

Vol.2, No.10  
October 2023

# Serving Those Who Served

The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

**Kentucky Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

*Serving Kentucky's Veterans*

**KDVA**  

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## **Commissioner's Corner**

### **Commissioner's Corner**

Greetings teammates,

It's hard to believe we're heading into October already. We have a lot going on this month following a somber and serious Virtual Suicide Prevention Summit.

Join us Thursday Oct. 5th at 2PM at the Frankfort Capitol Rotunda to help us celebrate our 25th Anniversary. Our 5K Run Walk Stroll to end homelessness for veterans is Oct. 21st and we'd love to see a great turnout. Check out the flier and details in this letter.

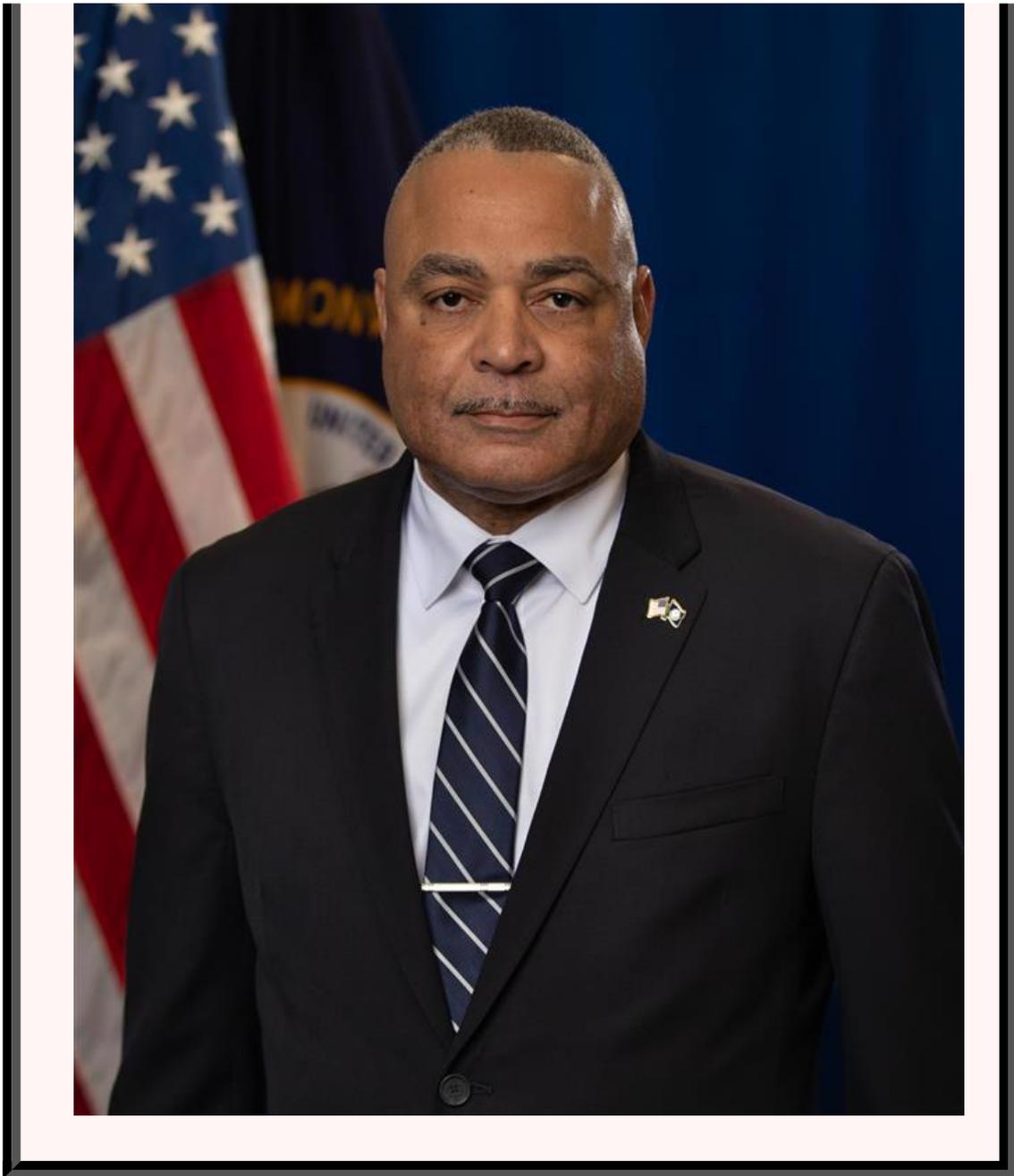
Additionally it is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and to be aware of the risk factors and avenues for healthcare.

