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Serving Those Who Served

The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs



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Commissioner's Corner

Commissioner's Corner

Greetings teammates,

Following our successful State Conference in August, we head into a month of awareness for Suicide Prevention. While this is a tense and difficult subject it is one we need to talk about. The losses of loved ones to suicide has affected so many people's lives across the nation and our Commonwealth. To not address the issue would be a disservice to our loved ones so deeply impacted by it.



So join us for our event on September 29, where we will have several leaders from federal and state levels and mental health professionals who will share resources available to help prevent suicides and support the families of those suffering from the loss to one.

While there are some somber issues and dates this month including Patriot Day, the anniversary of the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, I hope our veterans know they are not forgotten and we're here for them.

Very respectfully,

Commissioner Whitney P. Allen, Jr.
Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs

Latest VA News



Recently, VA joined Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) live on [Facebook](#) to discuss PACT Act benefits eligibility, who is impacted and what Veterans need to do now. You can [watch the full conversation here](#).

August 9 marked the one year anniversary of the passage of [the PACT Act](#), the new law expanding VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. If you think you have been exposed to toxic substances during your service you may now be eligible for VA benefits and health care, even if you have been turned down in the past.

[Between now and Sept. 30, 2023](#), Veterans who deployed to a combat zone, never enrolled in VA health care, and left active duty between Sept. 11, 2001, and Oct. 1, 2013, are eligible to enroll directly in VA health care—without first applying for VA benefits.

The Event

Rob Couture, VFW's communications director, began by introducing Mike Figlioli, VFW director of National Veterans Service; Marc McCabe, St. Petersburg VVA Florida bureau chief; and two experts from VA: Steven Miska, executive director PACT Act; and Kate Hoit, Communications and Outreach lead, PACT Act Enterprise Project Management Office. "What the PACT Act essentially does is it opens the aperture wide to millions and millions more Veterans," Miska explained, "and that includes Vietnam-era Veterans, Gulf War-era Veterans and post-9/11-era Veterans. It also includes survivors."

He went on to encourage Veterans that need help to reach out to a Veteran Service Organization or to contact VA. "We all just want you to be able to receive the benefits that Veterans have earned and deserve," he said.

The PACT Act adds to the list of [health conditions](#) that VA assumes (or “presumes”) are caused by exposure to toxic substances during service—so called “presumptive conditions.” If you served from 1955 to the present, in any of the [areas](#) covered by the law and have a diagnosis for a PACT Act presumptive condition, then you should submit a claim now. And it’s important to apply as soon as possible to assure that, if you qualify for benefits, you receive them from the earliest point possible.

“Our message is... don’t wait. If you applied previously and were denied and what you applied for is now considered a presumptive condition—and you can see those right online probably on either one of VFW or VVA’s websites or just go to [VA.gov/PACT](#), you can see all the presumptive conditions—file that claim again, because it can make a big difference,” Miska said. “And if you are a survivor out there, if your Veteran is no longer with us, you may be eligible for benefits as well. So go ahead file a claim.”

The Facebook Live covered the PACT Act eligibility and how it might impact you and your family. The discussion was wide ranging, and many commonly asked questions were answered.

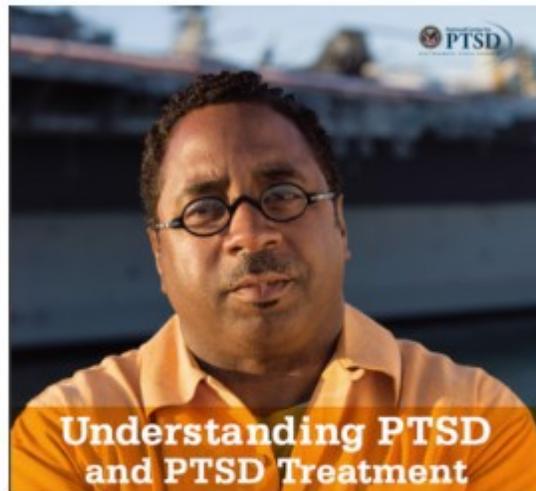
To listen to the full conversation, watch the video on [VFW’s Facebook page](#). To learn more about the PACT Act, including details about eligibility, go to [VA.gov/PACT](#). And to learn more about VA benefits that help Veterans earn degrees, start careers, buy homes, stay healthy and more, and how to apply, visit [Choose.VA.gov](#).

Welcome to the National Center for PTSD

News Relevant to the Issues of Trauma and PTSD



Welcome to the National Center For PTSD



Whether this is your first step in learning more about PTSD, or you are already receiving treatment, our mission is to support Veterans who have experienced trauma or suffer from PTSD. We are here to help. Reaching out is a sign of strength and getting treatment will help you find ways to cope so you can feel safe, look ahead and be there for your friends and family. We offer valuable resources that will help you along your journey, including:

- [Learning the Basics of PTSD](#)
- [Hearing Stories of Hope from Other Veterans](#)
- [Choosing the Right Treatment for You](#)

No matter where you are in your journey know that you aren't alone, treatment works, and we're here to connect you with help.

[Learn More](#)

If you're in crisis or concerned about someone who is, there are caring, qualified responders standing by to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The [Veterans Crisis Line](#) is a free, anonymous, confidential resource that's available to anyone, even if you're not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

[Learn More](#)

Suicide Prevention and Whole Health Teams

INVITE YOU TO OUR

VETERAN
Harvest  *Fair*

Suicide Prevention Awareness Event.

