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New London Veterans Affairs

Advisory Committee

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Veterans Update – Issue 11-2020

WALK OF HONOR DEDICATION—

as you know we had to cancel the dedication ceremony due to COVID 19 restriction and inclement weather conditions. So, we will be re-scheduling the ceremony sometime in the future. In the meanwhile, we are still offering the opportunity to purchase a memorial brick for a loved one who has served with honor in the U.S. Military. To learn more about it or request an application please call our office at 860.440.6691 or email dva@newlondonct.org.



VA reaches milestone, completing nearly half of Blue Water Navy disability claims received since beginning of year

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today, it has decided more than 34,000 Blue Water Navy disability claims, under the [Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019](#), effective Jan. 1, — which extends the presumption of exposure to herbicides such as [Agent Orange](#) to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

As of Sept. 30, VA has processed 34,415 (48%) of 69,570 claims received, of which 24,328 (71%) have been granted — awarding more than \$664 million in retroactive benefits to eligible Veterans and families. “It’s important we ensure Blue Water Navy Veterans and their families receive the benefits they’ve earned,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “As a result, VA will continue to get the word out via our social media channels, public service announcements and Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) — to ensure every Veteran who is eligible applies as soon as possible.”

VA also collaborated with the [National Archives and Records Administration](#) to digitize all Navy and Coast Guard deck logs for ships with known Vietnam service. Digitization of the Navy deck logs was completed in December 2019 and Coast Guard deck logs were completed in September. As part of the agreement, VA provided digital images of the deck logs to NARA to make digitally available in the [National Archives Catalog](#). Veterans may contact inquire@nara.gov if the deck log they are seeking is not available in the National Archives Catalog.

If you your claim was denied, click here on how to [appeal a VA claim decision](#).

For assistance in filling a claim, Veterans may contact approved [VSOs](#). Learn more about [Agent Orange exposure and VA disability compensation](#) or all 800-827-1000 for more information.

MEETING INVITATION

Ordinarily we would meet in the library at the New London Senior Center at 7:00PM. However, due to the COVID19 pandemic we are conducting our meeting on ZOOM. We encourage you to join us. It’s easy and you don’t have to leave you home.

Leave your email address either by calling or emailing us and we’ll send you the link. All you do is **CLICK** on the link and you’re in the meeting.

PCAFC requirements for in-person home visits during the National Emergency related to Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), for information please visit <https://www.regulations.gov/>*



See Page 4 for details



ACT or GET the BOOT FROM TRICARE

OK, now that I have your attention, I'll admit the headline does not tell the whole story. However, this year's [Tricare](#) open season, taking place Nov. 9 through Dec. 14, is different.

Why? Well, for the first time, "Group A" retirees -- those who entered service prior to Jan. 1, 2018 -- electing to utilize [Tricare Select](#) and [Tricare Overseas Select](#) will have to pay an enrollment fee starting in 2021.

And here's the key: They MUST set up arrangements to pay the fee, or they'll be disenrolled from Tricare Select. Group A makes up the vast majority of retired Tricare beneficiaries, so if you're retired and using Tricare, take note.

At \$25 per month (\$12.50 for individual plans), it's not a huge chunk of money, but if you don't contact your Tricare regional contractor and set up a payment plan during the open season window, you'll be disenrolled from Tricare Select in the New Year. And that could be a big chunk of headache.

If you somehow miss the deadline to set up your payment arrangements and are disenrolled, you can request reinstatement within 180 days.

Remember, Tricare Select is the option that allows you to get care from any Tricare authorized provider. In 2021, without enrolling and paying the fee, you'll be limited to space-available care at a military treatment facility and be responsible for the costs associated with civilian-provided health care.

The new enrollment fees do not apply to [Tricare for Life](#) beneficiaries, those medically retired with a 30% or greater disability, or the families of deceased service members.

This change was part of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, but implementation was delayed until 2021. Time flies; don't let the open season fly by without doing what you need to do!

Contact Your Tricare Regional Contractor:

East Region: 1-800-444-5445

NEED HELP Navigating the VA System; Questions about your Benefits; Need assistance filling out VA forms: Need a VA ID Card?



In spite of COVID 19 we are still available to help you with your VA questions and concerns. We will either resolve your issue over the phone, zoom conferencing or at a distance in-person appointment. Call or email New London Veterans Affairs Committee for an appointment.

dva@newlondonct.org

(860) 440-6691

Office is open 10:00am to 1:00pm

Tuesdays and Thursdays

FEATURED ARTICLE

Volunteers Needed for VA Phase III Clinical Trials

The Department of Veterans Affairs is recruiting 8,000 volunteers for the Phase III clinical trials of at least four COVID19 vaccine candidates, a process playing out behind the scenes at 20 medical facilities across the U.S. Officials with the VA and Operation Warp Speed, the Trump administration's initiative to fast-track coronavirus vaccines and treatments, confirmed that participation, saying the effort allows veterans to continue contributing to the country in its time of need during the pandemic. "For our nation's veterans, this is another way they can continue to serve in this way, fighting the pandemic as a volunteer," said Dr. Matthew Hepburn, head of vaccine development for Operation Warp Speed, during a discussion hosted by the Heritage Foundation on 27 OCT.

