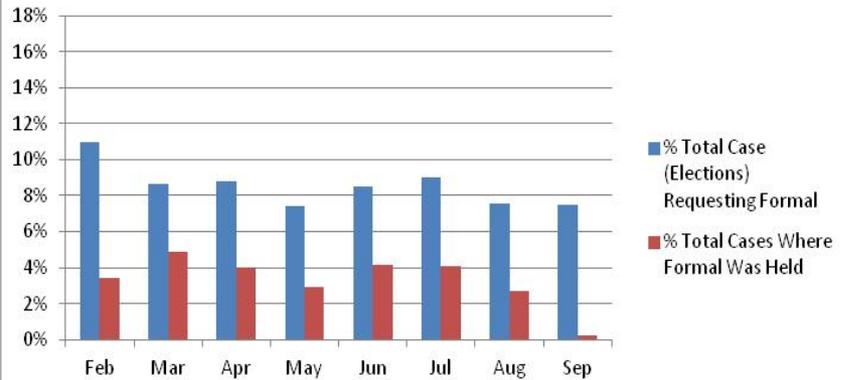


PEB Formal Rates

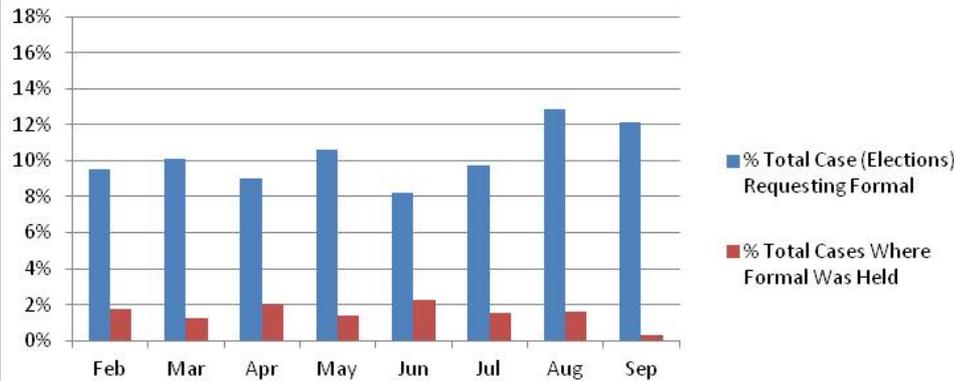
Formal Rates - JBLM



Formal Rates - NCR



Formal Rates - JBSA



- Percentage of Soldiers requesting formals (blue bars) highest at JBLM
- Percentage of Soldiers' cases that actually go to a formal (red bars) lowest at JBSA
- Formal request rates above 10% put a drain on PEB adjudicator resources; particularly MDs



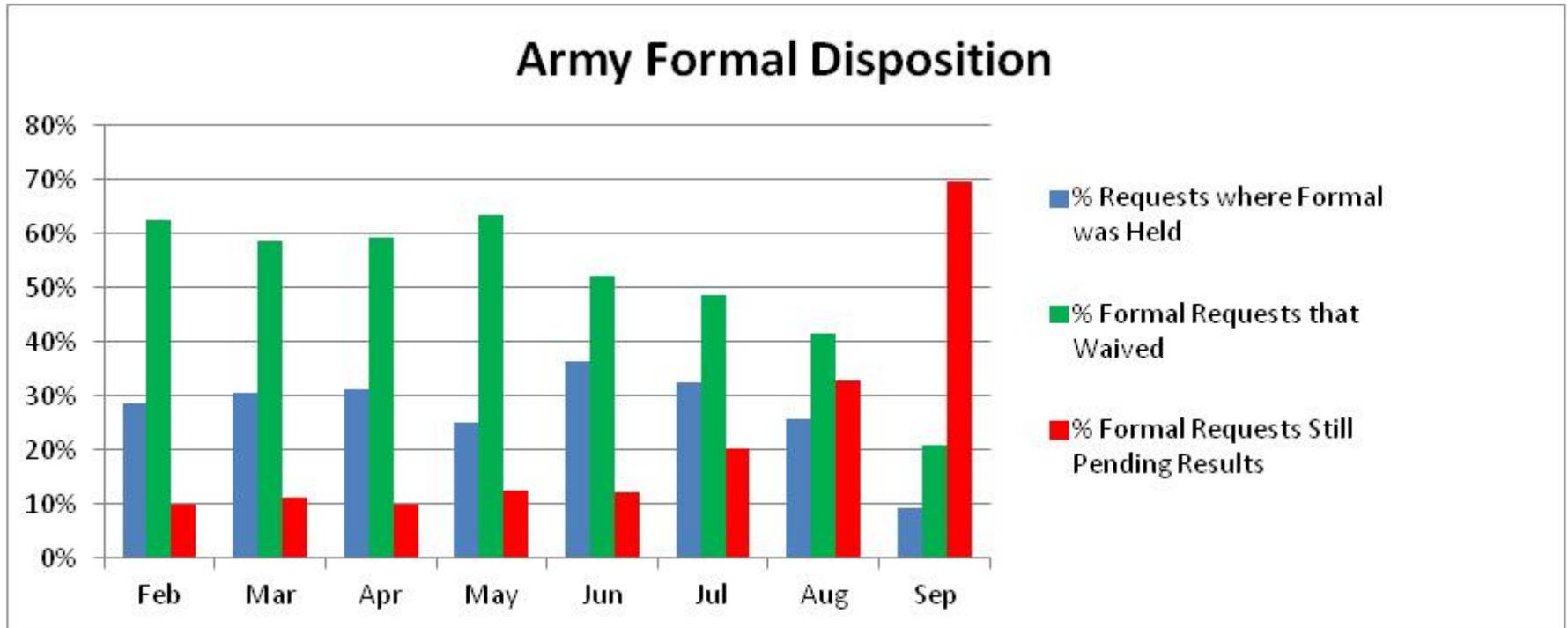
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Army Formal Dispositions

