



Disabled American Veterans

Department of North Dakota

Tri-Annual News Bulletin



DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

2009 4th STREET NE - JAMESTOWN, ND 58401

SEPTEMBER 2012

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER REPORT



Richard Krajewski
Department Commander DAV

It is beginning to cool down and the sense of Autumn is in the air. I have been busy around the state representing you as your Department Commander. I attended the National Convention held at Bally's, Las Vegas 2-8 Aug 2012. It's was a learning experience as always at these National Conventions, attending meetings, legislative committees, social functions and many seminars. It was a great convention. I wish you

all could have been there.

I conducted a friendly visit and presentation with Devils Lake Chapter#5 on Friday, 31 Aug 2012. I met with the following individuals, Commander Pete Padilla, Adjutant Gerald Bartram and 3 other DAV members. Their meeting location is in the Holiday mall in a small room. The adjutant has been in his position for ten years and the commander for 4 or 5 years. Most of their DAV members are spread through their region far and wide and attendance is a problem. The commitment of the commander is a strong asset to the Devils Lake Chapter,

I have six more chapters to schedule for visit with Williston, Minot, Bismarck, Jamestown, Valley City and Fargo before the snow flies.

I hope to see you in Valley City for our annual fall conference.

DAVA DEPARTMENT COMMANDER REPORT



Mary Holzworth
Department Commander DAVA

I would like to thank all of our veterans for their service. My prayers are with those currently serving and their families. A special thanks to all Chapter and Unit members for the volunteer work they do for the Disabled Veterans and their communities.

I recently found the following information and thought you might want to know about some changes. The alerts for Homeland

Security have changed from the color code to the following:

- **Imminent Threat Alert:** Warns of a credible, specific, and impending terrorist threat against the United States.

- **Elevated Threat Alert:** Warns of a credible terrorist threat against the United States.

- **Sunset Provision:** An individual threat alert is issued for a specific time period and then automatically expires. It may be extended if new information becomes available or the threat evolves.

- **NTAS Alerts** contain a sunset provision indicating a specific date when the alert expires - there will not be a constant NTAS Alert or blanket warning that there is an overarching threat. If threat information changes for an alert, the Secretary of Homeland Security may announce an updated NTAS Alert. All changes, including the announcement that cancels an NTAS Alert, will be distributed the same way as the original alert.

- Does your family have an emergency plan in case of whatever disaster occurs?

I would extend an invitation to members to attend a meeting if you are new or haven't attended before. The DAV and DAVA are great organizations and have an important mission in helping our veterans. Please participate as you can, because many hands make light work. We can do it together as no one can do it alone. Your spouses and children are welcome to join the Auxiliary working for the same great cause.

God Bless you and God Bless the U.S.A.



**Veterans
Day
November
11
2012**



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DAV Fall Conference
October 5-6, 2012
Valley City, ND

District 14 Fall Conference
October 19-20, 2012
Kelly Inn
Fargo, ND

DAV Mid-Winter
February 24-27, 2013
Crystal Gateway Marriot
Arlington, VA

DAV Department Convention
April 27-29, 2013
7 Seas Motel
Mandan, ND

DAV National Convention
August 10-13, 2013
Hilton Orlando
Orlando, FL



Tom Saddler, Jackie Saddler, and Warren Tobin at the 2012 DAV Commanders and Adjutants Orientation.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS DEPARTMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OFFICERS 2010-2011

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Darlene Famias

Dept. Web Site:
www.tristateveterans.com/nddav

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DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN
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TREASURER
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Published Tri-Annually
Disabled American Veterans
Department of North Dakota
2009 4th Street NE
Jamestown, North Dakota 58401

14th District DAV/DAVA Fall Conference

The 14th District DAV/DAVA Fall Conference will be held at the Kelly Inn, Fargo, on Saturday, October 20, 2012. The meeting begins at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and is expected to be finished by noon.

The Kelly Inn (701-281-9700) is located at the junction of Interstate Highway 29 and Main Avenue in Fargo. (Approximately 2 miles north of Highway I-94) Forty (33) rooms have been set aside in the name of the DAV for Friday, October 19th at a cost of \$69.30 for a double room. The Kelly Inn will only hold these rooms until October 1st, so please make your reservations as soon as possible.

