

VFW SERVICE OFFICER NOTES FOR THE TEN-HUT OCTOBER 2021

Homeless Veterans in MN

Any MN veteran who has fallen behind on rental payment due to COVID-19 related issues should connect with Rent Help Minnesota to catch up on their past due payments. Registration information can be found at: <https://www.renthelpmn.org/>

If a veteran is behind on rent and eligible for the rental assistance, but does not apply, they are subject to eviction now that the eviction moratorium is expired.

Minnesota Veterans Restorative Justice Act

On August 10th, Governor Walz signed the Minnesota Veterans Restorative Justice Act. This law will provide veterans convicted of crimes with probation and social services rather than jail.

This act does not exempt veterans from punishment. The law provides an alternative specially convened court to consider service-related issues such as chemical exposure, physical injury, PTSC, and military sexual trauma (MST) as veterans navigate through the legal system.

Those crimes include most drug crimes, DWI, theft and burglary.

Veterans convicted of murder, sexual assault, aggravated robbery, or assault would not be eligible for the special court.

Read more at: <https://mn.gov/mdva/blog/?id=1066-494591>

VA Awards \$418M in Grants to Help Veterans and Families at Risk of Homelessness

The VA has awarded \$418M in grants to more than 260 non-profit organizations. This allows low-income veteran families around the nation to access services under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

Learn more about the SSVF program at: <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp>

More Troops and Veterans will see Federal Student Loan Fees Waived

As many as 47,000 service members and veterans will see some of their federal student loan debt reduced due to new policies implemented by the Department of Education.

Active-duty men and women coming home will not have to fill out a bunch of paperwork to access their educational benefits.

Currently, troops who are deployed to overseas combat zones and hostile fire areas could have interest on many federal student loans waived. The rules include student loans first paid out after Oct. 1, 2008. For some individuals, that extra interest can range from a few hundred to several

thousand dollars. But until now, getting those additional fees waived required lengthy paperwork proving past military service and deployments.

Department of Education officials said fewer than 5,000 service members and veterans requested the interest fees be waived in recent years. The new policy change shifts the burden from student veterans and troops to federal officials.

Loan recipients should see the changes appear automatically in their accounts. Individuals with questions can contact Department of Education officials with questions regarding the benefit. More information on the changes is available on the [Department of Education website](#).

VA Eyes More Focused Employment Help With Future Education, Benefits Efforts

Recent reforms to the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) have been focused largely on broadening eligibility for both what individuals and what types of education opportunities it covers.

But the head of [Veterans Affairs' Education Service](#) said the future of the benefit may be focused on narrowing down some of those options, based on the success of a few recent department job training programs. This would give veterans better guidance on selecting a career field.

In fiscal 2020, more than 875,000 individuals used GI Bill benefits for college classes, at a cost of about \$11 billion. The program is among the best-known benefits for military service and is unlikely to undergo a major overhaul in coming years, given its high usage rates.

If interested, read the entire article at: https://www.militarytimes.com/education-transition/2021/08/30/va-eyes-more-focused-employment-help-with-future-education-benefits-efforts/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2008.31.21&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

Dog Training Pilot Program Becomes Law

President Biden signed into law VFW- supported H.R. 1448, the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act.

This legislation will establish a 5-year pilot program on dog training therapy for veterans diagnosed with PTSD and require VA to provide service dogs for those veterans, including veterinary insurance.

Veteran Mental Health Support Resources

Through the VFW, VA, and other non-profit organizations, there are people you can talk to and resources available to help you cope during stressful times. VFW partner, <https://giveanhour.org/>, provides free mental health counseling for veterans and their families. All 166 VA Medical Centers offer <https://www.va.gov/samedayservices/> mental health services through in-person appointments, telephone calls, VA video connect, or secure messaging. <https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/> provide counseling and other services for eligible veterans and their families. The Veteran Crisis Line is available 24 hours

a day, 7 days a week by phone (1.800.273.8255, press 1), text (838255), or online chat by visiting <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>. Simply contacting a comrade, friend, or battle buddy to talk can also be helpful in managing stress and coping with difficult situations.