Just a few months left to 2023, lets keep up the good work.

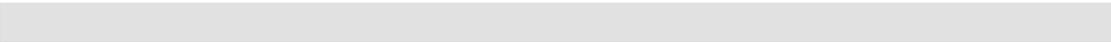
Very respectfully,

***Commissioner Whitney P. Allen, Jr.***

*Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs*



**Latest VA News**





**1 IN 8 WOMEN  
WILL HAVE BREAST CANCER**

**Breast cancer care for  
deployed Veterans and The  
SERVICE Act**

Check the locations and dates in this story to determine your eligibility

October 1, 2023

By Dr. Sally Haskell  
Acting Chief Officer, VA Office of Women's Health

One in eight women will have breast cancer, the most diagnosed cancer among American women.

VA understands how startling that number can be, but we have your back when it comes to assessing your risk. While no direct link has been found between deployment and increased risk for breast cancer, we've heard your concerns and we're continuing to study if toxic exposures may be a cause of breast cancer.

In support of these efforts, the "Dr. Kate Hendricks Thomas Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environment ([SERVICE](#)) Act" was established to ensure that Veterans deployed in specified locations during certain periods are eligible for a breast cancer risk assessment and mammogram. This is if it is determined to be clinically appropriate based on your personal risk assessment regardless of your enrollment in VA health care.

## Understanding your risk

Common risk factors for breast cancer include age, race, weight and use of alcohol. Other risk factors that may increase your chance of developing breast cancer are connected to your family and personal medical history. These include factors such as when you went through puberty, when you had your first pregnancy or if you've experienced pregnancy loss.

The use of certain medications, past chest radiation, history of breast biopsy or breast cancer, and certain breast characteristics, such as how dense your breasts are, can play a role in determining your risk as well.

## Exposure to toxic substances

Toxic exposure, such as burn pits, could be a risk factor, but research to date has not shown that deployment increases your risk for breast cancer. Based on the [SERVICE Act](#), if you served in the following locations, we encourage you to speak with your VA health care team to assess your risk for breast cancer:

- Iraq between Aug. 2, 1990, and Feb. 28, 1991, and from March 19, 2003, until burn pits (areas of land used for the open-air combustion of trash and other solid waste products) were no longer used;
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar, from Aug. 2, 1990, until burn pits were no longer used;
- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen from Sept. 11, 2001, until burn pits were no longer used.

While we emphasize the importance of receiving a breast cancer risk assessment if you served in the areas above, we recommend you speak with your VA health care team to assess your risk, no matter your service history.

## Keeping an eye out for symptoms

You may be surprised to learn that both the American Cancer Society and VA no longer recommend routine clinical of self-breast exams for breast cancer screening. This means that during regular checkups your doctor won't physically examine your breasts for lumps as part of the screening process.

However, you should always tell your doctor about any changes you notice in your breasts, including lumps, skin changes, pain or nipple discharge.

## Screening process

We want to make sure your risk assessment is simple and painless. Your doctor will begin by asking you questions about your military service and potential toxic exposures, your family and personal medical history and other risk factors. If they determine that there is a need, they will help you get a mammogram scheduled. During this procedure, a trained professional will take X-ray images of your breasts.

For women over 40, mammograms are the best test to look for early signs of breast cancer, even if you don't show signs or symptoms.

## Reducing your risk

Staying up-to-date on your breast cancer screenings and continuing discussions about your risks with your doctor will help you keep up with your health. Besides that, there are many ways to stay healthy, such as exercising and maintaining a healthy weight. Additionally, avoiding or limiting your alcohol intake can make a difference.