In addition a reception, will be hosted by the 14th District on Friday evening from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in Rooms 174, 175, and 176 of the Kelly Inn. The district will also be hosting a breakfast at 8:00 a.m. in the O'Malley room of the Kelly Inn on Saturday morning.

North Dakota DAV/DAVA Fall Conference

The Department of North Dakota DAV/DAVA Fall Conference will be held at the VFW Club, Valley City, on Saturday, October 6, 2012. The meeting begins at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday and is expected to finish by early afternoon.

There are several motels located in Valley City. Among them are the Super 8 (1-800-800-8000 Toll Free or 701-845-1140 Local) and the Wagon Wheel Inn (701-845-5333).

Activities begin on Friday evening with a Chapter 24 DAV and Auxiliary Auction. Coffee and donuts will be available Saturday morning at the VFW.



Golden Corral / DAV Partnership Military Appreciation Monday Event

We are fast approaching the 12th annual Golden Corral Military Appreciation Monday tribute to honor all military personnel with a free "thank you" dinner to be held Monday, November 12, 2012. We are looking forward to having you celebrate with us. This year will be the first time in 7 years that the Veterans Day Holiday has fallen on Golden Corral's Military Appreciation Monday and we expect larger than normal crowds.

The Disabled American Veterans organization is our exclusive partner for this event and will have the opportunity from November 1 through the night of the dinner to solicit guests for contributions to be used by the DAV state and local

chapters. DAV members will also have the opportunity to distribute DAV materials.

(FYI: 2011 contributions to the DAV totaled \$1,035,665.)



The address for the Golden Corral in North Dakota are:

8420 North 14th Street
Bismarck, North Dakota
James Miller, Manager

I-94 & 45th Street
Fargo, North Dakota
Charles Morgan, Manager



Land of the Free! Home of the Brave!

THANK A VETERAN TODAY!

Joint VA/Labor Department Program Launches to Retain 99,000 Unemployed Veterans

Online site now opened for veterans to apply for education benefits

WASHINGTON — Unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 can now apply for new benefits to cover education costs for up to one year through a joint U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Department of Labor program that focuses on retraining 99,000 veterans for high-demand jobs.

"Our veterans have made this nation stronger through their service, and they deserve our continued support," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "This new program will help unemployed veterans expand their skills and compete for good jobs."

"This important tool will help those who served our country receive the education and training they need to find meaningful employment in a high-demand field," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Veterans are disciplined, hardworking, goal-oriented team members who can play a vital role in helping businesses and the economy grow."

As part of a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (known as VOW), the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program allows qualifying veterans to receive up to 12 months of assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill — Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

Veterans can apply on a first-come, first-serve basis for VRAP for programs that begin on or after July 1, 2012. Assistance under this benefit program ends on March 31, 2014.



(VRAP)
**VETERANS RETRAINING
 ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**
 Now accepting applications.

To complete an application, a veteran will need to know his or her direct deposit information (bank routing number and account number), the name and location of his or her school, the program the veteran wishes to pursue and the applicable high-demand occupation.

To qualify, veterans must:

Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application and not dishonorably discharged.

Start education or training after July 1, 2012, in a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school leading to an associate degree,

non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by the Department of Labor.

Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program (e.g., Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment).

Not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program within the last 180 days.

Not receive VA compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployability.

Upon completion, the Labor Department will engage with participants within 30 days after their training to help them find good jobs that utilize their newly learned skills.

"This is a true example of interagency collaboration, and we are committed to the full and speedy implementation of this program to ensure the success of our veterans in the civilian labor market," said Ismael "Junior" Ortiz, deputy assistant secretary for the Labor Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

"We are working diligently with our partners around the country to ensure our veterans have access to all the benefits and services to which they are entitled — especially when it comes to those unemployed," added VA

Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

For more information on VOW, high-demand occupations and how to apply for VRAP, veterans may go to <http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW> website

or call VA's call centers toll-free at 800-827-1000. Veterans may also access the VRAP application online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov> through eBenefits, a joint project between the U.S. Department of Defense and VA.

Veterans are also encouraged to visit nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation for assistance from staff, local veterans' employment representatives and disabled veterans' outreach program specialists. To find the center nearest you, visit <http://www.servicelocator.org>.

For more information about the Department of Labor's veterans programs, go to <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

Chapter 1 Members Enjoy Circus



This photograph was taken at the Shrine Circus in Fargo, ND. Members of Chapter 1 and their families were guests of the El Zagal Shiners at the circus in Fargo. Chapter 1 is going to make this an annual event.



