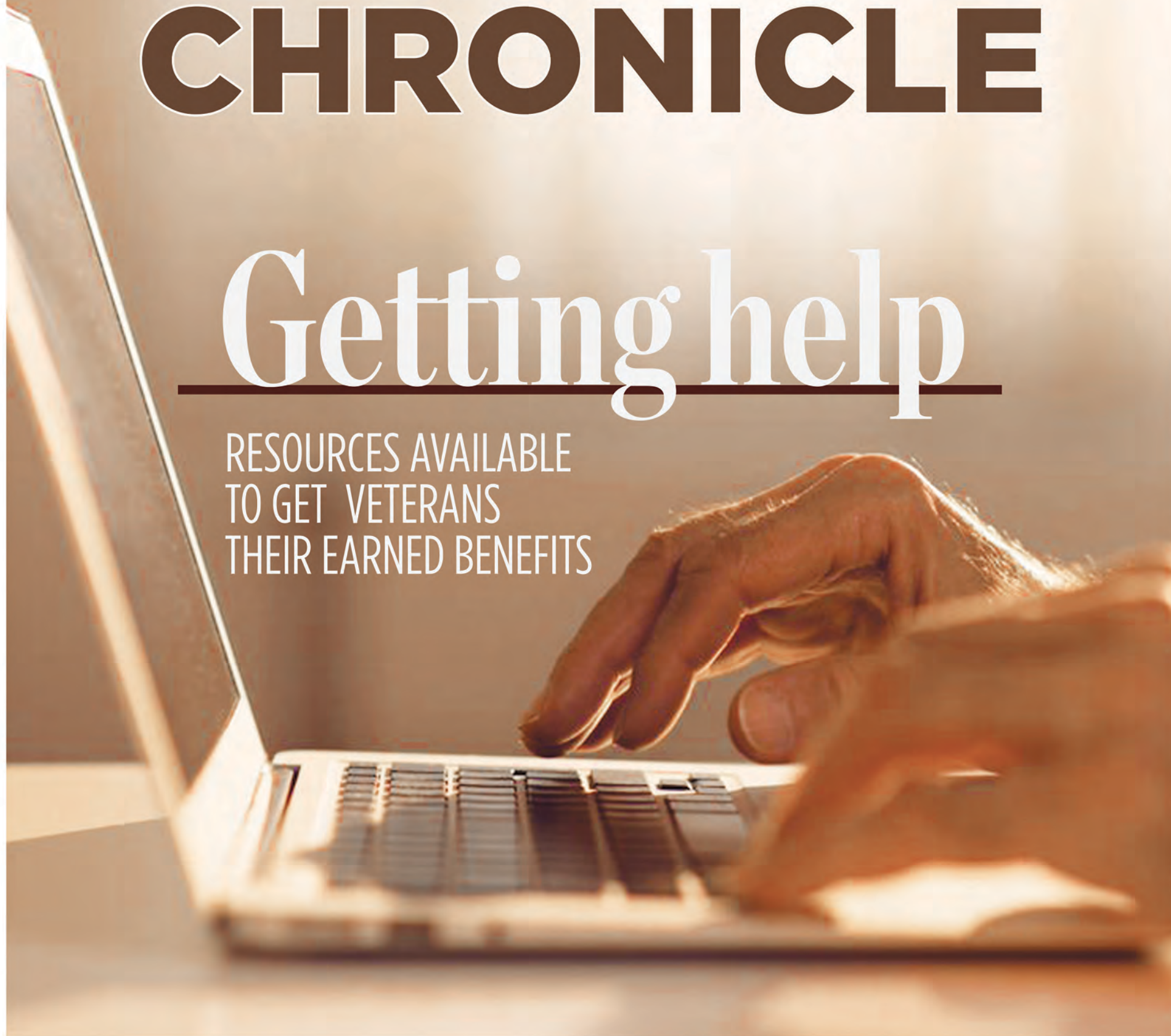


VETERANS CHRONICLE

APRIL 2020

Getting help

RESOURCES AVAILABLE
TO GET VETERANS
THEIR EARNED BENEFITS



VETERANS CHRONICLE



Don't delay for coronavirus

By Don Walker
VETERANS HELP NET

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) medical crisis that our country and the world face has shown that patience, even when we are in a hurry to see solutions, is required to keep us as safe and healthy as possible.

While a lot of veteran services and support organizations have suspended or reduced services, it is still important for veterans to receive the benefits that they have earned, especially health care. It would be easy to wait this out and hope to catch up after this crisis is over, but the time is now!