## Breast cancer services and resources available at VA

[Breast cancer support and resources](#) available through VA include:

- Breast cancer screening (including mammograms, ultrasounds, and MRI)
- Breast biopsy and surgery
- Cancer diagnosis and treatment
- Full-service [oncology](#) (the study and treatment of tumors)
- Connection to [clinical trials](#)
- [Mental health care](#)

Breast cancer screening could save your life. Early detection is key to improving outcomes and increasing your chance of successful treatment. Speak with your VA health care team to assess if you're at risk. To learn more about breast cancer screening at VA, download our [SERVICE Act handout](#) or call 1-855-VA-WOMEN for more information.

Enrolled Veterans: If you do not have a primary care provider, you may contact your local VA facility to schedule a breast cancer risk assessment appointment with the SERVICE Act POC provider.

Unenrolled Veterans: You [may enroll](#) in VA health care. If you are not eligible or do not desire enrollment, you will be directed to Register only. After enrollment or registration, you may contact your local VA facility to schedule an appointment with the SERVICE Act POC provider.

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# 2023 SUICIDE AWARENESS & LETHAL MEANS SAFETY SUMMIT

October 24th, 2023  
09:00 AM to 03:00PM EST  
Ramada Inn Paintsville Hotel & Conference Center  
624 James S Trimble Blvd #123 Paintsville, KY 41240



VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge  
to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF

## TARGET AUDIENCE

**Peers** - Paraprofessionals and family/friends of SMVF individuals  
**Healthcare Professionals** - Behavioral and Medical

## DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

### OUR VISION

- Host a Lethal Means Summit
- Train providers on military cultural competency and counseling on access to lethal means

## THE AGENDA

8:45 am-9:00 am  
Arrival and Check-In

9:00 am-9:10 am  
Welcome and Introductions

9:10 am-10:00 am  
Military Culture

10:10 am-10:50 am  
Suicide Risk and Protective Factors

11:00a-11:50a  
Lethal Means Safety Counseling

11:50a-1:15pm  
Lunch (on your own)

1:15p-1:30pm  
Welcome Back and Overview of Breakouts

1:35p-2:45p  
Community Conversations (EKU)  
Application of what we learned.

\*Resources available in conjunction

2:45pm-3:00pm  
Closure and Evaluations

## REGISTRATION



What's New at KDVA?



**SCAN ME**

Register Here

Kentucky Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Serving Kentucky's Veterans



# *Run, Walk and Stroll 5K*

Starts at 9 a.m.

\$15 Registration  
12 and under free

**Saturday, October 21, 2023**

Iroquois Park  
1080 Amphitheater Road,  
Louisville, KY

**KDVA's New Women Veterans Coordinator  
Dina Parrott**



At the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, there are several programs, services, and staff members available to assist veterans in getting them the benefits they've earned. Dina Parrott has taken on the role of KDVA's Women Veterans Coordinator which is responsible for making connections with Kentucky's 27,000 women veterans in the Commonwealth.

Parrott served in the U.S. Air Force from 1994 to 2019. Since her retirement, she has been a volunteer with God's Pantry here in Kentucky. She felt like there was a greater service she could provide.

"I got my husband to volunteer with me at a God's Pantry event called 'Taste of the Bluegrass'," Parrott said. "While we were there, my husband brought over Dwayne Edwards, KDVA's chief of staff and introduced us and told him I was looking for a job. When Dwayne introduced himself, he gave me his card and said we're looking for a women veteran's coordinator, and I said, 'I am looking for a job.'"

Being a woman and a veteran gives her a great perspective as she takes on the role as KDVA's Women Veterans Coordinator. She hit the ground running speaking at a few events including KDVA's Commanders State Conference, the Joint Executive Council of Veteran Organizations monthly meetings and more.

"I come to work every day excited because of the possibilities of how far we can go as women," Parrott said. "I told my husband when I was wanting to go back to work [coming out of retirement], that I needed something that would get me out of bed. It must be worthwhile, must have an impact somewhere, I want to be around people who are caring

about the mission. The mission is taking care of our veterans, and specifically our women veterans in my case.”

A year from now, Parrott would like to see several women veterans getting together throughout the state to discuss concerns, benefits, and education.