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Williston, North Dakota

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of each month



Jake Liudahl Owner/President

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Jamestown, North Dakota

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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



FRANCIS J. BEATON Chapter No. 1

Fargo, North Dakota

Meetings Held 4th Thursday
of each month

VA and Veterans Service Organizations Partner in Fully Developed Claims Process

WASHINGTON (Aug. 7, 2012) – The Department of Veterans Affairs hosted an event July 31 for 10 Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) to collaborate in VA's effort to eliminate the claims backlog.

The main focus of the workshop was VA's emphasis on the shared goal of better serving Veterans and positive impact of filing Fully Developed Claims (FDC). Participation in the FDC Program is completely optional, and allows for faster claims processing, while preserving a Veteran's right to appeal a decision. "VA prides itself on our ongoing partnership with organizations that represent Veterans throughout the VA claims process," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "They are at the frontlines and have a major role in our ability to transform our claims process, starting with fully-developed claims."

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. VA gathers all Federal records the Veterans identify, like those from VA Medical Centers and the Social Security Administration. VA will also send the Veterans for a VA medical examination, if needed. The early submittal of evidence and certification by the Veteran allow VA to start processing the claim immediately, without holding it for mandatory wait periods.

Veterans and their representatives do much of the development that typically takes VA 175 days to gather. Currently, FDC claims take an average of 110 days to decide compared to 254 days through the traditional claims method.

Part of the workshop featured a discussion lead by Chicago Regional Office Director Duane Honeycutt on how VA's regional offices and VSO field staff can work

together to increase the number of FDCs Veterans file. The Chicago Regional Office is one example of recent successes in reducing the time it takes to process a claim by working with Veteran representatives to increase FDC claims. Currently, FDC make up 10 percent of the RO's claims, compared to just 3 percent nationwide.



"VA, Veterans representatives and Veterans all have a stake in the claims process," Honeycutt said. "We continue to operate under the mantra, 'Grant if you can, deny if you must,' but more often than not, the challenge to obtain certain evidence that allows us to grant the claim. That is why partnering with the VSO's to increase the number of fully developed claims that are submitted is so important."

Honeycutt said FDC involves Veterans in the process and allows them more control over their claims. Their reward is a claim that is finished in substantially less time.

"DAV has National Service Officers located in every regional office," said Jim Marszalak, Assistant Service Director with Disabled American Veterans. "Our NSOs in the Chicago Regional Office started using the FDC program and have seen a dramatic amount of time shaved off waiting times. It has also minimized the amount of appeals we file on our Veterans' behaves."

Using VA Form 21-526EZ, Veterans can file FDC for disability compensation. VA Form 21-527EZ allows Veterans to file for a non-service connected pension. The FDC forms, found at <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526EZ-ARE.pdf> and <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-527EZ-ARE.pdf> include information on what evidence is VA's responsibility and what evidence is the Veteran's responsibility.

For more info on the Fully Developed Claims program, visit benefits.va.gov/transformation/fastclaims/.

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VA Announces Contract for Montana Community Based Outpatient Clinic

WASHINGTON—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has selected the contractor to build a new community-based outpatient clinic in Billings, Mont. "This new facility will ensure that Montana's Veterans continue to have the world-class medical care that they've earned through their service to our Nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

One of Secretary Shinseki's top priorities is increasing access to VA care and services for Veterans wherever they live. VA is expanding access in a three-pronged effort that includes facilities, programs and technology. The contract was awarded to Billings VA 2008 LLC on Aug. 31 and will create approximately 399 construction jobs. Once the facility is completed in spring 2014, VA will pay an annual rent of approximately \$1.8 million. The contract calls for construction of a one-story building on Spring Creek Lane in Billings. The project includes 52,141 square feet of space for specialty services for Veterans, including primary care, mental health, specialty care, laboratory, pharmacy, outpatient surgery, dental, audiology, radiology, physical therapy, and vision. Space is also allocated for Veterans Benefits Administration offices. In addition, 230 parking spaces will be constructed.