Even though processes may take longer than previously anticipated, don't lose any more time by waiting. There is still a lot you can do to stay on top of your benefit applications.

Learn

Go to VA.gov to learn about the benefits and services you might have earned and are eligible for.

Go to YouTube.com and search "Veteran Benefits" to review videos that offer tips and shortcuts to approval.

Go to VeteransHelpNet.com to read about veteran success stories, veteran support organizations and quick "Did You Know?" facts that explain little known benefits and how to apply.

Request

You will need copies of your DD 214 (official discharge papers) to begin most claims and applications. It will also help to order a copy of your Medical Health Records. milConnect (milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/

milconnect/) is a great place to start.

You can also see a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) for assistance; see **"How Can I Get Help?" on page 5** for contact information to set up a phone call appointment.

Act

Make a list of the benefits and services you think you are qualified to receive. Include information about why you believe you have qualified.

Create a list of questions to ask during your VSO appointment.

Sign up to the VA Health System at VA.gov. All honorably discharged veterans qualify at some level.

Get a VA ID card to make proof-of-service easier to provide (see **"Did You Know?" on page 2** for more information).

Hey veterans, did you know ...

The VA is prepared to protect your health?

By now, you've heard about the novel coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19, that's causing illness around the world. Fortunately, the VA is ready. Plans are in place to protect everyone who gets care, visits or works at one of our facilities.

For veterans, families and visitors, that means your VA visit will be different for a while.

Call before visiting: If you're a veteran seeking medical care, call your VA health facility if you have symptoms of the virus. Or sign in to MyHealtheVet (myhealth.va.gov) and send a secure message. You may be able to get diagnosed and receive care through VA telehealth (telehealth.va.gov) without having to come in at all.

If you visit a VA health care facility, you will be asked questions: VA health care facilities are adding protocols to ensure the safety of its patients and visitors. If you visit a VA hospital, clinic, community living center or other health care facility, you'll be met at the entrance by a staff member. They will greet you and ask screening questions. Depending on your answers, a VA health care professional will assist you on the next steps of your visit. Some facilities, especially community living centers, may have visitor restrictions in place.

Leave time for screening: If you're a veteran coming in for an appointment, plan to leave home earlier than usual to allow time for the screening.

We're doing all we can to make sure everyone in every VA facility — patients, families, visitors, staff and anyone else — stays as safe as possible during this situation.

For the latest VA updates on coronavirus and common-sense tips on preventing the spread of disease, visit publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/. For more information about coronavirus, please visit cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/.

My HealtheVet simplifies health care management?

My HealtheVet is the VA's personal health record. It was designed for veterans, servicemembers, their dependents and caregivers. When you register on My HealtheVet, you gain access to tools to track and monitor your health. As a registered user, you can build your own personal health record that you manage and control yourself.

Specific features in My HealtheVet are available to you based on your account type. Users who have a Basic account are able to view their self-entered information. If you are a VA patient, you can upgrade your account to Advanced or Premium. These account types may allow you to view parts of your VA health record and/or DoD Military Service Information. For more information, visit www.myhealth.va.gov.

For help, contact your Veteran Service Officer or one of the groups listed in "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

A new federal Veterans ID Card (VIC) is available?

The old Military ID Card is limited to current service members, retirees and certain veterans with 100% disabilities. Any honorably discharged veteran can now obtain and official the new VIC. It will save you the trouble of carrying around your DD214 when asked for proof of veteran status.

To get your VIC card, you will need a valid ID (driver's license, passport, etc.) and a copy of your DD214 (proof of service) You can complete an application, available on the 7th floor of Spokane's Mann-Grandstaff VAMC (4815 North Assembly St.), or online at va.gov/records/get-veteran-id-cards/vic/.

For help, contact your Veteran Service Officer or one of the groups listed in "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

VETERANS CHRONICLE



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Veterans Chronicle

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Veterans Help Net

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Veterans Help Net partners with The Spokesman-Review to publish Veterans Chronicle on the third Friday of every

month to increase awareness about veteran issues and to help veterans find hope and help.

To share a veteran story or information about resources for veterans, please contact info@veteranshelpnet.com or visit www.VeteransHelpNet.com.

For ad information, please contact advertising@spokesman.com or (509) 459-5095.

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WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

Spokesman-Review reporter Adam Shanks on assignment from earlier this year.
Photo by Spokesman-Review photographer Dan Pelle.