“Building something where women will get together getting educated on the benefits available to them,” Parrott said. “To be an advocate for them. I want to be busy, getting together each month with various groups of women vets. Part of my role is to advocate and represent them but to also be a face, someone to talk to. I want them to understand that we have compassionate people who are truly here for them...”

“...I’m all in, this is where I belong.”

*By James Hensley, KDVA Public Information Officer*

## **KVCW and Retiree Appreciation Day**





Staff from the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery West attended the annual Fort Campbell Retiree Appreciation Day event on Saturday Sept. 16, 2023. The staff assisted both retirees and family members by providing information on the variety of services provided by the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs. The event allowed the staff to connect with the community and was a huge success with an estimate of over 600 attendees.

## **Kentucky Veteran Cemetery West Run For the Fallen**



Kentucky Veteran Cemetery West hosted the end of day ceremonies for the annual Kentucky Run for the Fallen event on Sunday September 10, 2023. The two-day 110-mile run is an organized tribute event to run specific miles for every Kentucky Fallen Service Member who died as a result of serving from any circumstance during the War on Terror. The run that honored 319 service members started on Saturday September 9th in Owensboro, KY and ended 110 miles away on Sunday September 10th at KVCW.

## Rockcastle VFW Monthly Meeting



KDVA Veterans Benefits Field Representative Vivian Taylor was invited to speak at the Rockcastle VFW monthly meeting in Mt. Vernon, KY on Sept. 16, 2023. Vivian provided the attendees with information on PACT Act, Aid and Attendance, Dependent Indemnity Compensation and KDVA resources for Veterans and surviving family members.

## KDVA Staff Recognition



KDVA's own Air Force Veteran/VBFR Sherrie Davis's selection to the Council of State Governments – South (CSG-South) Staff Academy for Government Excellence (SAGE) Class of 2023! SAGE is the only leadership development program geared specifically toward southern state legislative, judicial, and executive agency staffs, which consist of 15 states.

Sherrie is the first ever KDVA employee and only the second non-legislative Kentucky state government employee selected for the program. In addition to developing her personal and professional leadership skills, she will have the opportunity to build a strong network of peers of various state government backgrounds over the four-day, Atlanta-based leadership program.

Sherrie is part of the Office of Kentucky Veteran Services' Benefits Division and is our Veterans Benefits Field Representative assigned at Ft. Campbell, KY.

## Upcoming Events



# SAVE THE DATE

*Celebrate With Us*

## TRI AN MONUMENT

**Dedication Ceremony  
Honoring Vietnam War Veterans**

Monday, October 9, 2023 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time

Veterans Memorial Park  
10707 Taylorsville Road  
Jeffersontown, KY 40299

*\* See Important Parking Details and Map on back of flyer*

**FEATURING  
101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Band**



RSVP - To help us plan, scan the QR Code or visit  
[https://form.jotform.com/tri\\_an/dedication](https://form.jotform.com/tri_an/dedication)

# TRI AN MONUMENT DEDICATION CEREMONY

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE DAY OF THE EVENT

**TICKETS/SEATING:** This event is free and open to the public. Park entrance will open for the event at noon.

**PARKING:** Parking maps are shown below. No parking at the park or at the Jeffersonian on the day of the event.

There will be no charge for parking. Due to the potentially large number of guests attending, available parking will be at Southeast Christian Church parking lots located at 920 Blankenbaker Pkwy, Louisville, KY 40243.

**ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES:** For those guests with special needs and who have a state-issued placard, parking will be located at Jeffersontown Christian Church, 10631 Taylorsville Road, Jeffersontown, KY 40299 and Assemblies of God Church (C3AG), Calvary Christian Center, 10710 Taylorsville Road, Jeffersontown, KY 40299. These spaces are limited.

