

# Veterans Voice



## \*\*\*\*PAPERLESS NEWSLETTERS\*\*\*\*

**If you would like our newsletter sent to your email address please call our office & we will add you to our new email list.**

## Flu Shots Now Available

Flu season is here! Flu vaccines are available at no-cost to eligible Veterans at all VA medical centers and more than 65,000 in-network community retail pharmacies.

The VA encourages all veterans enrolled at a VA medical center to get their no-cost flu shot to protect themselves, their families and their community from the flu and related complications.

### Availability

Flu shots are available at community providers and all VA medical centers and outpatient clinics starting September 2023 through April 2024.

### Eligibility for flu shots at a community provider

To be eligible for a flu shot from a community provider, Veterans must be

enrolled in VA health care **and** have received care from either a VA provider or a member of VA's Community Care Network (CCN) within the past 24 months. VA recommends you confirm with your VA primary care doctor that you have eligibility first. If you are not eligible and receive a flu shot in the community, the veteran will be responsible for the cost of the vaccine.

### Billing

Veterans are advised to scan this community provider billing information code to a mobile device or print and bring this billing information to the vaccine provider.



**If you're in crisis, call the new  
Veterans Crisis Line number.**

**Dial 988 then Press 1.**

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### THE OFFICE

#### Hours:

Monday thru Friday  
8:00am to 4:30pm  
Closed Noon to 1pm for lunch

#### Director

Shannon Kreger

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#### Contact us!

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### Department of Veterans Affairs Committee

John Nezworski, Chairman

Michael Hare

Frederick Buchner

Donald Rudy

Charles Cunningham

Donald Maury

Justin Faber

# PACT Act

VA announced that Veterans and their survivors have filed more than one million claims for toxic exposure-related benefits under the PACT Act since signed it into law Aug. 10, 2022. VA has processed more than 551,000 of these claims, granting 77.9% of them and awarding more than \$2.2 billion in earned benefits to Veterans and survivors.

Thanks to the largest outreach campaign in VA history, Veterans and survivors are applying for their earned benefits at record rates. In this fiscal year alone, Veterans and survivors have submitted 2.29 million total claims (PACT and non-PACT) — 40.4% more year-to-date than last fiscal year, which was the previous all-time record. Veterans have also submitted more than 2.1 million “intents to file” during this fiscal year — 53.1% more than all of last fiscal year and also an all-time record.

The PACT Act is the biggest expansion of Veteran health care and benefits in decades. VA encourages all eligible Veterans and survivors to file a claim — or submit their intent to file a claim — for PACT Act-related benefits now.

“The heroes who fought for our country are now getting health care and compensation for the conditions that followed them home from war,” said VA **Secretary Denis McDonough**. “We’re proud that more than one million Veterans and survivors have applied for their hard-earned benefits to date, but this is just the beginning — and we won’t rest until every Veteran and every survivor gets the VA health care and benefits they deserve.”

Partly due to the PACT Act, VA is delivering more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before. Key results to date include:

- **Delivering benefits to Veterans and their survivors:** VA has processed 1.85 million total Veteran claims (PACT and non-PACT) thus far in

this fiscal year —15.7% more to date than last fiscal year and already surpassing last year’s all-time record total of 1.7 million claims processed.

- **Increasing Veteran access to health care:** Since Aug. 10, 378,995 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care. This includes more than 158,691 enrollees from the PACT Act population (Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 era Veterans).
- **Screening Veterans for toxic exposures:** More than 4.4 million enrolled Veterans have received 5-minute screenings for toxic exposures from VA under the PACT Act.

Right now, there is also a special enrollment period for Veterans to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Specifically, until 11:59 p.m., local time, Sept. 30, Veterans who deployed to a combat zone, never enrolled in VA health care, and left active duty between Sept. 11, 2001, and Oct. 1, 2013, are eligible to enroll in VA health care without first applying for disability compensation benefits. VA encourages all of these Veterans to visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and sign up for VA health care before the deadline.

VA is delivering health care and benefits at record rates partly due to a dramatic increase in hiring at VA. For the first time in VA’s history, the Veterans Health Administration has over 400,000 employees and the Veterans Benefits Administration has over 31,000 employees — and both organizations are growing at the fastest rates in 20 years. Moving forward, VA will continue to modernize and expand capacity to deliver health care and benefits to Veterans as quickly and effectively as possible.

Veterans and survivors may apply or learn more about the PACT Act by contacting our office at 810-648-0212.



# Protect your G.I. Bill benefits from scams!

Unfortunately, some educational institutions and programs use misleading practices and overpromise their degrees' value and earning power. Without knowing the warning signs to protect yourself, this could lead to a depletion of your education benefits.

VA wants to ensure Veterans are informed when using their G.I. Bill benefits and to help them make the best education decisions. We encourage Veterans and their beneficiaries to know these education fraud warning signs and the best practices to avoid falling victim to a scam.

What are the types of scams targeting your education benefits?

- \* Job scams. Job Boards or Advertisements targeting specific demographics may be misleading or fake and require you to give personal information or money to get a job. You can find free, official information about federal jobs at [USAJOBS.gov](http://USAJOBS.gov), [FedsHiresVets.gov](http://FedsHiresVets.gov), and [CareerOneStop.org](http://CareerOneStop.org). Your state's Department of Labor may have job listings, contacts for local job offices, and resources for counseling and referrals.
- \* Student loan scams. Educational institutions may promise immediate student loan forgiveness or debt cancellation to entice Veterans to enroll in classes. For most borrowers, loan forgiveness is only available through programs requiring many years of qualifying payments or other qualifying criteria. Here is a list of Student Debt Relief "Do's and Don'ts" to help borrowers avoid scams.
- \* Scholarship scams. Educational institutions may "guarantee" Veterans a scholarship in exchange for a redemption/processing fee.
- \* Seminars. Veterans may be promised a scholarship and financial aid under the guise of high-pressure sales pitches where they feel pressured to pay a fee immediately or risk losing the so-called

"opportunity."

- \* Free gifts. Veterans may be promised incentives such as free laptops, gift cards or other "freebies" for enrolling in courses.

How can you protect your education benefits?

- \* Choose G.I. Bill approved schools. Use the WEAMS Institution Search Tool to find G.I. Bill approved schools.
- \* Use the G.I. Bill Comparison Tool. Compare the benefits you'll receive at different schools.
- \* Learn about the Principles of Excellence Program. This program requires schools that receive federal funding through programs such as the G.I. Bill to follow certain guidelines.
- \* Check out the National Resource Directory Database. This database provides validated resources that support recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration for service members, Veterans, family members and caregivers. Scammers may try to appear legitimate by using official sounding names, logos, websites or showcasing a false affiliation with VA.
- \* Find schools that take part in the Yellow Ribbon Program, which can help you pay for school costs not covered by the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.

VA recognizes the importance of professional growth and training for a meaningful career after your service to your country. If you suspect you are a victim of fraud, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General at VAOIG Hotline. You may also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by visiting [reportfraud.ftc.gov](http://reportfraud.ftc.gov). If you miss a VA benefits payment, identify a discrepancy in payments, or find suspicious activity with your direct deposit account, contact VA immediately at 1-800-827-1000.



*Thank you for the millage!*