The Spokesman-Review is working tirelessly to keep our community informed and safe. Along with our daily print edition, we are providing access to our most crucial COVID stories online.

www.spokesman.com/coronavirus

Constantly updated: The spokesman.com website is being updated 24 hours a day with local, national and international news related to COVID-19.

Email Newsletter: Get our latest coverage, as it happens, delivered right to your inbox.

Coronavirus 101: Learn about the science behind the virus and how it is impacting our community.

COVID-19 Cancellations: Running list of cancelled or postponed events and location closures.

Restaurant Takeout Menus: Links and contact information for local restaurants offering to-go service.

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THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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Digital

VETERANS CHRONICLE



VBA regional offices available by phone, email

The Veterans Benefits Administration announced the regional offices will be closed to the public starting March 19, 2020. Regional offices will remain open, but will no longer accept walk-ins for claims assistance, scheduled appointments, counseling and other in-person services. This decision protects older veterans and those with underlying conditions as well as VA employees.

VBA benefits and services provided to veterans, families, and survivors will continue to be delivered throughout the duration of COVID-19 impacts. Spokane County Regional Veteran Services is responsible for providing emergency financial services to indigent veterans, widows and their families in the Spokane community. Funding for these programs is mandated by law and comes from a small portion of each county's property tax revenues.

Emergency relief assistance is provided in voucher form to a specific vendor for the following emergency related needs: food and hygiene, rent (facing eviction), burial

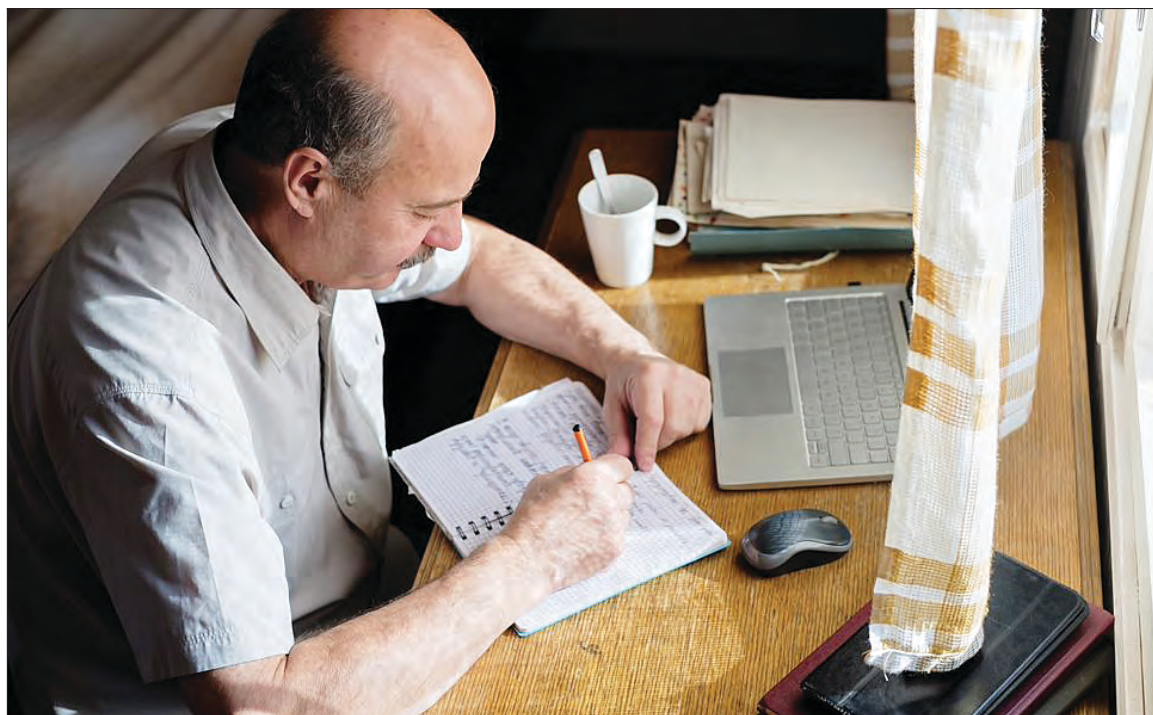
assistance, work clothing (limited availability), transportation, utilities (facing shut-off), training assistance and barriers to employment.

In partnership with the Washington Department of Veteran Affairs (WDVA) there are five Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff are available to help you enroll in the VA System, answer questions, file claims and sign up for benefits. Service officers are knowledgeable, skilled and have relationships with area partners to work together in forming comprehensive and lasting solutions for clients.

SCRVS staff will continue to provide phone and email communication support at (509) 344-9280, (509) 344-9353, or VETSTUDY@spokanecounty.org. Visit spokanecounty.org/1122/Veteran-Services for more information.

Veterans can also get information about benefits or file a claim by visiting www.va.gov. Veterans with claims specific or other questions may request information via Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS) at iris.custhelp.va.gov or by calling (800) 827-1000.

3 steps towards getting veteran benefits



Many deserving veterans or their families believe they may qualify for some earned veteran benefits or medical help but don't know where or how to start the process. Below you will find 3 steps to get you started on the path to hope and help.

Step 1. Find your DD 214

Your discharge papers certifies your service, your service time and your status. You will need it before you can file any claim or get any benefits.

If you can't locate your DD 214, a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) can help (see Step 2).

Step 2. Make an appointment with a VSO

These experts can walk you

through a variety of VA benefit processes and help you find out what you need to make a claim for your earned benefits. You can find a VSO at many different veteran service organizations. You never need to pay for VSO assistance; this is a free service.

Contact information for several veteran service organizations can be found in "How Can I Get Help?" on page 5.

Tip: Talk to a VSO before trying to apply for any benefits online by

yourself. Filing a claim can be a complicated process. Help from a VSO will ultimately save you time and reduce your frustration.

Step 3. Start today

Don't wait any longer. It's your life, health and money.

Get started now by calling Spokane Regional Veterans Service Center at (509) 477-3690 or North Idaho Veterans Service Benefits Office at (208) 446-1092.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.



GO ONLINE

VA.gov

The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

VA.gov/welcome-kit

The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

DAV9.com

Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

Explore.VA.gov/benefits-navigator

Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.



IN PERSON

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

1117 N. Evergreen Rd.,
Spokane Valley, WA
(509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 5 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls, ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA (509) 828-2449

SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.



BY PHONE

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

(509) 477-3690

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1092

Veteran Crisis Line

1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

North Idaho Crisis Center

(208) 625-4884

Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

Dial "2-1-1" for health and human resources referrals.

Healthcare for Homeless Veterans HCHV

In Person or Phone

504 E. Second Ave.,

Spokane, WA

Phone: (509) 435-2019

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Elizabeth Andrew,
labor organizer

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VETERANS CHRONICLE

The high cost of waiting to apply for benefits

By Seth Maier

When we service members solemnly swore our oath in supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States, we didn't think that we might potentially leave military service with fewer abilities than we had at the start.

Imagine that a carbon copy of yourself was created right when you signed those enlistment papers. Fast forward to your military exit. Compare your post-military self to the carbon copy that had not experienced military service. What are the differences?

Perhaps there is a physical difference, such as a paratrooper with a bum knee and back spasms from all the voluntary airplane leaps. Perhaps there is something invisible, such as witnessing the hell of combat and the ongoing trauma of reliving those experiences and painful memories. We might not see the physical difference from our carbon copy, but internally there is certainly something changed.

It is these differences that the VA disability compensation system was designed for. It's in the VA motto, a quote from President Lincoln: "To care for him (her) who shall have borne the battle and for his (her) widow (widower), and his (her) orphan." (Emphasis rightly added for my Women Warriors!)

It breaks my heart to hear a brother or sister in arms tell me that they won't apply for a service connection because they feel like they are taking something away from another veteran, believing that "They deserve it more than I do."

No vet is getting anything taken away from them when another vet applies. It simply doesn't work that way!

I bugged a veteran buddy for three years to apply for service connection from his exposure to Operation Iraqi Freedom burn



GETTY IMAGES

pits. He could hardly breathe – the burn pits had a major impact on his health – but he always said, "Some other vet needed it more." He finally applied and, three months later, he was 100% service-connected disabled.

Here is a metaphor that helped change his perspective:

If you leased a car from a dealership, you made an agreement on the maximum number of miles driven and if you get a ding in the car, you'll have to fix it before it's returned. If you return it with unrepaired damages and/or more miles than agreed upon, you are going to have to pay extra. Our enlistment contract is like a lease with the government. Uncle Sam leased our minds and our bodies in exchange for a signed blank check, payable for up to our mortal life. If we left military

service with dings, cracked headlights, or more miles used – guess what? Our Uncle will compensate for that! The problem is our Uncle won't just pay it – we have to apply to obtain service-connected disability.

