

## **1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICER VA & R REPORT FOR MARCH 2023**



**By Richard Strehlow 262-641-0977**

Obtaining 100% VA disability for mental health can be a complicated and lengthy process. However, with the right resources and guidance, veterans can increase their chances of success. Understanding the eligibility requirements, seeking a medical evaluation, submitting evidence, attending a hearing, and appealing decisions are all important steps in the process. Additionally, utilizing resources such as veteran service organizations and legal assistance can help ensure veterans get the benefits they deserve.

Once you have determined that you are potentially eligible for VA disability, you should seek a medical evaluation from a qualified professional. This professional should have experience working with veterans and be knowledgeable about the VA's disability rating system. They should also be able to assess the severity of your condition and provide medical evidence to support your claim.

Did you know the PACT Act added two new presumptive conditions related to Herbicide Exposure for Vietnam era veterans? Monoclonal Gammopathy of Unknown Significance (MGUS), and Hypertension added to list.

Did you know the PACT Act added five new locations to the "assumed herbicide exposure (Agent Orange) list? (1) All U.S. or Royal Thai military bases in Thailand from January 9, 1962, through June 30, 1976; (2) Veterans who served in Laos from December 1, 1965, through September 30, 1969; (3) Veterans who served in Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16, 1969, through April 30, 1969; (4) Veterans who served in Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off of Guam or American Samoa from January 9, 1962, through July 31, 1980; (5) Veterans who served at Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972, through September 30, 1977.

Did you know the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has developed a quick and easy questionnaire to determine potential eligibility for veterans under the new PACT Act? To learn more about PACT Act eligibility, and get connected with an accredited Veterans Service Officer (VSO) for assistance with your VA claim

Did you know Tricare users who receive prescriptions by mail need to confirm their refills before they are sent? A change that could cause disruptions for millions of beneficiaries if they don't immediately respond to the confirmation messages and take the needed steps. Express Scripts, Tricare's pharmacy benefits manager, let patients know in December 2022 that the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy Program would stop sending refills automatically without any confirmation.

Did you know 100 percent disabled veterans can fly Space Available flights or Space-A flights for free? The Space-A Program sells extra seating capacity on DoD aircrafts. Air Mobility Command

(AMC) has an extensive network of flights throughout the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa. You will need to obtain a DD Form 2765, Department of Defense/Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card before taking a flight.

Did you know skin diseases and a form of acne called chloracne are visible symptoms associated with exposure to Agent Orange's main ingredient, 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-*p*-dioxin (TCDD)? Chloracne is similar to other types of acne that block hair follicles, such as acne vulgaris.

Did you know that veterans still remain reluctant to apply for service-connected disability because they believe common misconceptions surrounding VA disability benefits? A successful claim requires an in-service event, a current diagnosis and a medical opinion linking the two. Unfortunately, many veterans are shocked to realize they had missed out on years of benefits because they assumed their conditions were ineligible.

Did you know one way for veterans to start the application process is to enlist a person or an organization to help them with their claim? A Veterans Service Officer (VSO), claims agent or accredited attorney can help veterans determine which claim fits them best. Though this step is not required, most veterans find that assistance from veteran advocates make the process much easier by helping them prepare and submit their claim.

Did you know people who exercise regularly had lower rates of hospitalization and death from COVID-19? In a study published recently in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine the study even goes a step further and suggests that even people whose age or health conditions make them higher-risk have better outcomes if they are regular exercisers.

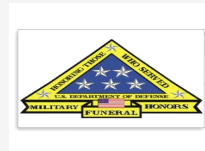
Patients with failing kidneys will have more care charges covered at dialysis clinics under a Tricare rule change triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The kidneys of patients with end-stage renal disease, or ESRD, have stopped functioning well enough to keep them alive, necessitating either three-times-weekly dialysis treatments to filter their blood or a kidney transplant. Until now, Tricare coverage at ESRD facilities paid for patients to receive certain services, such as the dialysis, formally called hemodialysis, itself. However, Tricare hasn't covered related services typically billed separately, such as nursing care. The new rule, which was effective Jan. 12, permanently extends coverage to those other costs tied to receiving dialysis. The coverage change will not be affected by the ending of the COVID-19 federal public health emergency declaration, due to happen this spring.

Did you know veterans enrolled in the VA health care program or are a beneficiary of the Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA), the VA offers a dental insurance program that gives veterans the option to buy dental insurance through Delta Dental and MetLife at a reduced cost? The VA also provides free dental care to veterans who have dental problems resulting from military service. To learn more about these options call 877-222-8387 today.

Did you know veterans who are incapable of overseeing their own bills may be assigned a fiduciary who manages a veteran's financial affairs? That kind of assistance leads the VA to make a report to the background check system as a disability that may preclude the veteran from purchasing a firearm.

Good news for Veterans and caregivers in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC): VA is extending eligibility and applicable benefits for Legacy Participants and Legacy Applicants through Sept. 30, 2025. During this time, VA will not discharge or decrease any support to Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants and their Family Caregivers, based on reassessment, to include monthly stipends paid to Primary Family Caregivers. This extends the transition period and timeline to complete reassessments for Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants and their Family Caregivers for an additional three years. VA will continue to complete reassessments of Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants and their Family Caregivers at the request of the Veteran or Family Caregiver or if evidence of an increased need for personal care services is identified.

Did you know Tricare users who receive prescriptions by mail, effective January 1, 2023, need to confirm their refills before they are sent? This change could cause disruptions for millions of beneficiaries if they do not immediately respond to the confirmation messages and take the needed steps. Tricare patients were notified in December 2022 by Express Scripts, Tricare's pharmacy benefits manager, that the Tricare mail order pharmacy program would stop sending refills automatically without any confirmation. Contact your Express Scripts service telephone number for more information and to ensure that your mail-order prescriptions continue to be sent on time.



**Remember..... That all gave some, but many gave all!**