

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 <http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>.

VA BENEFITS AND TAXES All VA benefits are exempt from taxation. This includes the VA Work Study Program. Moneys paid to participants in the Work Study program are educational assistance benefits paid under the same Chapter under which the student is receiving educational assistance. VA does not issue W-2 or 1099 forms.

Secondary interest on VA benefits may be taxable. For example, if a veteran deposits his or her compensation check in an interest-bearing account, the interest is not tax exempt.

VA benefits are subject to collection for tax liens, i.e. in cases where the beneficiary owes the IRS.

Military Retired Pay: Veterans in receipt of military retired pay who are awarded VA compensation benefits retroactively may claim an exclusion on their income in the amount of VA compensation they would have received had they not been in receipt of military retired pay. Affected veterans should claim the exclusion by submitting the VA award letter showing the amount and effective date of compensation they would have received but for the receipt of military retired pay. VA can provide a letter in lieu of the award letter if needed.

CERTIFICATION OF PERMANENT AND TOTAL DISABILITY FOR INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS)

PURPOSES Claimants of the IRS Disability Income Exclusion are required to submit a certificate attesting to permanent and total disability. Under an agreement with the IRS, IRS will accept a VA certification on VA Form 21-0172, Certification of Permanent and Total Disability, based solely on an existing rating of permanent and total disability in place of the required private physician's statement. The form may be obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000 or through <https://iris.va.gov>.

VOICE OF THE VETERAN CALL CENTER

SATISFACTION RESEARCH PROGRAM The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Voice of the Veteran (VOV) Call Center Satisfaction Research Program was established to measure the impact of various initiatives

aimed at providing a better call center experience for veterans and beneficiaries.

The program focuses on clients' interactions with the National Call Centers, the Pension Call Center, and the Education Call Center. Insights gathered through this program will help identify opportunities to improve clients' experiences with VA's call centers and provide VA leadership with actionable and timely feedback.

VA contracted with J.D. Power and Associates, the industry leader in measuring customer satisfaction, to launch the VOV Call Center Satisfaction Research Program in March 2009. J.D. Power and Associates began contacting a sample of veterans and beneficiaries via telephone in October 2010. Selected respondents are surveyed within 24-48 hours after their experience with a VA call center.

This is a VA-sponsored initiative. While VA encourages veterans and beneficiaries to participate in the VOV Call Center Satisfaction Research Program, participation is completely voluntary. The expected time commitment is less than 6 minutes. Current and future benefits will not be impacted regardless of the client's decision about whether to participate in the survey. All information obtained through the questionnaires is confidential.

VA'S HOMELESS INTERVENTION PROGRAM NEARS

ROLL OUT (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – A homeless-prevention program by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which seeks to help veterans and families who are on the verge of becoming homeless, has moved closer to implementation. The program marks the first time that VA will fund services for the spouses and children of veterans at risk of becoming homeless.

VA formally announced that it is taking applications from private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives interested in providing needed services to at-risk veterans and their families. With funding from VA for the program, called Supportive Services for Veterans Families, community organizations will be better able to provide counseling, training, education assistance, direct

time-limited financial assistance, transportation, child care, rent, utilities, and other services to participating veterans and family members.

When the "Notice of Funds Availability" applications are available, they will be posted on the VA Web site at www1.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp. Community organizations can also contact VA at 1-877-737-0111 or at SSVF@va.gov.

VA ANNOUNCES USE OF STANDARD PAYMENT RATES FOR SOME NON-VA CARE (VA News Release)
WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will begin using Medicare's standard payment rates for certain medical procedures performed by non-VA providers on February 16, 2011.

The new adjustment was made in federal regulations and will affect the following treatments VA provides to veterans through contracted care: ambulatory surgical center care, anesthesia, clinical laboratory, hospital outpatient perspective payment systems, and end stage renal disease (ESRD).

Veterans who are eligible for care will continue to receive the uninterrupted care they need and have earned. Non-VA doctors and facilities will still get paid for services they provide to eligible veterans but at rates set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Prospective Payment Systems (PPS) and Fee Schedules. Existing contracts will not be affected and the rule allows for new contracts using the new rates.

Savings of approximately \$1.8 billion over five years will allow VA to continue to invest in such innovative programs as a wearable artificial kidney, home dialysis and expanding access through stand-alone clinics.

VA is providing written notifications to veterans and non-VA providers. As additional information becomes available, it will be posted to the VA's "Non-VA Purchased Care" Web site, www.nonvacare.va.gov.

VA PROCESSES FIRST CLAIMS FOR NEW AGENT ORANGE PRESUMPTIVES (VA News Release)
WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has decided more than 28,000 claims in the first six weeks of processing disability compensation applications from Vietnam veterans with diseases related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

VA published a final regulation that makes veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam and who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease, or a B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia eligible for health care and disability compensation benefits. With the expiration of the required 60-day congressional review on October 30, 2010, VA is now able to process these claims. Vietnam veterans covered under the new policy are encouraged to file their claims through a new VA Web portal at www.fasttrack.va.gov.

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

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) www.warms.vba.va.gov

St. Petersburg VA Regional Office: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>

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

Federal employment: www.usajobs.opm.gov

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: www.floridavets.org

"Florida Vets First:" www.FloridaVetsFirst.com

Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov