

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office  
St. Petersburg, FL



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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete).

**VA IS MAKING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO MORE VETERANS** Public Law 110-329 provided VA additional funding to allow expanded enrollment opportunity for certain veterans who may have been previously denied enrollment in VA's health care system because their income exceeded VA's Income Thresholds.

The new regulations enable VA to relax income restrictions on enrollment for health benefits. While this provision does not remove consideration of income, it does increase income thresholds.

A veteran applying for enrollment who does not qualify for a higher priority group and whose income exceeds VA's Income Thresholds by 10% or less will be enrolled in the VA health care system.

Veterans may complete a VA Form 10-10EZ, "Health Benefits Renewal" form to have their eligibility for enrollment assessed against the new Income Thresholds. Veterans may also self-determine their eligibility for enrollment under this new provision by entering their information into VA's on-line calculator at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility/apps/enrollmentcalculator/](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/apps/enrollmentcalculator/).

**VA UPDATES ONLINE APPLICATION FOR HEALTH BENEFITS** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that the Department of Veterans Affairs has updated its online Form 10-10EZ, "Application for Health Benefits." This revised online application provides enhanced navigation features that make it easier and faster for veterans to apply for health care benefits. This new version also allows veterans to save a copy of the completed form for their personal records.

The most significant enhancement allows veterans to save their application to their local desktop and return to the application at any time without having to start over. Previously, veterans had to complete the form in a single session. This updated online form, along with the revised VA Form 10-10EZ, reduces the collection of information from Veterans by eliminating some questions.

In addition, there are minor changes to simplify the wording of questions and provide clarity in the instructions. Further enhancements to the online application are expected to be delivered in increments throughout 2010.

Veterans may complete or download the 10-10EZ form at the VA health eligibility website at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>. Veterans may also contact VA at 1 (877) 222-8387 (VETS) or visit the VA health eligibility website at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

**NATIONAL TELEPHONE SURVEY** The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is conducting the 2010 update of the national VHA telephone Survey of Enrollees. The purpose of the survey is to provide information that is incorporated into annual VHA projections of enrollment, utilization, and expenditures, as well as into a variety of high level VHA budget and policy related analyses.

The survey provides critical and essential information on veteran utilization of health services, projecting the resources and services needed in VHA, and in developing the budget. The survey collects information on a random sample of 42,000 veterans enrolled in the VA system, who participate in an approximately 15-30 minute telephone survey. The survey will be fully initiated the week of May 24, 2010. Interviewing will continue for 12 weeks.

Veteran enrollees selected for the survey will receive a letter that provides information about the survey and the contractor conducting the survey on behalf of the VA. Veterans support in this survey will help ensure that the best care possible is provided, where it is needed, when it is needed, and by whom it is needed.

**NEW VA FORM FOR SUPPLEMENTAL COMPENSATION CLAIMS** VA has developed VA Form 21-526b, "Veteran's Supplemental Claim" to enhance clarity and consistency in processing subsequent claims. The form allows veterans to list disabilities, provide the locations of certain treatment records, and request ancillary benefits; and is available at <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526b-ARE.pdf>

**HERBICIDE RELATED CLAIMS FROM VETERANS WITH THAILAND SERVICE**

After reviewing documents related to herbicide use in Vietnam and Thailand, VA has determined that there was significant use of herbicides on the fenced in perimeters of military bases in Thailand intended to eliminate vegetation and ground cover for base security purposes. Evidence of this can be found in a declassified Vietnam era Department of Defense (DoD) document titled "Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report: Base Defense in Thailand." Therefore when herbicide related claims from veterans with Thailand service are received, VA will evaluate the treatment and personnel records to determine whether the veteran's service activities involved duty on or near the perimeter of the military base where the veteran was stationed.

DoD has provided information that commercial herbicides, rather than tactical herbicides, were used within the confines of Thailand bases to control weeds. These commercial herbicides have been, and continue to be, used on all military bases worldwide. They do not fall under the VA regulations governing exposure to tactical herbicides such as Agent Orange. However, there is some evidence that the herbicides used on the Thailand base perimeters may have been either tactical, procured from Vietnam, or a commercial variant of much greater strength and with characteristics of tactical herbicides. Therefore, it has been determined that a special consideration of herbicide exposure should be extended to those veterans whose duties placed them on or near the perimeters of Thailand military bases. This allows for presumptive service connection of the diseases associated with herbicide exposure.

The majority of troops in Thailand during the Vietnam era were stationed at the Royal Thai Air Force Bases of U-Tapao, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat, and Don Muang. If a US Air Force veteran served on one of these air bases as a security policeman, security patrol dog handler, member of a security police squadron, or otherwise served near the air base perimeter, as shown by MOS (military occupational specialty), performance evaluations, or other credible evidence, then herbicide exposure will be acknowledged. However, this applies only during the Vietnam era, from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975.

Along with air bases, there were some small Army installations established in Thailand during this period, which may also have used perimeter herbicides in the same manner as the air bases. Therefore, if a US Army veteran was a member of a military police (MP) unit or was assigned an MP MOS and states that his duty placed him at or near the base perimeter, then herbicide exposure will be acknowledged. The difference in approach for US Army veterans is based on the fact that some MPs had criminal investigation duties rather than base security duties. Therefore, the veteran's lay statement is required to establish security duty on the base perimeter. This also applies to US Army personnel who served on air bases in Thailand.

**VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:****SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255**

**VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg** - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

**Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA** (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)

Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications 1-877-823-2378

**VA EFT Information Hotline** (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

**Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline** (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

**VA Health Revenue Service** (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

**VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia** (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

**VA Health Administration Center** (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -

CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023

CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024

Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

**National Cemeteries**

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426

6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 352-793-7740

6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 561-649-6489

4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 904-766-5222

Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846

9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840

104 Marine St, St Augustine FL 352-793-7740

**National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs** (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

**Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center** (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit** - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

**INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:**

**VA Web Site:** [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

**VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)** [www.warms.vba.va.gov](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov)

**St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:**

[www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete)

**Property Management (sale of VA-repossessed homes):** <http://va.reotrans.com/>

**Federal employment:** [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

**Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs:** [www.floridavets.org](http://www.floridavets.org)

**"Florida Vets First:"** [www.FloridaVetsFirst.com](http://www.FloridaVetsFirst.com)

**Library of Congress (information on pending legislation)** [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)