The new facility will be located near the existing 26,000 square foot CBOC located on the west end of Billings at Spring Creek. The clinic will annually provide outpatient services for 11,000 Veterans in eastern Montana. Last year, VA spent \$3.4 billion providing health care, benefits and services to Montana's 102,000 Veterans. VA operates a medical center and ambulatory care clinic in Ft. Harrison, a dozen community-based outpatient clinics and four Vet Centers across the state, and a community living center in Miles City.

VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care system. With a health care budget of about \$50 billion, VA expects to provide care to 6.1 million patients supporting 920,000 hospitalizations and nearly 80 million outpatient visits this year. VA's health care network includes 152 major medical centers and more than 800 community-based outpatient clinics.

This initiative is part of the department's program for infrastructure improvements for the Veterans health care system. It includes approximately \$11 billion in major construction projects and a similar amount of facility acquisitions through lease agreements.

Dept. Member of the Year Joe Hall



Chapter 3 member Joe Hall was recognized as the DAV Department Member of the Year at the 2012 Dept. Convention.

Army ROTC Awards Presented by Chapter 2



DAV Dept Commander Richard Krawjeski and Past Dept. Commander Roy Fillion presented Award Medals to Cadets Lyons and Cadet Soldner during the UND Army ROTC annual Awards Ceremony May 3, 2012.



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VA to Increase Mental Health Staff by 1,900

WASHINGTON –Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki today announced that the department would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians – to include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of 20,590 mental health staff as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations.

“As the tide of war recedes, we have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to anticipate the needs of returning Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “History shows that the costs of war will continue to grow for a decade or more after the operational missions in Iraq and Afghanistan have ended. As more Veterans return home, we must ensure that all Veterans have access to quality mental health care.”

VA's ongoing comprehensive review of mental health operations has indicated that some VA facilities require more mental health staff to serve the growing needs of Veterans. VA is moving quickly to address this top priority. Based on this model for team delivery of outpatient mental health services, plus growth needs for the Veterans Crisis Line and anticipated increase in Compensation and Pension/Integrated Disability Evaluation System exams, VA projected the additional need for 1,900 clinical and clerical mental health staff at this time. As these increases are implemented, VA will continue to assess staffing levels.

“Mental health services must be closely aligned with Veterans' needs and fully integrated with health care facility operations,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel. “Improving access to mental health services will help support the current and future Veterans who depend on VA for these vital services.”

VA will allocate funds from the current budget to all 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) across the country this month to begin recruitment immediately. Under the leadership of President Obama and Secretary Shinseki, VA has devoted more people, programs, and resources toward mental health services to serve the growing number of Veterans seeking mental health care from VA. Last year, VA provided specialty mental health services to 1.3 million Veterans. Since 2009, VA has increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent. Since 2007, VA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of Veterans receiving mental health services, and a 41 percent increase in mental health staff.

VA has enhanced services by integrating mental health care into the primary care setting, developed an extensive suicide prevention program, and increased the number of Veterans Readjustment Counseling Centers (Vet Centers). VA's Veteran Crisis Line has received more than 600,000 calls resulting in over 21,000 rescues of Veterans in immediate crisis.

“The mental health of America's Veterans not only touches those of us at VA and the Department of Defense, but also families, friends, co-workers, and people in our communities,” said Petzel. “We ask that you urge Veterans in your communities to reach out and connect with VA services.”

To locate the nearest VA facility or Vet Center for enrollment and to get scheduled for care, Veterans can visit VA's website at www.va.gov. Immediate help is available at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net or by calling the Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (push 1) or texting 838255.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



ANDY NOMLAND
Chapter No. 2

Grand Forks, North Dakota

Meetings Held 2nd Wednesday
of each month at 6:30 pm
County Office Building - 6th Floor
September - June



1345 Main St. SW • Box 966
Valley City, ND 58702
701-845-1671 • 1-800-599-3792

MICHAEL E. DOBMEIER
Past Natl. Commander

*Thank you for
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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



CLARENCE “TOM” LEMLEY
Chapter No. 24
and Auxiliary Unit 24

Valley City, North Dakota

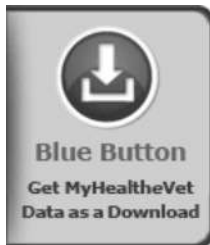
*We ask you to support your
Department and Chapter Projects*

Blue Button Reaches One Million Registered Patients

Cutting Edge Technology Expands to Empower More Patients

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that, during the month of August, the one millionth patient has registered for Blue Button to access and download their Personal Health Record (PHR) information.

