

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/>.

HUD & VA TEAM UP TO PROVIDE PERMANENT HOMES TO 9,000 HOMELESS VETS (VA News Release)
WASHINGTON – Approximately 9,000 homeless Veterans living on the streets and in the nation's shelter system will soon find a permanent place to call home. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will provide \$60 million to local public housing agencies across the country to offer permanent supportive housing to homeless Veterans, many of whom are living with chronic disabling conditions.

The supportive housing assistance is provided through the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program which combines rental assistance from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by VA. Since 2008, a total of 48,385 vouchers have been awarded and 42,557 formerly homeless Veterans are currently in homes because of HUD-VASH.

Assistance under this program in Florida is going to:

Jacksonville Housing Authority, Jacksonville FL 50 vouchers \$250,787

Housing Authority of the City of St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg FL 35 vouchers \$207,005

Tampa Housing Authority, Tampa FL 205 vouchers \$1,286,531

Orlando Housing Authority, Orlando FL 110 vouchers \$741,708

Miami Dade Public Housing And Community Development Miami FL 45 vouchers \$327,024

Housing Authority of City of Daytona Beach Daytona Beach FL 20 vouchers \$104,984

Sarasota Housing Authority Sarasota FL 25 vouchers \$160,403

West Palm Beach Housing Authority, West Palm Beach FL 35 vouchers \$260,719

Housing Authority of the City of Titusville, Titusville FL 30 vouchers \$149,258

Ocala Housing Authority, Ocala FL 15 vouchers \$60,908

Seminole County Housing Authority, Oviedo FL 15 vouchers \$99,143

Housing Authority of the City of Stuart, Stuart FL 15 vouchers \$113,421

Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers, Fort Myers FL 20 vouchers \$117,076

Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers, Fort Myers FL 35 vouchers \$204,884

Pinellas County Housing Authority, Largo FL 35 vouchers \$251,168

Alachua County Housing Authority, Gainesville FL 65 vouchers \$378,397

Tallahassee Housing Authority, Tallahassee FL 60 vouchers \$391,246

Broward County Housing Authority, Lauderdale Lakes FL 100 vouchers \$895,956

The grants are part of \$75 million appropriated this year to support the housing needs of homeless veterans. Local public housing authorities provide rental assistance to homeless Veterans while nearby VA Medical Centers (VAMC) offer supportive services and case management. This is the first round of the 2013 HUD-VASH funding. HUD expects to announce more HUD-VASH funding this summer.

VAMCs work closely with homeless Veterans then refer them to public housing agencies for these vouchers. The HUD-VASH program includes both the rental assistance the voucher provides and the comprehensive case management that VAMC staff provides.

VA AND VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS ANNOUNCE CLAIMS INITIATIVE TO REDUCE CLAIMS BACKLOG

(VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and The American Legion announced a new partnership to help reduce the compensation claims backlog for Veterans. The effort—the Fully Developed Claims (FDC) Community of Practice—is a key part of VA’s overall transformation plan to end the backlog in 2015 and process claims within 125 days at 98% accuracy. VA can process FDCs in half the time it takes for a traditionally filed claim.

Claims are considered to be “fully developed” when Veterans submit all available supporting evidence, like private treatment records and notice of federal treatment records, to VA at the time they first file a formal claim and certify they have no more evidence to submit. This is the information that VA needs to make a determination on a disability claim. The FDC program supports the sharing of best practices across Veterans Service Organizations, who help thousands of Veterans each year with their compensation claims, to identify up front all evidence necessary to support a Veteran’s claim. Veterans then certify that they have no additional evidence to submit, and VA can process the claim in half the time it takes for a traditionally filed claim.

VSOs have long played an integral role in submitting Veterans claims - often with representatives working within VA regional offices. VA has consulted with them throughout the development and implementation of VA’s plan to end the backlog in 2015 to ensure best practices and their unique insights were incorporated. The American Legion and DAV are the first to step forward to work with VA on the FDC program, and that program has led to a much more efficient process. Meaningful progress will be felt by increasing numbers of Veterans as more VSOs participate with VA in the FDC program.

On May 15, VA announced that it is mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices through the end of fiscal year 2013 to help eliminate the backlog, with continued emphasis on high-priority claims for homeless Veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims. Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with the Department of Defense through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). On average, Wounded Warriors separating through IDES currently receive VA compensation benefits in 2 months following their separation from service.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense-VA web portal eBenefits at <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov> and find information about filing Fully Developed Claims at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/transformation/fastclaims/>.

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)

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) 1-800-733-8387 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

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) - 711

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: www.va.gov

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

VA Workload and Performance Reports;
<http://www.vba.va.gov/reports/>

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

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

Florida Dept of Veterans' Affairs: www.FloridaVets.org
Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov