

VFW SERVICE OFFICER NOTES FOR THE TEN-HUT November 2017

NEW NEWS!!!!

Veterans ID Cards Update: You won't have to carry around a copy of your DD Form 214 anymore! The VA will begin issuing veteran identification cards to all honorably discharged veterans in *November*. The initiative is required by the Veterans Identification Card Act 2015, which ordered VA to issue a hard-copy photo ID to any honorably discharged veteran who applies. The card will be issued for free upon request, according to a [Military.com article](#), and will contain the veteran's name, photo and a non-Social Security identification number. VA will provide [additional information](#) once finalized.

Toxic Exposure – Even Burn Pits!

VFW Hosts Roundtable Discussion on Toxic Exposures: This topic was addressed at the District 1 meeting last Saturday here at our hall. If you were in areas of operations where burn pits were located and you're suffering from some type of illness (topical, respiratory, mental, or some other type of physical impairment), submit a claim to the VA. Recently the VFW hosted a discussion on the efforts of several veterans and military service organizations to tackle issues related to *toxic exposures faced by military veterans*. The VFW was joined by the Association of the U.S. Navy, Military Officers Association of America, Vietnam Veterans of America and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. The goal of the meeting was to find common ground, share information on efforts and discuss barriers to success. The VFW has a long history of working with other veterans organizations on major legislation. Future efforts on issues like Blue Water Navy, Agent Orange and burn pit exposure will be areas where collaboration will also help.

Attention Female Veterans!

VA Hosts Monthly Women Veterans Meeting: Recently the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Center For Women Veterans held their monthly meeting with the Department of Defense and veterans service organizations to discuss issues specific to women veterans. Topics included updates on VA's program for in-vitro fertilization, the Service Women's Action Network upcoming gender-specific mental wellness summit being held Nov. 13-14, the National Women's Memorial anniversary activities being held Oct. 20-22 and legislative priorities. [Learn more about the Center for Women Veterans.](#)

Track and Have the VA Assess Your Health!

Did you know that if you're enrolled in VA health care, you can use My HealtheVet to partner with your VA care team to better manage and improve your health? This is an annual survey. I just received my notification yesterday.

Through My HealtheVet, you can:

- Refill and track VA prescriptions online,

- Communicate with your health care team through Secure Messaging,
- Track your upcoming appointments and get reminders,
- View, print or download your VA medical record information and much more.

You can start today by registering for My HealtheVet and taking the HealtheLiving Assessment. This information will help you understand your health risks and how to start making positive changes in your daily routine. To get started, visit myhealth.va.gov.

Learn how to apply for VA health care by visiting [Explore.VA.gov](https://explore.va.gov).

Can I Get Travel Costs for VA Health Care?

Another great benefit – that we've EARNED!!!

Many Veterans can be reimbursed for travel costs related to VA health care services.

[The Beneficiary Travel program](#) helps eligible Veterans receive mileage reimbursement. In some cases, it can pay for the costs of an ambulance or a wheel chair van. When a privately-owned vehicle is not reasonably accessible or travel by a common carrier such as a plane, train, bus, taxi, or light rail is medically necessary, Veterans may be reimbursed. The transportation is to help Veterans get to and from their VA health care facility, or to VA-authorized non-VA health care for which the Veteran is eligible. Veterans may apply for travel reimbursement by completing [VA Form 10-3542](#) (Veteran/Beneficiary Claim for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses). Veterans usually receive payments from electronic fund transfers to a bank account or a debit card.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections you can get by having sex with someone who has an STI

What's Important to Know?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections you can get by having sex with someone who has an STI. STIs are the same thing as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many STIs do not have symptoms, and you can have an STI and pass it on without knowing it. Some STIs can cause organ damage and infertility. Having one STI may raise your risk for getting other STIs. Some examples of STIs are chlamydia, gonorrhea, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and human papillomavirus (HPV).

You can get STIs from any sexual activity, whether it involves the mouth, anus, vagina, or penis. Some STIs can pass from a pregnant woman to her baby before or during the baby's birth. Most STIs can be treated and cured. Some cannot be cured but can be managed by taking medicines. If

you are treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated to prevent you from being re-infected.



The spread of some STIs can be reduced by using latex condoms every time you have sex and by having only one sex partner. Lambskin condoms and birth control pills can help prevent pregnancy but they will not protect you from STIs. A vaccine is available for young women and men against HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer. The best way to fully protect yourself from STIs is to not have sex.



Want to Know More?

If you want to learn more about STIs or think you may have one, talk with your VA health care team. They can help if you have questions about testing or treatment.

[Don't Miss Out On Your VA Benefits](#)

Are you eligible for benefits beyond health care? You might be missing out on benefits such as disability compensation, employment services or memorial benefits. Visit [Explore.VA.gov](https://www.va.gov/explore) to learn more. Click 'Get Started' and answer a few questions to learn what may be available to you and your family.

It's Here! The Improved My HealtheVet Website

We are proud to announce the release of our newly redesigned website. It is designed to improve your online experience and adopts the U.S. Web Design Standards.