"Since President Obama announced the availability of Blue Button two years ago, VA has worked tirelessly with our sister agencies to make online access to personal health records convenient, reliable, and safe. I am very pleased with our progress," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.



The Blue Button enables patients to assemble and download personal health information into a single, portable file that can be used inside a growing number of private health care electronic records—as well as those in the VA, Department of Defense, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and private sector partners. The VA Blue Button PHR includes prescription history, the ability to review past appointments and medical history details, wellness reminders and emergency contact information. Because it is web-based, the information is available anywhere, any time. Its security measures are identical to those employed by retail websites that accept credit cards.

"VA believes that patients are hungry for their health information," said Peter Levin, VA's Chief Technology Officer. "The simplicity of Blue Button makes it easy for other public agencies and Federal Employee Health Program carriers to participate. Getting to one million registered users so quickly is a great validation for our team."

The Blue Button will see even wider use as more non-profit organizations and health care industry partners, such as Kaiser Permanente and Aetna adopt it as an integral part of their customer health records. One of the most recent Blue Button partners is UnitedHealth Group.

"We are just thrilled to see how Blue Button has expanded so quickly, both in the richness of its content as well as the number of institutions that have pledged to make their data available," said U.S. Chief Technology Officer Todd Park. He went on to say that Blue Button has become the model of data liberation throughout the Federal Government. "Data is the rocket fuel of job creation in the high tech sector. Blue Button is just a terrific example of what people can do once we liberate their data – safely and privately – from our vaults."

For more information on the Blue Button initiative, please visit: <http://www.va.gov/bluebutton/>

VA Expands Medical Forms Program to Support Faster Claims Processing

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today the release of 68 new forms that will help speed the processing of Veterans' disability compensation and pension claims.



"VA employees will be able to more quickly process disability claims, since disability benefits questionnaires capture important medical information needed to accurately evaluate Veterans' claims," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Disability benefits questionnaires are just one of many changes VA is implementing to address the backlog of claims."

The new forms bring to 71 the number of documents, called disability benefits questionnaires (DBQs), that guide physicians' reports of medical findings, ensuring VA has exactly the medical information needed to make a prompt decision.

When needed to decide a disability claim for compensation or pension benefits, VA provides Veterans with free medical examinations for the purpose of gathering the necessary medical evidence.

Veterans who choose to have their private physicians complete the medical examination can now give their physicians the same form a VA provider would use. It is very important that physicians provide complete responses to all questions on the DBQs. VA cannot pay for a private physician to complete DBQs or for any costs associated with examination or testing.

"By ensuring relevant medical information can be found on one form, we will cut processing time while improving quality," added Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

DBQ's can be found at <http://benefits.va.gov/disabilityexams>. The newly released DBQs follow the initial release of three DBQs for Agent Orange-related conditions.

Veterans may file a claim online through the eBenefits web portal at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>. The Department of Defense and VA jointly developed the eBenefits portal as a single secure point of access for online benefit information and tools to perform multiple self-service functions such as checking the status of their claim.

Servicemembers may enroll in eBenefits using their Common Access Card at any time during their military service, or before they leave during their Transition Assistance Program briefings. Veterans may also enroll in eBenefits and obtain a Premium account in-person or online depending on their status.

VA Expanding Burial Options in Rural Areas

WASHINGTON (August 1, 2012)— The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that it is moving forward with a plan to provide burial services for Veterans in rural areas where there are no available VA national cemeteries, state Veterans cemeteries or tribal Veterans cemeteries.

"VA is committed to improving service to Veterans in rural areas," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Through an innovative partnership with existing cemeteries, we will be able to ensure burial for Veterans in more locations that meet the high standards of national shrines."

Under the Rural Initiative plan, VA will build small National Veterans Burial Grounds within existing public or private cemeteries in rural areas where the unserved Veteran population is 25,000 or less within a 75-mile radius.

VA plans to open eight National Veterans Burial Grounds that will serve Veterans in the areas of Fargo, N.D.; Rhinelander, Wis.; Cheyenne, Wyo.; Laurel, Mont.; Idaho Falls, Idaho; Cedar City, Utah; Calais, Maine; and Elko, Nev.

VA officials will announce further details about the eight new burial grounds as information becomes available. This new initiative will make VA burial options available to more than 136,000 Veterans and their eligible dependents.