**EVENT PARKING LOT - Opens at 11:30 AM**

**ACCESSIBLE PARKING LOTS - Opens at 11:30 AM**

**Shuttle buses begin at noon and end at 1:30 PM  
Shuttle buses return between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM**

Southeast Christian Church  
920 Blankenbaker Pkwy  
Louisville, KY 40243

Jeffersontown Christian Church  
10631 Taylorsville Road  
Jeffersontown, KY 40299

Assemblies of God Church (C3AG)  
Calvary Christian Center  
10710 Taylorsville Road  
Jeffersontown, KY 40299



TRI AN FOUNDATION, INC  
[www.tri-an.org](http://www.tri-an.org)  
501(c)(3) non-profit organization

**Latest PACT Act News**

# COMPENSATION & PENSION EXAM, TOXIC EXPOSURE SCREENING, AND REGISTRY EXAMS

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

With the new toxic exposure screening required by section 603 of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (the PACT Act), Veterans may have some questions about which exams and screenings they need, when they need them, and what purposes these exams and screenings serve. This comparison chart breaks down some key differences:

EVALUATION TYPE	PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION
 <b>Compensation and Pension (C&amp;P) Exam</b>	Part of the claim decision process to help determine service connection and rate a disability for purposes of compensation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Exams administered as part of the VBA claims process but performed by VHA or contracted providers.</li> <li>» Enrollment in VA care is not required to receive VA benefits, but the exams may provide a basis for eligibility to enroll in VA care.</li> </ul>
 <b>Toxic Exposure Screening</b>	<p>Helps identify Veterans with exposure concerns and advises them how to connect with benefits, resources, and services.</p> <p>Not part of the VA benefits claims process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» VA must offer the toxic exposure screening to all enrolled Veterans as required by section 603 of the PACT Act.</li> <li>» The screening will be repeated at least once every 5 years.</li> <li>» Screenings will take 5-10 minutes.</li> <li>» If a Veteran has exposure concerns, VA staff will provide them with <a href="#">additional information</a> and resources and advise them on next steps.</li> </ul>
 <b>Registry Evaluation</b>	Information collected is used for research and quality improvement purposes and is not for clinical care, nor to determine eligibility for health care or benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» VA has <a href="#">six registries</a>: Agent Orange, Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pits, Depleted Uranium, Gulf War, Ionizing Radiation, and Toxic Embedded Fragments.</li> <li>» VA's health registry evaluations are free, voluntary medical assessments for Veterans who may have been exposed to certain environmental hazards during military service.</li> <li>» There is no requirement to be enrolled in VA health care or receive other VA benefits to participate in a registry.</li> <li>» Exams take approximately 60 minutes and are performed by a VA or military health provider. Veterans can contact the nearest local VA medical facility <a href="#">Environmental Health Coordinator</a> about getting a registry evaluation.</li> </ul>
 <b>Million Veteran Program (MVP)</b>	Information collected is used for research, not for clinical care or to determine eligibility for health care or benefits. No direct, in-person toxic exposure screening is involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» VA will use information to learn how genes, lifestyle, and military experiences and exposures affect health.</li> <li>» Participants provide informed consent, a blood sample, and secure access to their health records with MVP.</li> <li>» There is no requirement to be enrolled in VA health care to enroll in MVP. Participation is entirely voluntary.</li> <li>» Join online at <a href="http://mvp.va.gov">mvp.va.gov</a> or call 866-441-6075 to schedule an appointment.</li> </ul>

For more information visit:

[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/)  
[www.VA.gov/PACT](http://www.VA.gov/PACT)

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

# TOXIC EXPOSURE SCREENING AT A GLANCE

## WHAT IT IS



### A CONVERSATION STARTER

The screening asks Veterans if they believe they experienced toxic exposures while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.



### A CONNECTION

Veterans will be offered connections and information on benefits, registry exams, and clinical resources, as appropriate.



### A RECORD

Veterans' responses are added to the VA medical record to be included as part of their care.



### EXPOSURE-INFORMED CARE

This approach includes exposure concerns as a cornerstone of Veteran care across their lifetime.



**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health  
Administration

For more information, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT)



## WHAT IT IS NOT



### A COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

No specific diagnostic tests or physical exams are indicated to screen for illness based solely on self-reported exposure to toxins.



### A PATH TO BENEFITS

The screening does not play a role in determining disability compensation, but Veterans who report exposures will receive information about [filing a claim](#).



### A VERIFICATION OF EXPOSURE

The screening provides no legal or medical verification.



### A REGISTRY EVALUATION

The screening is not part of VA's [environmental health registries](#) and does not serve as a registry evaluation.