How to get Your COVID-19 Vaccine Records Online

Whether you qualify for a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine and need to make an appointment or you're just trying to get into your favorite restaurant, there's a chance that you will need to prove your COVID-19 vaccination status.

You can carry your CDC vaccination card (or a photo of it), here's how to get a copy of your VA COVID-19 vaccine records online.

The best way to access your medical records depends on the type of online account you have and if you want to get your records on your mobile device. Do not register for a new account if you already have a Basic or Advanced My HealtheVet account.

To register or access your MyHealtheVet account go to: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthevet/user-login?redirect=/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthevet/home>

VA is Expanding Opportunities, Services for Women Veterans

Leaders across the Department of Veterans Affairs are mitigating barriers for women veterans and increasing access to benefits and services through new technology solutions.

Within VA's Center for Women Veterans, division Director Lourdes Tiglaio highlighted a new campaign called I Am Not Invisible (IANI), which aims to spotlight diversity across the veteran community. IANI is increasing awareness and dialogue about [women veterans](#) as well as highlighting their skills and expertise.

Important Breastfeeding Information for new Veteran Moms

Breastfeeding has many [benefits](#) for both mom and baby. For example, breastfeeding strengthens a baby's immune system, lowers their risk of chronic diseases later in life, and may even help them maintain a healthy weight as an adult.

For moms, breastfeeding lowers the risk of postpartum depression, lowers the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and may promote postpartum weight loss.

The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or longer.

Nutrition is especially important while breastfeeding to support mom, baby, and overall milk production.

Pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period take a big toll on a mom's body.

Moms should continue taking prenatal vitamins for at least the first six months postpartum to replete important vitamins and minerals and keep both mom and baby properly nourished.

Additional details can be found at: <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/93850/>

Sleep Easier with VA Video Connect

Many people in the U.S. struggle with getting high-quality sleep. Without it, your days can feel like a drag. Your energy may be low, and it can be tough to manage your mood. Sleeping better can help. It might also be a quick fix for several issues affected by troubled sleep, such as memory problems, difficulty making decisions, and more.

Find out how virtual appointments through [VA Video Connect](#) could help you sleep better.

[Sleep apnea](#) is a serious disorder where your breathing repeatedly stops and starts. Some common signs of sleep apnea are loud snoring, gasping for air while sleeping, morning headaches, and excessive daytime sleepiness.

Get additional information at: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/ss20210827-sleep-easier-with-va-video-connect>

Commemorative Coin available to GWOT Veterans

In recognition of the 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and subsequent Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has created a commemorative coin as an expression of appreciation to Minnesota Veterans who have served since that fateful day. These coins are a limited edition and available for a short time.

Minnesota GWOT Veterans are invited to register for this free coin by visiting <https://bit.ly/GWOTvetcoin> (registration site works best using Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome or Firefox). If you're having trouble registering, please e-mail mdva.communications@state.mn.us.

Coins will be distributed by [County Veterans Services Officers](#).

Flu Vaccines will be available for Veterans Enrolled in the VA Health Care System

Veterans should receive the flu vaccine at their regularly scheduled appointments and during inpatient admissions.

If a Veteran does not have an upcoming appointment, walk-in flu shots are available at Minneapolis VA medical center Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the second-floor atrium (2P).

VA Facilities and Community Retail Pharmacies and Urgent Care Locations can be found at: <https://www.va.gov/communitycare/flushot.asp>

COVID-19 Vaccine Third Doses at Minneapolis VA

The Minneapolis VA is offering the 3rd dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to eligible immunocompromised individuals. Moderately to severely immunocompromised Veterans (and other persons, including Veteran spouses and caregivers, eligible for COVID-19 vaccination at the VA through the Saves Lives Act) are invited to walk-in Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 3 P.M. to receive a third dose at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, in the 2nd floor atrium, Room 2P.

More info is available at: <https://www.va.gov/minneapolis-health-care/programs/covid-19-vaccines/>