Immediately you will see new site features such as colors and a leaner, cleaner appearance. You will notice all your favorite My HealtheVet features such as Pharmacy, Appointments, Secure Messaging and VA Health Records are still on the home page.

A few things you'll love about the new My HealtheVet website right now:

- **New Drop-down Boxes:** There are now fewer tabs to choose from! Fewer tabs make it easier to navigate the site. We reduced the thirteen red and white tabs to six blue drop-down topics. Each of the following topics has drop-down navigation sub-topics to help you locate your targeted feature:
 - o Personal Information
 - o Pharmacy
 - o Research Health
 - o Get Care
 - o Track Health
 - o MHV Community
- **Search, About, Contact:** These resources are on every page, making them more visible.
- **Quick Links:** This popular section, with links to VA resources, is now on the bottom of every page.
- **Login/Register:** The Login and Register buttons are clearly visible. Registration requires fewer steps to complete.
- **Other Updates:** You will notice some other minor changes that should not affect navigation throughout the site, such as the eye-catching Login and Register buttons.

What Stayed the Same?

- **Health Information:** Veterans' VA health information and self-entered data is not

affected by this change.

- **Features and Functionality:** All features and functionality are the same. Veterans will still be able to accomplish their tasks as before (refilling prescriptions, sending Secure Messages and accessing VA medical records, etc.).
- **User ID and Password:** My HealtheVet User IDs and passwords are not affected.

Vets.Gov and My HealtheVet

My HealtheVet is partnered with [Vets.gov](https://www.vets.gov) and VA Mobile to provide you with a more integrated online experience to access VA products and services. You can now securely access Rx Refill, VA Blue Button reports and Secure Messaging directly from Vets.gov.

We hope these updates will make it easier to use the important tools and resources available to manage your health.

[Log in](#) today.

White House Petition: Agent Orange Blue Water Navy Issue

The Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Association has put a "We the People" petition on the White House website that calls for the enactment of The "Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act." It has been introduced in both the House (H.R.299) and Senate (S.422). These proposals would clarify that service members serving off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict have a presumption for filing disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. FRA believes Congress should recognize that the so-called "Blue water" veterans were exposed to Agent Orange herbicide and authorize presumptive status for VA disability claims. Click [here](#) to sign the petition online.

Do You Know a Veteran Who is Struggling With Mental Health Issues?

Adam, an Army Veteran, suffered from a life-threatening condition due to a chemical he encountered while serving overseas. As he was physically recovering, he fell into what he describes as a "deep, dark hole." His mother knew he desperately needed help and reached out to VA.

Adam says it took his entire team at the Huntington VA Medical Center to pull him out of that dark place. "The health care at my VA – it helped saved my life," says Adam. "They're heroes to me because they never gave up."

Veterans enrolled in VA health care receive high-quality mental health services, including inpatient and outpatient care for depression, readjustment, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma and more.

“I didn’t feel like I deserved to feel anything but darkness, anger, depression,” says Adam. “Now I’m living life to the fullest. I’m enjoying every day.”

Veterans can learn more about VA mental health services and how to apply for VA health care at [Explore.VA.gov](https://www.va.gov/Explore) or by clicking on the button below.

If you or a Veteran you know is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, call the Veterans Crisis Line at [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and press 1.

#BeThere - A Simple Act of Kindness

Calling a friend, meeting a colleague for coffee, having dinner with a relative - these everyday actions can seem small, but they have the power to make a huge difference for someone going through a difficult time. And it doesn't require a grand gesture or complicated task. A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone.

Veterans and service members may navigate many transitions - such as sending a child off to college, retiring, or losing a loved one. Sometimes these challenges contribute to feelings of hopelessness or even thoughts of suicide. That's when the support of family and friends is crucial.

Being there for someone can be easy, but starting a conversation about your concerns for that person or making hints on the subject of suicide can seem much more challenging. The most important thing is to show genuine, heartfelt support for someone going through a rough period. People may worry about what to say, fear that they will make matters worse, or think that special training is required to raise the subject safely.

Before you start a conversation, do some research to find out what [suicide prevention](#) resources are available. If you notice warning signs in yourself or another Veteran, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. You can chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat), or text 838255 to get confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

VFW Financial Grants

We understand the challenges veterans, service members and military families can face and believe that experiencing financial difficulties should not be one of them. That's the premise behind the VFW's **Unmet Needs** program.

Unmet Needs is there to help America's military families who have run into unexpected financial difficulties as a result of deployment or other military-related activity or injury. The program provides financial aid of up to \$5,000 to assist with basic life needs in the form of a grant -not a loan- so no repayment is required. To further ease the burden, we pay the creditor directly.

Since the program's inception, Unmet Needs has distributed more than \$6.75 million in assistance to more than 4,300 qualified military families, with nearly half of those funds going directly toward basic housing needs.

The needs of our veterans, service members and their families should never go unmet. Let us offer you a hand up when you need it!

Please review the [Unmet Needs eligibility criteria](#) to see if you or someone you know qualifies for a grant through the Unmet Needs program.

Apply Today