We calculated that because my buddy waited those three years, he lost over \$70,000 in compensation. It will never be paid back to him. Every month a member waits before filing is a month of compensation they'll never get! Don't wait, apply now!

It further breaks my heart when I encounter a veteran whose home is being foreclosed on because of the cost of their medical treatments, such as cancer. If they had a cancer that has been directly connected to exposure to Agent Orange and they had applied for a service connection, those medical bills

would have been covered and they wouldn't have been able to keep their home.

Additionally if that service member clocks out in life because of that cancer, I can sleep at night because I know their spouse and their dependents will be taken care of, as they'll continue to receive survivor benefits. That part is really important to me – if my death is related to an injury or disease associated with my service, I need my family to be able to sustain themselves after I'm gone. The service-connection disability I applied for and was awarded benefits all for my family.

VA disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to a veteran because of injuries or diseases that happened while on active duty, or were made worse by active military service. All recognized service-connected disabilities

will all be fully covered medically for the rest of the vet's life, followed by a plethora of additional benefits that can't even be enacted until a service claim is made.

I urge veteran readers (and their support systems) to meditate for a moment on the idea of that carbon copy self made at military enlistment. What is different? Does it still impact you today? Has it gotten worse?

Meet with a Veteran Service Officer to discuss these differences at no cost; you don't have to be a member of their organization, nor is there pressure for you to join their organization. VSOs took the exact same oath as you did upon entering service. They'll understand and recognize if your experiences will qualify. It is incredibly valuable to have that talk!

VETERANS CHRONICLE

EQUINE THERAPY AT RUNNING W RANCH

"To provide a pathway to well-being that adds value to the lives of those with challenges through the strength of the horse."

This is the mission of Running W Ranch Therapeutic Riding Center, an equine therapy ranch that sits on the Rathdrum prairie. Hundreds of individuals can vouch for the truth of the ranch's mission. Countless children with special needs, high risk youth, senior citizens, and veterans have been touched by the people and horses at Running W.

Don and Cyndie Wiltsie celebrated the non-profit's five year anniversary this January. They owned Running W Ranch for a few years prior, but after a while wanted to find a way to give back. They started the non-profit and began offering classes to children with special needs. In the last few years, they have expanded to offer more programs serving more people in the community. One of these is WildFreedom, made possible through a partnership with a local veteran center for those receiving counseling services from mental health professionals there.

One WildFreedom volunteer reflected, "Seeing the transformations that have taken place in the last year and a half have shocked us. When we first began, we were optimistic but didn't know what to expect. A year and a half later, we have countless stories of men and women going from suicidal to understanding that their lives have purpose."

It's common to hear WildFreedom course graduates say things like "I'm more patient with my

kids," and "I'm more compassionate with my spouse."

One of those veterans is Randy Voll. He entered the fall 2019 WildFreedom program having only ridden many decades ago as a boy. Not long after starting, he gravitated toward a horse named Wyatt, a mustang that Don and Cyndie adopted from the Bureau of Land Management, wild off the range. When the two connected, Wyatt had been at the ranch for only a few months.

It was a great learning curve for Randy, because he is naturally more animated and high-energy, and Wyatt's personality requires a calm leader who is quiet and methodical.

"I've learned to reduce my anxiety. Now, I think before I say something, which correlates to being with the horse – you have to think before you act with them," Randy noted.

Working with Wyatt allowed him an opportunity to confront the anxiety that was a result of his military PTSD. Horses are incredibly intuitive and respond honestly to one's emotional state. Wyatt's initial reactions to Randy's demeanor spurred on reflection and personal growth.

Looking at his progress over the last few months, Randy said, "I'm definitely more patient, and that's a direct result of Wyatt."

Randy also reflected that beginning the program, he lacked self-confidence, but this shifted as he worked with Wyatt and grew into an effective and compassionate leader. His relationship with his significant other, a combat veteran, is marked



PHOTOS BY COURTESY INFO HERE



with new compassion and patience. As she also works through her PTSD, Randy has been more understanding as a partner.

All of his relationships have benefitted from his time with Wyatt.

"I've learned to trust

again," Randy said. "A lot of veteran's issues are not trusting others because of military experiences, so as you gradually have a trust relationship with your horse, it directly relates to starting to trust others."

Months later, Randy is

still working with Wyatt and has made considerable progress with him. He now volunteers in the current session of WildFreedom as a horse handler, helping other veterans find freedom and healing through the strength of a horse – just like he has.