A National Veterans Burial Ground will be a small, VA-managed section of three to five acres within an existing public or private cemetery. VA will provide a full

range of burial options and control the operation and maintenance of these lots. These sections will be held to the same "national shrine" standards as VA-run national cemeteries.

VA is still evaluating suitable sites for its Rural Initiative. In Laurel, Mont., VA is exploring with local officials the feasibility of acquiring a portion of the Yellowstone County Veterans Cemetery to establish as a National Veterans Burial Ground.

VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Nearly four million Americans, including Veterans of every



war and conflict -- from the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan - - are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 19,000 acres.

Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a

private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone, grave marker or medallion.

More information on VA burial benefits is available from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at www.cem.va.gov or by calling VA Regional Offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at the time of need at any VA national cemetery, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

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Interagency Agreement Offers Convenience to Veterans' Prescription Refills

WASHINGTON – Nearly 250,000 patients served by the Indian Health Service (IHS) have utilized a prescription service available through an interagency agreement between IHS and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



"Federal partners such as IHS are invaluable in VA's commitment to collaborating and expanding award-winning services that enhance patient care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "This agreement reflects VA's pledge to be an

effective steward of Federal resources and ensure that countless Veterans and patients of IHS receive the best health care possible."

The agreement allows IHS pharmacies to use the VA Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP) to process and mail prescription refills for IHS patients. By accessing the service, IHS patients can now have their prescriptions mailed to them, in many cases eliminating the need to pick them up at an IHS pharmacy.

"The use of VA's CMOP saves IHS patients travel time and wait time at the pharmacy, and allows IHS pharmacists to focus more attention on patient care," said Kenneth Siehr, Director of the VACMOP program.

The service provides an alternative method for patients to obtain medication refills when transportation or work schedules make visiting a pharmacy difficult. Due to the agreement, pharmacists have been able to spend more time in clinics interacting with patients and answering questions.

"As a result of our partnership with VA and our use of CMOP, we've seen advances in our patient care and satisfaction," said Randy Grinnell, Deputy Director for IHS. VA has successfully utilized CMOP since 1994 and currently processes over 111 million prescriptions annually. In 2011, the program earned distinction as a Customer Service Champion from JD Power and Associates. Eleven IHS sites currently use VA CMOP: Haskell, Kan.; Phoenix; Rapid City, S.D.; Yakima, Wash.; and Claremore, Clinton, El Reno, Lawton, Pawhuska, Pawnee and Watonga in Oklahoma.

VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country. With a health care budget of more than \$50 billion, VA expects to provide care to 6.1 million patients supporting 920,000 hospitalizations and nearly 80 million outpatient visits this year. VA's health care network includes 152 major medical centers and more than 800 community-based outpatient clinics.

For more information visit:
<http://www.va.gov/CBO/wfm/cmop.asp> or

http://www.ihs.gov/PublicAffairs/DirCorner/2012_Letters/IHS%20VA%20Summary%20Enclosure%2003-05-2012.pdf.

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Unemployed Veterans Requesting Retraining Program to Enhance Job Skills

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs has approved more than 36,000 applications for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), a new training and education program for unemployed Veterans to upgrade their skills for in-demand jobs.

“The tremendous response illustrates how important this program is in providing Veterans the opportunity to find employment in a high-demand field,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

At the current approval rate, VA expects to fill all 45,000 available slots for the fiscal year 2012 phase of the program before the Sept. 30 deadline, and will continue processing new applications for the 54,000 slots available in fiscal year 2013. The program, a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which was passed by Congress and signed by the President in November 2011, is managed by VA and the Department of Labor (DOL) and allows qualifying Veterans to receive up to 12 months of education assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

The goal of VRAP is to train a total of 99,000 Veterans over the next two years in more than 200 job skills that DOL has determined are the most sought-after by employers.

To be eligible for the program, a Veteran must:

- Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and not dishonorably discharged;
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment;
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job-training program within the last 180 days; and

- Not receive VA compensation at the 100% rate due to individual unemployability (IU).

Veterans who have been approved for VRAP are encouraged to enroll as soon as possible to start training full-time in a VA-approved program of study offered by a community college or technical school. The program of study must lead to an associate degree, non-college degree, or certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by DOL. Applicants approved for the 2013 phase should enroll full-time in an approved program and start training by April 2013 in order to take full advantage of this benefit before its termination March 31, 2014.