The effort follows a Defense Department announcement in September that it had partnered with AstraZeneca to recruit Phase III volunteers at five of its medical facilities. The DoD is in talks with developers of other vaccine candidates, but Pentagon officials have declined to name them. "There are a number of different vaccine Phase III trials in which the Army and the Department of Defense as a whole is involved in. Some of those are still in negotiations, in terms of the numbers and the sites that will be used," said Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, director of emerging infectious diseases at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, on 14 OCT.

The VA plans to recruit the volunteers for four trials at 20 of its medical centers, including 17 that will test Johnson & Johnson's candidate, made by subsidiary Janssen. Three other medical centers are recruiting or have completed recruitment for studies of candidates by Moderna, AstraZeneca and Pfizer, according to a VA website. At the VA, the department is seeking to recruit healthy veterans between the ages of 18 and 65 who are not pregnant and may be at risk for exposure. As with trials conducted in civilian facilities and at the DoD, participants will be paid, with compensation being determined and provided by the developer, VA spokeswoman Christina Noel said. VA nurses and case workers also are being asked to identify their sickest, most at-risk patients to determine who should be at the top of the list once a vaccine is approved.

This difference has some VA health providers worried. "These people who volunteer for the trials are heroes -- the ones who raise their hands -- but I'm concerned about my patient population. If we are only testing the vaccine on healthy people, how are we going to know how it affects those who are sick?" asked a VA nurse who asked not to be named because she is not authorized to speak to the press. "All this time, I have worked so hard to keep my patients alive." According to the nurse, the VA is prioritizing its patients to receive the vaccine. The priority groups are, in order:

Veterans in VA nursing homes; Those age 85 in non-VA nursing facilities; Veterans in other residential settings; Vets over the age of 75; Those receiving hemodialysis or chemotherapy; Homeless veterans; Those age 65 and over, and among those, "emphasize patients with CDC high-risk conditions like hypertension, obesity or COPD."

The DoD plans to recruit 3,000 volunteers at five military hospitals for the AstraZeneca trial, and additional volunteers for other companies, depending on their agreements. DoD officials said the department is participating in the research because it requires a "diverse and representative population (demographics and distribution), including people who are most affected by COVID-19." Retired Navy Rear Adm. Tom Cullison, former deputy surgeon general for the service, said Oct. 30 that it is not unusual for the DoD as well as the VA to participate in multicenter trials, as they have participated for years in cancer and trauma research. "In general, standard recruiting for African Americans and other minorities for medical research is difficult, and the military provides a rich opportunity to find volunteers for those groups," Cullison said.

The DoD is seeking adult volunteers in the military health system, including active-duty personnel, retirees and family members. To be considered, volunteers must provide written informed consent to be screened and considered for participation, and they must have no known or planned change of location or deployments at the time of enrollment. No U.S. service members will be required to participate in the COVID-19 vaccine trials, according to the DoD. All volunteers must agree to be monitored at the same location for the expected study time of two years. Some active-duty members such as new recruits or boot camp participants will not be allowed to volunteer because they are "considered vulnerable from an ethical and regulatory standpoint," a DoD official said.

The VA and DoD did not disclose the financial arrangements they have with developers to support the research. Volunteers will be paid for participating in the trials; the amount they receive depends on developers. To volunteer, inquire at your local VA medical center or complete a screening survey at Coronavirus Prevention Network <https://www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org>.

[Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime | November 6, 2020 ++]

SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

As a family caregiver you play an important role in caring for the Veteran at home and in the community.

Review the fact sheets to learn more about the expansion.

Announcement Expansion Phase 1 is Here!

[Caregivers PCAFC - Expansion Booklet](#) (PDF)

[Caregivers PCAFC - Application Process Fact Sheet](#) (PDF)

[Caregivers PCAFC - Expansion Fact Sheet](#) (PDF)

[Caregivers PCAFC - Eligibility Criteria Fact Sheet](#) (PDF)

[Caregivers PCAFC - Current Participant Fact Sheet](#) (PDF)

There are several steps in the application process that determine if you qualify.

How do I apply for this program?

You and the Veteran will need to apply together and participate in an application process to determine if you're eligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. You'll both need to sign and date the application and answer all questions for your role. You can apply online right now.

[**Apply for the program of comprehensive caregiver assistance**](#)

You can also apply:

By mail

Fill out a joint Application for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (VA Form 10-10CG).

[**Download VA Form 10-10CG**](#) (PDF)

Mail the form and any supporting documents to:

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers
Health Eligibility Center
2957 Clairmont Road NE, Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30329-1647

In person

Bring your completed VA Form 10-10CG to your local [VA medical center's](#) Caregiver Support Coordinator. To find the name of your local coordinator, you can:

Go to the VA [Caregiver Support Coordinator directory](#), or
Contact the [Caregiver Support Line](#) at 855-260-3274

Do not send medical records along with the application. VA will follow up after the application is received. If you need assistance with completing the application or would like to check the status of your 1010CG application please call 1-855-488-8440, option 3.

Be sure to check back for updates or [subscribe](#) to receive email updates and information about VA Caregiver Support Program services.