Running W Therapeutic Riding Center is beginning a new course this spring called "Wild to Mild." They will pick six mustangs from a BLM holding pen in Boise for six WildFreedom graduates to train for six months – Randy is one of those veterans. Wild to Mild will conclude in fall 2020 as all participants take their mustangs on a pack trip with Don and Cyndie Wiltsie in the mountains of Montana. The mustangs will be auctioned off at Running W in September 2020, with all proceeds funding the next Wild to Mild program.

Want to learn more or get involved?

Mark your calendars for the annual fundraiser on Thursday, July 16 at Running W Therapeutic Riding Center. Visit their website for more information at www.runningwranch.net or email Maddy at runningwtrcmktg@gmail.com.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

A NEW TREATMENT FOR PTSD

What is a stellate ganglion block?

Stellate ganglion block (SGB) is an established procedure used by anesthesiologists and anesthesia providers to relieve pain. Emerging research suggests that SGB may also help a subset of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who have not found relief from traditional evidence-based treatments such as therapy and medication.

SGB has been used for decades to treat complex pain syndromes that affect the head, face, neck and arms. During the procedure, a doctor or certified health care provider uses x-ray or ultrasound imaging to guide a needle into a bundle of nerves located near the base of the neck. The provider then injects a local anesthetic into the nerve tissue like a dentist delivers numbing medicine before a dental procedure. The anesthetic lasts only a few hours, but the effects of the procedure can last for several weeks or longer in some cases.

How can SGB be used to treat PTSD?

There is growing evidence that SGB may alleviate certain PTSD symptoms such as hyperarousal, exaggerated startle responses and anxiety. Researchers are not sure exactly how SGB works, but it appears to calm an exaggerated “flight or fight” survival reflex in people living with PTSD, which can become triggered by various events that don’t warrant it. Veterans who received SGB for other health conditions like nerve pain report positive effects for their PTSD symptoms including reduced anxiety

and hypervigilance.

SGB has limited side effects and is relatively safe when administered by a trained clinician. After the procedure, some veterans who are treated with SGB for PTSD symptoms find more benefit from traditional treatments like talk therapy because of a reduction in anxiety and other symptoms.

SGB is not a cure and the treatment does not work for everyone. However, it is a promising option for veterans with PTSD symptoms, which have not responded to other evidence-based treatments.

Where can a veteran receive SGB for PTSD treatment?

Spine Team Pain Center of Spokane (a referral is not required to obtain non-insurance covered treatment).

What are the indications that SGB may be an option for a veteran?

SGB is indicated for veterans who:

- Have a current PTSD diagnosis:
- Including prominent hyperarousal or hypervigilance symptoms
- And continue to experience significant symptoms of PTSD
- Can make medical decisions at the time of treatment
- Are under care by a VA mental health (MH) provider:
- May include a clinician that veteran previously worked with or
- Primary care mental health integration (PC-MHI) team or other patient aligned care team



GETTY IMAGES

A 3D illustration of human brain anatomy is shown here.

Where can I find more information about SGB?

- Watch a VA video about SGB at https://players.brightcove.net/2851863979001/default_default/index.html?videoId=5713669618001.
 - Watch a video from The Wall Street Journal about U.S. Army research into SGB treatments <https://on.wsj.com/2zRAXYU>.
 - Visit the CCI webpage at <https://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/>.
- Courtesy of Center for Compassionate Care Innovation and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

(PACT) member with mental health expertise

- Have had at least one adequate trial of evidence-based treatment, such as an antidepressant trial, prolonged exposure therapy, cognitive processing therapy or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy

and:

- Discontinued treatment due to intolerability
- Did not experience meaningful symptom improvement after treatment
- Are not enrolled in an active PTSD research protocol

FAST FACTS

Stellate Ganglion Block

Information about SGB treatment was featured on “60 minutes” in June of 2019.

The Spine Team of Spokane is currently offering this treatment at both their Spokane locations.

The treatment normally consists of an evaluation visit, two visits for shots and a follow-up appointment.

The noninsured cost is around \$1,000.

There are some VA health scenarios that would refer you for this treatment and pay for this under community care. Ask your primary care physician, a counselor or Veteran Service Officer if qualify.

Many of veteran service groups have policies that provide financial help for emergencies or medical needs, including DAV Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, and the VVW Veterans of Foreign Wars.

