

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

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



June 2011

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/>.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) APP HELPS THOUSANDS (VA News Release)

WASHINGTON – The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD), has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources. Since its launch, the PTSD Coach app has been downloaded by thousands of individuals. While 96 percent of the users so far are located in the United States, the app has also been downloaded in 25 other countries. The app lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go.

Currently, the PTSD Coach app has received perfect customer review scores on the iTunes App Store. Comments from veterans and family members are overwhelmingly positive and one user describes the app as "a must for every spouse who has a family member with PTSD." Professionals have sent positive reviews, suggestions, and offers to collaborate on research evaluating the PTSD Coach app.

The app has also already proven to be a useful tool for the staff at the Veterans Crisis Line. Within the first two hours of the app's official launch, the Crisis Line staff were contacted by a distressed veteran who reported being instructed by the app to call the crisis line and was subsequently given an appointment at the local VA medical center. Crisis Line staff have begun to regularly recommend this resource to callers.

The app is one of the first in a series of jointly-designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology to help service members and veterans manage their readjustment challenges and get anonymous assistance. Given the popularity of mobile devices, VA and DoD hope to reach tens of thousands of veterans, service members, and their family members with the new suite of apps.

Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA's National Center for PTSD Website:

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>. More apps from DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology can be found at: <http://www.t2health.org/apps>.

IF DISASTER STRIKES - ADVICE FOR HOMEOWNERS WITH VA GUARANTEED LOANS June 1 is the beginning of the hurricane season. Here are some reminders for homeowners on what to do if a storm hits your area.

Contact Your Mortgage Company: Contact your lender or servicer as soon as possible regarding your loss. *You are not excused from making your regular monthly loan payments even if your home is not habitable.* You should discuss forbearance or possible modification of your loan if you are unable to make your payments on time. You should also have your lender explain procedures regarding insurance loss checks and repairs to your property, payment to contractors, etc.

Contact Your Insurance Company or Agent: File insurance loss claims as soon as possible; however, *do not make a hasty settlement on insurance.* When the property is damaged but repairable, attempt to get the engineer's office of your local government to make an inspection for *structural damage*. If possible, get at least two estimates from licensed contractors for cost of repairs or rebuilding. Insurance checks for personal property and living expenses should be made payable to you only. Checks for damage to your home should be made payable to you and your mortgage company.

Contact FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency): You begin the disaster application process by calling FEMA's toll free number (800) 621 3362, or (800) 462-7585 (TTY). In order to receive the maximum assistance, you must register with FEMA before their deadline expires. You cannot obtain assistance for uninsured losses or damages to your home from the Small Business Administration (SBA) or any other disaster recovery agency if you have not registered with FEMA.

More information can be found at the FEMA website, www.fema.gov. Be sure to check every source for assistance including the SBA. Do not pay your loan in full before checking with SBA on a loan for the uninsured portion of your loss. Low interest loans, cash grants, and housing assistance may be available from agencies associated with the disaster recovery effort.

Check Other Sources of Help: Veterans should contact local offices of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), or other veteran service organizations to see if special assistance may be available, even to non-members of the organization.

Change your Address: If you are receiving a monthly benefit check from VA or another source and you will not be able to receive mail at your regular address, notify your local post office and VA Regional Office of your change of address. For information other VA benefits, call (800) 827-1000.

Contact VA: If you have further questions, please contact your nearest VA Regional Loan Center by calling toll-free (877) 827-3702, or visiting ww.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/.

VA PROCESSING HUNDREDS OF APPLICATIONS FOR NEW FAMILY CAREGIVER BENEFITS IN FIRST WEEK (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – In the first week for open applications, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has assisted more than 625 veterans, service members and their family caregivers in applying for new services under the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act 2010.

New services for primary family caregivers of eligible post-9/11 veterans include a stipend, mental health services, and access to health care insurance, if they are not already entitled to care or services under a health plan. The stipend portion of this service will be backdated to the date of the application. Comprehensive caregiver training and medical support are other key components of this program.

VA began processing applications for eligible post-9/11 veterans and service members to designate a primary family caregiver on May 9, 2011. On top of receiving the 625 plus applications, Caregiver Support Coordinators have also assisted nearly 1,200 other caregivers in finding more than two dozen other caregiver benefits VA provides.

Applications can be processed by telephone through the Caregiver Support Line at (855) 260-3274, in person at a VA medical center with a Caregiver Support Coordinator, by mail or online at www.caregiver.va.gov with the new Caregiver Application (VA Form 1010-CG). The website application also features a chat option that provides the family caregiver with a live representative to assist in completing the application form.

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

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