Army Formal Disposition



- Vast majority of Soldiers who request a formal eventually waive
 - Further consultation with Soldier's counsel improves understanding
 - PEB executes an informal reconsideration after seeing additional information not previously included in the case file



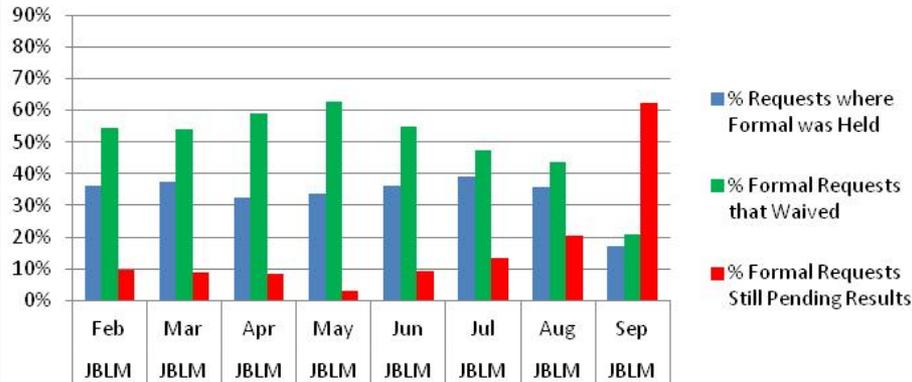
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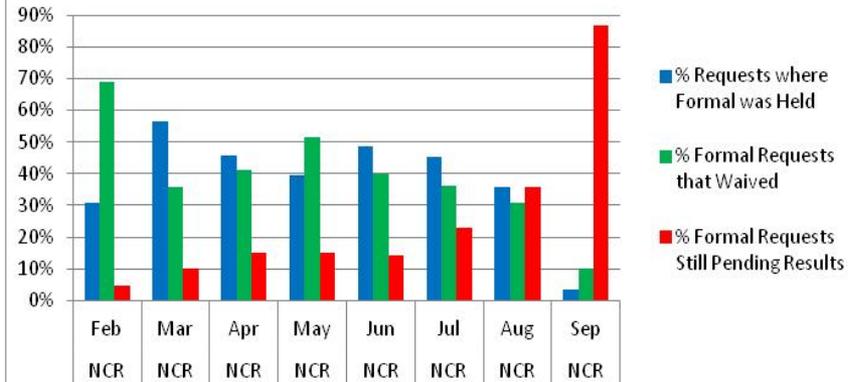


PEB Formal Disposition

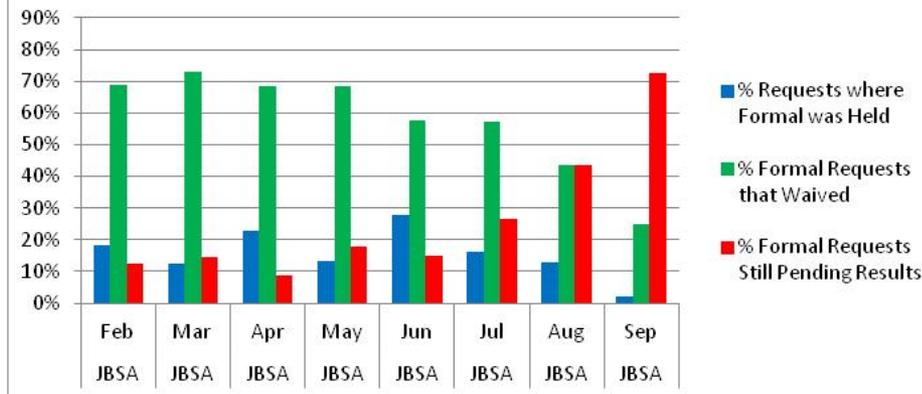
Formal Disposition - JBLM



Formal Disposition - NCR



Formal Disposition - JBSA



- More cases at JBSA waive their requests after meeting with counsel or after informal reconsideration
- Informal reconsideration rate slightly higher at JBSA



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Questions