



Washington County

Veterans Services

Newsletter

January 2018

A Word From Your Veteran Service Officers

It's been another eventful year in the world of Veterans Services! We fielded just under 5,000 phone calls and met with more than 1,600 Veterans and their families, not to mention all of you that we meet with outside county walls.

We hope you'll continue to spread the word about our services as we spend a large part of our time receiving training on the ever-changing federal, state, and local laws. Our goal is to apply this specialized knowledge in the best way suited to meet the needs of every Veteran, dependent, and survivor who visits our office.

Our doors are always open so feel free to drop by for a visit or give us a call and we'll set up an appointment!

Emergency Care at Non-VA Facilities

You may have heard by now that there will be some changes to the regulations VA uses when they determine whether they'll pay for emergency care at a Non-VA facility. While we wait for the formal announcement of the changes we wanted to share a few things you need to know now.

The VA considers a medical emergency to be an injury or illness so severe that without immediate treatment, it threatens your life or health. You *do not* need to call the VA before calling for an ambulance or going to an emergency room for a life-threatening condition.

You, your family, friends, or hospital staff should contact the nearest VAMC within 72 hours of your emergency, so you are better aware of what services VA may or may not pay for.

If you are admitted to the hospital for the emergency, advance approval is not required, although notification within 72 hours is. If the admission is not an emergency, then you must obtain advance approval from the VA.

The bottom line is, always notify the VA if you receive Non-VA treatment and ask for guidance on what emergency charges are and aren't covered.

Are You Eligible for VA Health Care?

Many of our customers are surprised when they discover that not all Veterans are eligible for VA health care so we wanted to clarify some of the eligibility requirements.

You may be able to get health care benefits if you served on active duty and separated under conditions other than dishonorable as well as the criteria listed below.

If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, or entered active duty after October 16, 1981, you must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty. This minimum duty requirement may not apply if you: were discharged for a disability **or** were discharged for a hardship or "early out," **or** you served prior to 09/07/1980.

If you're a current or former member of the Reserves or National Guard, you must have been called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty. If you had or have active-duty status for training purposes only, you likely won't qualify for VA health care.

You may qualify for a higher priority group if at least one of these applies to you:

- You receive compensation for a service-connected disability or you receive a VA pension
- You were discharged for a disability incurred or that got worse in the line of duty
- You're a recently discharged Combat Veteran
- You're a former POW or Purple Heart recipient
- You get (or qualify for) Medicaid benefits
- You served in Vietnam between 01/09/1962 and 05/07/1975
- You served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War between 08/02/1990 and 11/11/1998
- You served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between 08/01/1953 and 12/31/1987

If none of the above apply to you, you may still qualify for care based on your income so please give us a call for additional information.

Veteran ID Cards on Hold

The VA has suspended applications for its new Veteran identification card due to a large number of applicants, according to their website from which you'll get the following message:

"You've reached the new Veteran ID Card application! We're excited to bring this important recognition to Veterans. We've experienced a great response and are working to make the application more efficient.

We want to engage you in the application process quickly and will be sending specific instructions on how to proceed. Please enter your email address below."

The new ID card was ordered by Congress in 2015 as a way to give Veterans proof of service at businesses without carrying a copy of their DD-214 or discharge.

You can sign up at www.Vets.gov to receive future e-mail updates on the card and hopefully they'll have the system up and running smoothly soon!

Mission

Washington County Veterans Services provides responsive, timely, accurate, and compassionate assistance to Veterans, their dependents, and survivors in applying for federal, state, and local benefits.

Contact Us

Phone: 651-430-6895

Email: vso@co.washington.mn.us

Website:

www.co.washington.mn.us/veteranservices

Locations

Cottage Grove

13000 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
Monday-Thursday

Forest Lake

19955 Forest Road North
Forest Lake, MN 55025
Tuesday-Friday

Stillwater

14949 62nd Street North
Stillwater, MN 55082
Monday-Friday

Need a Little Help to Stay in Your Home?

The VA knows that most Veterans are happier and healthier if they're able to stay in their own homes. That's why the VA Health Care System provides Home Based Primary Care which is health care services provided to Veterans in their home. The program is for Veterans who need skilled services, case management, and help with activities of daily living. Examples include help with bathing, dressing, fixing meals, or taking medicines. This program is also for Veterans who are isolated or their caregiver is experiencing burden.

All *enrolled Veterans* are eligible **IF they meet the clinical need for the service and it is available**. A copay for Home Based Primary Care may be charged based on your VA service-connected disability status and financial information. You may have a basic copay each time a VA staff team member comes to your home for a medical visit (the same as if you went to a VA clinic).

Next time you're at the VA for an appointment ask a doctor or nurse about these services designed to help keep you in your home as long as possible!

Do You Have a VA Claim on Appeal?

If so, you'll want to read about major changes coming to the VA appeals process in the next few years.

On November 2, 2017, the Department of Veterans Affairs rolled out the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program or "RAMP." In compliance with the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, RAMP is intended to provide a new, more efficient claims process.

RAMP will create a multi-lane appeals process where veterans can expect a quicker review than in the standard, legacy appeals process. RAMP appeals reviewers can overturn previous claims decisions or order a correction based on a difference of opinion. RAMP review is expected to be fully implemented by February of 2019.

Veterans who have a disability compensation appeal pending in one of the following legacy appeal stages are eligible for RAMP:

- Notice of Disagreement (NOD)
- Form 9, Appeal to Board of Veterans' Appeals
- Certified to the Board but not yet activated for a Board decision
- Remand from the Board to VBA

Veterans who have been waiting the longest for a resolution of their appeal will receive a letter giving them the opportunity to participate in RAMP first. VA will phase more Veterans into RAMP, eventually inviting almost 350,000 to participate.

Participation in RAMP is voluntary; if a Veteran chooses not to participate, the appeal will continue to be processed under the current (legacy) process. We highly encourage all Veterans who receive a letter regarding RAMP to give us a call. We can set up a meeting to discuss the program in detail so you can make an informed decision on whether you'd like to participate.