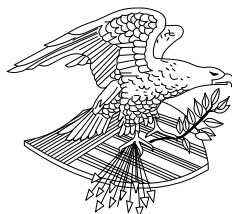
“I’m thrilled that the response to the program has been so strong,” said VA Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “But we need to keep getting the word out to maintain the momentum.”



VA Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity Curtis Coy acknowledged the program applies to a small segment of the Veteran population that may not have regular interaction with VA or stay informed about Veterans' benefits and opportunities. “We ask anyone who knows an unemployed Veteran to tell

them about VRAP,” said Coy. “We are counting on the continued help of Veterans Service Organizations and the Department of Labor, as well as the American public, to reach as many eligible Veterans as possible.”

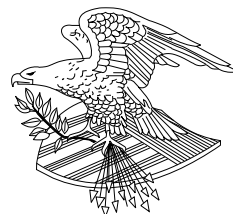
Potential applicants can learn more about VRAP and apply online at www.benefits.va.gov/VOW, or call VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. Information about the Department of Labor's programs for Veterans is available at www.dol.gov/vets. Veterans can also visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation, listed at www.servicelocator.org, for in-person assistance.



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Today's Military • Tomorrow's Veterans



VA Expands Women's Health Practitioner Training

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs has trained nearly 1,500 providers through its flagship National Women's Health Mini-Residency Program, one of many training opportunities for VA clinicians to sharpen their women's health skills.

"We have collaborated throughout VA to develop training that keeps VA providers and staff at the forefront on women's health issues," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "This training will help VA prepare for the continuing increase in women Veterans and the accompanying complexity of their health care needs."

VA is offering an unprecedented number of creative education opportunities to its health care providers interested in women's health care. The training ranges from traditional lectures with direct instruction to online and audio courses. Several courses target physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners; other courses have sections geared toward wider audiences, including nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and psychologists. VA's Employee Education System and VHA's Simulation Learning Education and Research Network partnered closely with Women's Health Education to develop the courses.

"Health care providers throughout VA must understand that women have unique health care needs and that different approaches might be necessary to provide the highest quality care to them," said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel.

Training programs include:

- The flagship Mini-Residency Program on Primary Health Care for Women Veterans, which has educated nearly 1,500 VA primary care providers using techniques like first-hand practice, lectures, and case discussions. This year, an online e-learning version of the mini-residency has been released as well as a mini-residency program for nurses.

- Monthly Women's Health Provider Audio-conferences, which are designed to complement the mini-residency program by supplying providers with up-to-date information about important women's health

topics. A new Monthly Women's Health Nursing Audio-conference Series launched in May 2012.

- Women's Health Emergency Medicine Course, a series of 10 online modules that use virtual patient scenarios, interactive content delivery, and videos to educate emergency care providers about common women's health issues in emergency rooms. The first module was released this year and an additional three are slated for release this summer.

- Women's Health Simulation Equipment and Videos enable health care providers at VA facilities nationwide to get hands-on training in breast and gynecologic examinations. One such system is MAMMACARE, involving computerized simulation equipment that gives the provider the opportunity to hone hand-eye coordination when assessing lumps.

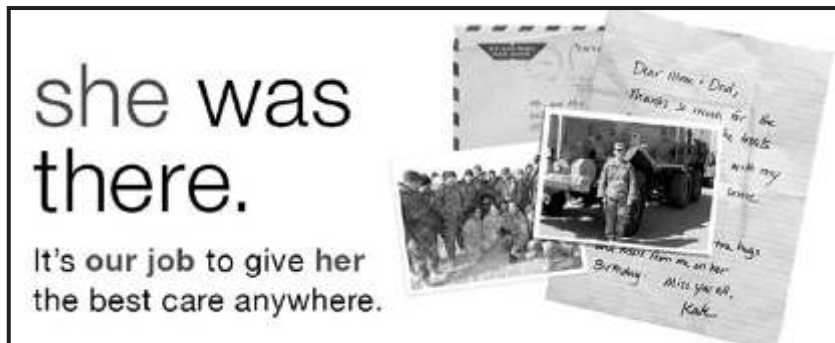
To reach VA's more remote locations, Women's Health Services recently partnered with VA's Office of Rural Health to sponsor 15 Women's Health Education Innovation Grants. These grants are providing resources to produce creative ideas for women's health education training at 15 VA locations nationwide. Lessons learned from this grant program will be used to shape future national training initiatives.