SGB Injection Testimonial

“I’ve had horrible sleep issues ever since I returned from Iraq in 2007. My subconscious would wake me up with full-on adrenaline shots and gasping for air every night, on a bad night 30-40 times a night. Since getting the SGB injection, I no longer get the adrenaline (that feel like dying sensations), and my daytime anxiety (I didn’t realize how bad it was after all these years) has completely gone away! I’m much happier and my depression has gone away completely.” - Jason

Provided by Spine Team Pain Center of Spokane

Does PTSD get worse with age?

Many older veterans find they have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms even 50 or more years after their military experience. Some symptoms of PTSD include having nightmares or feeling like you are reliving the event, avoiding situations that remind you of the event, being easily startled, and loss of interest in activities.

Changes that come with aging can make you feel more vulnerable, and this can make your PTSD symptoms more noticeable.

Strategies that once seemed to help you avoid thinking about the trauma, like long hours spent at work or self-medicating with alcohol or drugs, may no longer work. Even positive coping strategies, like exercising or friendships with supportive peers, can be more difficult to maintain as you get older.

For an overview of PTSD and aging, download the Understanding PTSD and Aging booklet at www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/understandingptsd_aging_booklet.pdf.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, resources to help veterans in “How Can I Get Help” on page 5.

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Service-connected disability compensation available for qualifying veterans

Lifelong or later-in-life health conditions as a result of military service qualify vets for monetary benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that certain illnesses and health concerns have been associated with military service. Some injuries are common to all wars; examples include amputations, traumatic mental health disorders such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including military sexual trauma, and vision and hearing loss.

The VA can make monthly monetary payments, or "service-connected disability compensation" for these and other illnesses and diseases directly

related to the unique circumstances of your military service.

In addition, many veterans suffer from chronic diseases later in life as the result of exposure to toxic chemicals and biologics used during their wartime service.

In Vietnam, veterans (Feb. 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975) were exposed to Agent Orange and other toxic herbicides and pesticides. Many who now suffer from various cancers and other maladies, such as Type 2 diabetes, ischemic heart disease, and Parkinson's disease, can file for compensation benefits and

health care with the VA. Children born with birth defects to a veteran parent exposed to AO may also be eligible for certain VA benefits and healthcare.

The same is true for any Operation Desert Shield veterans (Aug. 2, 1990, to present) and OIF/OEF veterans (Sept. 11, 2001, to present) exposed to depleted uranium munitions, or the toxic fumes and chemical smoke released from oil well fires and "burn pits," and who now suffer from debilitating illnesses such as Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS), fibromyalgia, and other neurological disorders.

The amount of compensation depends on the severity of a veteran's service-connected disability and, in some cases, the number of qualifying family members.

If a veteran dies of a medical condition considered to be service-connected by the VA, the spouse (and their children) may be eligible for monthly compensation payments through the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program (DIC).

For more information

To file a claim or learn more, see **"How Can I Get Help?" on page 5** for assistance resources.

Information courtesy the Veterans Health Council (veteranshealthcouncil.org), a program sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America.

A special message from Veterans Help Net

What veterans say when we ask about VA benefits ...

"I tried once, but it took so long that I gave up."

"There are veterans who are more deserving."

"I couldn't find my records, so I quit."

"Is it really worth it?"

But what do MORE veterans say?

"I wish I would have kept trying."

"Why didn't anyone tell me about this?"

"I wish I would have known about this 20 years ago."

"I didn't know that it would also help my family."

We hear these statements every day. If you're a veteran, you need to know ...

You do deserve it! It is worth it! You can get through the process!

To all veterans, remember: You served. You owe it to yourself and your family to seek the VA benefits that you earned through your service and sacrifice.

If you quit, try again! If you never started, begin now! It requires effort; you must do your part to gather necessary information and documents. But there are people and resources in your community to help! Don't wait. It will make your life better.

To learn more about benefit eligibility and application assistance, see "How Do I Get Help?" on page 5.



WE BELIEVE IN VA FINANCING

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The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers home loans to active military members, reservists, and retirees, as a benefit of service in our nation's Armed Forces.

Many service members are not aware this earned benefit is available to them; many sellers are not aware of the advantages to VA loans in the transaction process.

We encourage all Spokane realtors - to become familiar with this loan type so that we can all join in saying "We believe in VA financing!"

Visit www.spokaneopen.com to view VA qualified homes in your preferred area

VETERANS CHRONICLE

Telehealth: Has COVID-19 made this medical method the 'new normal' for VA, other medical providers?