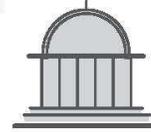




# BE VIGILANT OF PACT ACT SCAMS

**On August 10, President Biden signed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act (PACT Act) into law. This law helps millions of Veterans and their survivors by:**

- Extending VA health care eligibility for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 (Post-September 11, 2001) eras
- Expanding benefits eligibility for Veterans exposed to toxic substances and their survivors



## Tips to Avoid PACT Act Scams

Scammers are taking advantage of new opportunities to commit fraud. There's been an increase in PACT Act-related [phishing \(email\)](#), [vishing \(phone\)](#), and [social media scams](#) targeting Veterans to access their PACT Act benefits or submit claims on their behalf.

Veterans should be cautious of anyone who guarantees a lucrative financial benefit or service.

### Do's

- ✓ You may submit your application securely [online](#) via VA.GOV or in person at any Regional Office. You may file your claim directly with VA and then, VA will assist in gathering evidence necessary to support it. There are no costs or hidden fees to apply.
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who advertise VA benefits can only be obtained with their help. These companies may not be recognized by VA and may be attempting to charge illegal fees.
- ✓ Be cautious of aggressive companies who may try to pressure you to sign their contract through frequent communications or by insisting "you must act now or lose your chance for benefits."
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who claim to be contacting you on behalf of VA or to have a special relationship with VA. Contact VA at 1-800-827-1000 if you are unsure about the authenticity of any message received.
- ✓ Validate: If you are interested in working with a Veteran Service Organization (VSO), agent, or attorney, use the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#) to confirm and validate their credentials.

### Don'ts

- ⊘ Do not sign a contract agreeing to pay an unauthorized company a percentage of your benefit payment in exchange for their assistance with your VA claim. If you need help filing a claim, there are representatives of VSOs, agents, and attorneys who have been [accredited by VA](#) to assist you.
- ⊘ Do not sign a blank form for someone else to complete later. Always review the completed form before signing and keep a copy for yourself.
- ⊘ Do not be fooled by companies who advertise they have special relationships with medical professionals and can guarantee your benefits award. If they are defrauding the Federal government, you could be held responsible for paying those benefits back.
- ⊘ Do not provide your social security number, medical records, or other personally identifiable information to anyone offering claims assistance before confirming their credentials using the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#).
- ⊘ Do not sign forms that are not [VA generated](#) or third-party authorization for someone to provide "behind-the-scenes" claims assistance.

## [www.VA.gov/PACT](http://www.VA.gov/PACT) is the official source of PACT Act information.

We want Veterans and survivors to apply now for their PACT Act-related benefits. To report suspected scams, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General ([OIG Hotline \(va.gov\)](#)). File a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#). Visit the [Cybercrime Support Network](#) for additional [resources](#) to help Veterans, service members, and their families combat cybercrime.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Learn more and sign up at [VA.gov/PACT](http://VA.gov/PACT)  
Download the VA Health and Benefits App  
Call us at 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)  
Find a VA at [VA.gov/find-locations/](http://VA.gov/find-locations/)

## Useful VA Links

- **VA Housing Assistance Page** - Information about home loans, eligibility, interest rates reductions and other related topics: <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/>
- **National Center for PTSD** - Provides information and resources to veterans, care providers and organizations relating PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
- **Covid-19 Vaccine Updates** - Latest updates on Covid-19 guidance and vaccinations: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>
- **VA Life Insurance (VALife)** - <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>
- **Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E)** - job training, education, employment coaching, etc.: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>

## Upcoming Veterans Dates and Events

- Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October)
- Military World Games (October TBA)
- Columbus Day (Oct. 9)
- U.S. Navy Birthday (Oct. 13)
- KDVA Run, Walk or Stroll 5K (Oct. 21)
- Day of the Deployed (Oct. 26)
- Navy Day (Oct. 27)
- Halloween (Oct. 31)

## Resources for Veterans



### Flood Relief

Have you been affected by flooding in Eastern Kentucky? The Governor's Office has prepared a list of resources designed to help you make it through this challenging time.

Click here for more information:

<https://governor.ky.gov/disaster-response/flood-resources>

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