Additionally, the VA Women's Health Advanced Fellowship Program, which provides stipends to trainees in health care professions, has been expanded from seven to eight sites. Previously available only to physician trainees, the program has begun an inter-professional approach that incorporates training of associated health and nursing professionals. The Women's Health Advanced Fellowship Program is sponsored by VA's Office of Academic Affiliations.

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. By 2020, VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran

population and 8 percent of VA patients.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.womenshealth.va.gov.



VA Continues to Reduce Gender Disparities in Health Care



WASHINGTON (August 28, 2012) – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released a report that shows improvement in gender disparities in 12 out of 14 Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures in VA since 2008.

HEDIS measures are used by 90 percent of America's health plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and service, such as screening, prevention and chronic disease management. VA consistently scores higher than private sector health care on both gender-specific and gender-neutral HEDIS measures. "We have a solemn obligation to provide high-quality health care to all Veterans, regardless of gender. Although we are encouraged by the progress we have achieved, we are not going to stop working until all gaps are eliminated," said Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

VA began a national initiative to eliminate gender gaps in preventive care in 2008. In 2011, VA asked each health care region across the country to review gender disparity data and create and implement an improvement plan. The Comparing the Care of Men and Women Veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs report released by VA's Office of Informatics and Analytics (OIA) indicates progress. The report shows that VA improved gender disparities in six performance measures specific to VA, including the screening rate for persistence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

Other findings from the report include:

- VA has improved rates of screening women Veterans for depression, PTSD and colorectal cancer.
- VA has improved disease prevention for women Veterans through increased vaccination rates.
- VA has improved chronic disease management

for women Veterans in hypertension, diabetes and hyperlipidemia, all significant risk factors for cardiac disease.

· Although the gender gaps have narrowed, care remains better for men than women in cholesterol control, diabetes management and flu vaccination.

The OIA report includes results of Veterans' inpatient and outpatient satisfaction surveys, which show that men and women Veterans reported similar satisfaction except in the Getting Care Quickly and Getting Needed Care outpatient sections.

VA has implemented a national initiative to improve care for women Veterans. Some of the components include training VA providers in basic and advanced women's health care, implementation of women's health primary care teams at VA facilities nationwide and ramped-up communications efforts. The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, which leads the initiative, also issued a report looking at gender disparities. That report, Gender Differences in Performance Measures, VHA 2008-2011, identifies best practices for eliminating gender gaps based on success in VA networks.

"We're looking at what works and trying to replicate it throughout VA's system," said Patricia Hayes, chief consultant for the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. "We want to sustain this trend toward shrinking gender disparities and become a model for all other health care systems on how to eliminate gender disparities. Most importantly, we want to give every Veteran the best health care."

Both reports can be downloaded via www.womenshealth.va.gov.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit:

www.va.gov/womenvet and
www.womenshealth.va.gov.

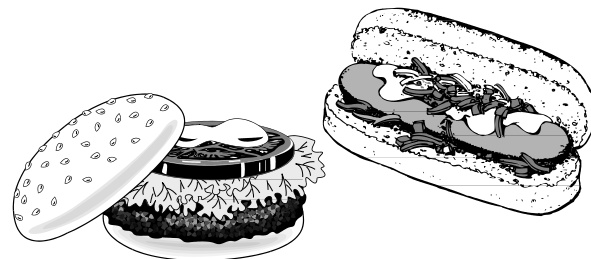
North Dakota Represented at DAV National Convention

A portion of the North Dakota Delegation at the DAV National Convention Banquet.

L-R: Mike and Sandy Dobmeier, Joe Litzinger, Warren Tobin and Richard Krajewski



Good Times from the Annual Picnic at the Veterans Home in Lisbon

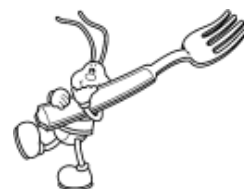


Manning the Grill at the ND Veterans Home Picnic.

Right: Chapter 1 members Shannon Norton and Ron Jackson preparing hotdogs and brats for the North Dakota Veterans Home Picnic.



Left: Paul Smart, Rod Olin, Paul Byron and Chris Wingire serving residents at the North Dakota Veterans Home.



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