

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 EXCEEDS 2012 GOAL TO IMPROVE ONLINE

ACCESS TO BENEFITS INFORMATION (VA News Release) The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that 1.67 million veterans and service members have registered for the secure, joint VA-Department of Defense (DoD), self-service web portal, *eBenefits*, which provides online information and access to a wide variety of military and veteran benefits resources. The strong pace of registrations for the site since its launch in October 2009 has allowed VA to exceed its fiscal year 2012 agency priority goal of 1.65 million users, and puts it on track to meet the 2013 goal of 2.5 million users, as outlined for VA in Performance.gov.

Veterans and service members new to the Website www.ebenefits.va.gov are guided through the registration process to get a full-access account, called a premier account, which allows maximum ability to update personal information and learn about benefits without having to visit a VA facility. With the premier account, one password—called a single sign-on—allows veterans to access multiple applications on the secure portion of the website.

A premier account also allows veterans to check the status of compensation and pension claims that they have filed with VA. This feature, the most popular within the *eBenefits* application, had over 700,000 visits in June alone.

On July 1, VA introduced its 11th consecutive quarterly release of improved functionalities to the *eBenefits* application that includes benefits eligibility email messages to service members as they reach career milestones and a new Career Center page with employment self-assessment tools, a resume builder, and a translator that relates military expertise to civilian work skills. The Career Center, which received over 8,000 visits in its first week, has single sign-on connectivity to VA's veteran hiring site, "VA for Vets." Another key function added is a single sign-on capability for veterans to transition securely between benefits information on *eBenefits* and health information on VA's *myHealthVet* website without an additional log-on step.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT AND VA The provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court will not affect the current role the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has in the lives of America's veterans. VA will continue to provide veterans with high quality, comprehensive health care and benefits they have earned through their service. VA health care does not change as a result of the ACA.

For more information about VA's health care services, visit <http://www.va.gov/health>.

ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE Veterans who wear or use a qualifying prescribed prosthetic or orthopedic appliance and/or prescription medication for a service-connected disability or skin condition may be eligible for an annual clothing allowance. To be eligible, the appliance must wear or tear clothing, or medication must irreparably damage the veteran's outer-garments.

Effective December 16, 2011, Veterans who wear or use more than one qualifying prescribed prosthetic or orthopedic appliance and/or prescription medication for more than one service-connected disability or skin condition may be eligible for more than one clothing allowance. To be eligible for more than one clothing allowance, the qualifying appliances must wear or tear more than one type of article of the veteran's clothing and/or medications must irreparably damage more than one type of the veteran's clothing or outer-garment.

Appliances such as an artificial limb, rigid brace, wheelchair, crutches or other appliance prescribed for the veteran's service-connected disability are included. Non-rigid appliances, such as knee, ankle, or elbow sleeves are not included. Any medication prescribed for a service-connected skin condition that causes permanent stains or otherwise damages the veteran's outer garments is included.

Clothing such as shirts, blouses, pants, skirts, shorts and similar garments permanently damaged by qualifying appliances and/or medications are considered in clothing

allowance decisions. Shoes, hats, scarves, underwear, socks, and similar garments are not included.

The application form for the clothing allowance is VAF 10-8678 APPLICATION FOR ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE (<http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-8678-fill%204-08.pdf>). Clothing allowance claims should be forwarded to the VA Medical Center (VAMC) or Outpatient Clinic (OPC) of jurisdiction, for the attention of the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service.

To be eligible for the 2012 clothing allowance, the veteran must be found to meet the eligibility requirements as of August 1, 2012. At the end of July 2012 computer-generated letter/applications were issued to veterans whose records are set to require annual redetermination of clothing allowance eligibility. Veterans have until July 31, 2013, to apply for the 2012 clothing allowance.

The 2012 clothing allowance payments for veterans who have been authorized recurring payments and for others whose awards are input on or before the last processing cycle of August will be issued on September 1. Payments authorized after the last processing cycle of August will be made by out-of-system payment processing and should go out about 7 - 10 days after authorization.

The 2012 clothing allowance is \$741.00. Veterans who are receiving their compensation payments by direct deposit will receive the clothing allowance payment by direct deposit. Veterans without direct deposit will receive their clothing allowance payments by check to the same address as their compensation payments.

A veteran receiving military retired pay is not required to waive any portion of his/her retired pay to receive the clothing allowance.

STUDY FINDS OBSERVATION AS EFFECTIVE AS SURGERY IN EARLY PROSTATE CANCER (VA News Release) WASHINGTON -- A major federal study led by the Department of Veterans Affairs found no difference in survival between men with early-stage prostate cancer who had their prostate surgically removed and those who were simply watched by their doctors, with treatment only as needed to address symptoms if they occurred. The findings appeared in the July 19 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

When the results were analyzed, no difference in death rates was found between the two groups, either from any cause whatsoever or specifically from prostate cancer.

In terms of quality of life for men in the study, the surgery group experienced nearly double the rate of erectile dysfunction—81 percent versus 44 percent—and roughly three times the rate of urinary incontinence—17 percent versus 6 percent. Bowel dysfunction was similar between the groups, 12 percent versus 11 percent.

For more information visit www.research.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.equator.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