By Bret Bowers

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER,
MANN-GRANDSTAFF VAMC

As debate swirls around expanding VA health care – and whether “privatization” of VA will become a reality as veterans choose between VA and a Care in the Community (CITC) authorized provider – VA Telehealth Services are becoming more popular for veterans.

Technology is getting better at connecting veterans with VA health care as they learn more about the convenience and use of home telehealth (HT) in part because “telehealth is mission-critical to the future of VHA care for veterans.” It allows the veteran to receive quality and timely care while living independently.

Put simply, telehealth helps veterans. For a variety of ailments or needs, VA can authorize or issue specialized telecommunication technologies when the veteran patient and practitioner are separated by geographical distance, eliminating the need for the patient to travel for an appointment. With telehealth, they can accomplish the same thing right in the comfort and privacy of their own home, reducing hospital admissions and focusing on disease prevention.

VA's numbers from Fiscal Year 2017 indicate more than 725,000 veterans are already using VA Telehealth, amounting to more than 2.18 million “episodes of care.”

Among them is Air Force Veteran Richard O'Boyle, who is enrolled at Spokane's Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical



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“They push me hard, but it’s worth it.”

Richard O'Boyle
Air Force Veteran

Center. HT technology automatically monitors his blood-sugar levels and sends reports directly to his cell phone, as well as his VA nurse and case managers who assist him with his diabetes.

“They know if I’m not eating right,” said O'Boyle, a former nurse himself. “And if I don’t take care of myself, I’m not going to live.”

For the past few years, O'Boyle and his Patient Aligned

Care Team (PACT) and telehealth nurses have kept diaries and metrics of his care while adhering to a diet and regular contact with each other.

“I can’t say I didn’t eat (high-sugar foods) because the numbers don’t lie and they’re sent directly to my nurse and care managers,” said O'Boyle.

VA telehealth nurses Gordon Winters and Karen Saucier-Renner, with primary care nurses, diagnosed,

authorized and located the equipment and devices needed to advance O'Boyle’s care. A company outfitted him with a small device that is connected to his stomach and monitors his sugar levels and other vitals.

“They push me hard, but it’s worth it,” said O'Boyle, who previously had several unexpected health scares that required paramedic help through emergency services. But not anymore!

To qualify for HT services, veterans must live in a stable housing situation; have a landline or cell phone; and enroll in VA health care for any one of the following diseases:

congestive heart failure; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); diabetes; hypertension (high blood pressure); or obesity. Telehealth options can also help veteran patients struggling with PTSD, depression, or anxiety when those ailments are secondary to the physical concerns of the patient.

HT is also complemented by other telehealth modalities, such as clinical video telehealth (CVT), which includes more than 50 clinical applications within VA specialty and primary care. In addition, “store-and-forward” telehealth (SFT) allows for review of data, images and sound by another provider at a different location who can then make a clinical evaluation, whether at VA or a CITC provider.

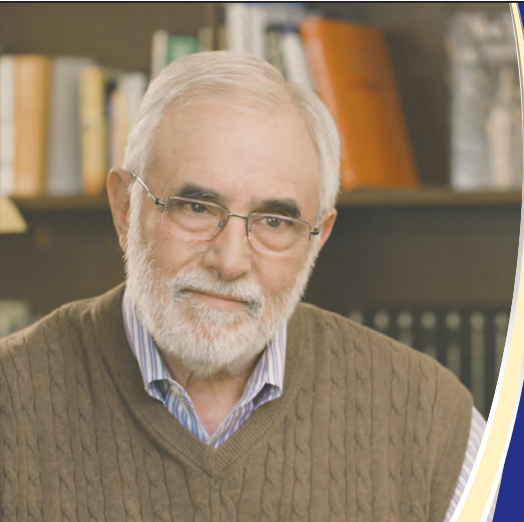
The 50-plus specialty areas are included in VA telehealth menu of services, such as Women’s Telehealth, TeleWound, TeleDentistry, TeleCardiology and TeleNeurology.

Best of all, veterans expressed high “Satisfaction Rates” for telehealth in FY2017, with 93 percent for SFT, 92 percent for CVT and 88 percent for HT.

With many states, including Washington, under “stay at home” orders to reduce the spread of COVID-19, now is a great time to learn more about accessing your VA health care from the safety of your own home. Contact VA Telehealth Services offered at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC, contact (509) 434-7763 or visit www.telehealth.va.gov for more information.

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