September 16

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Franklin Sousley Campus

**2250 Leestown Rd
Lexington, KY 40511**

Featuring:

Farmer's Market

NCA Representative

Ky Dept. of Agriculture

Job Information tables

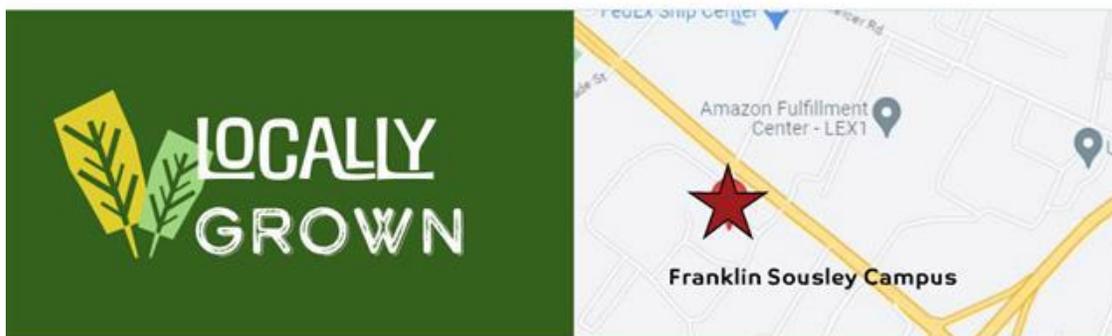
VBA Claims Representative

Suicide Prevention

VSOs

Nurse Recruiting Table

Lexington VA Program informational tables



What's New at KDVA?

2023 KDVA State Conference



KDVA's State Conference on August 24-25th featured several Federal and State VA officials and guest speakers. Additionally there were panels and Q&A's where the attendees, which consisted of veterans and state organizations, were able to directly ask the hard questions on topics that concern our Commonwealth's vets.



KDVA State Commanders' Conference, Lexington, KY, Thursday-Friday, August 24-25, 2023.

Over 100 participants attended the networking/training conference to include several Biden Administration VA leadership appointees, VA Midsouth Healthcare Network mental health and VA medical centers leaders, three national Veteran Service Organizations' executive directors, Kentucky's military leaders, federal/state/local government partners, and a host of Kentucky VSOs leadership.

Key guest speakers and panelists for the event included: Governor Andy Beshear, the Honorable Maureen Elias, Deputy Chief of Staff Department of Veteran Affairs, Dr. M. Christopher Saslo, Assistant Undersecretary for Health for Patient Care Services, John Boerstler, Chief Veterans Experience Office, and Maj. Gen. Johnny K. Davis, Commander, United States Army Recruiting Command and Fort Knox.

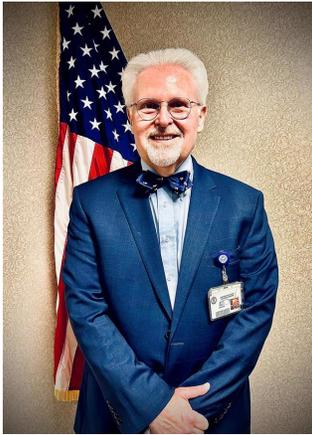


Rick King and Servant Leadership

By James Hensley
KDVA PIO

Rick King has been selected as the new Assistant Administrator for Paul E. Patton Eastern Kentucky Veteran Center (EKVC) in Hazard, KY. He assumed the role's responsibilities on Aug 16, 2023.

King is a lifelong resident of Eastern Kentucky and has been a practicing attorney for almost 30 years, 20 of which were as a health care attorney until he retired in 2020.



“I didn’t stay retired long, didn’t like retirement quite frankly,” King said. “I wanted to do something different than what I had done for the past 20 years. I started pursuing my nursing home administrators license which is what initially led me to the Eastern Kentucky Veteran Center.”

He started in October of 2020 as an administrator-in-training intern at EKVC. Shortly after starting, he found out that there wasn’t a full-time chaplain. There had not been one for nearly a year. There was someone due to fill the Chaplain position, but they turned down the job.

“I started conducting services, set up a program of visitation and just tried to jump in and help fill a gap where there was a definite need,” King said. “I was given the opportunity to apply for the Chaplain’s position, applied and was hired.”

While King didn’t serve in the military himself, his brother served in the Air Force and now continues in the civilian sector for the National Security Agency (NSA). He explained how this was his way to serve those who served.

“I’ve always just had great respect for veterans and for their service to our country,” King said. “From the Chaplain role’s perspective, there is such a need to minister to our veterans. Often times when they come to us, they’re not in the best of health, bodies breaking down, spirits low, but a unique opportunity to show them appreciation and let them know how much they are loved and respected.”

From December 16, 2020, until August 15, 2023, King served as the full time Chaplain for the EKVC residents and staff leading up to this new role as the assistant administrator.

“To be honest I had a little trepidation about taking this job simply because I enjoy the other job (Chaplain) so much,” King said. “In the end, I saw it as an opportunity to be able to do even more for our veterans than I had ever been able to do before. Servant-leadership has always appealed to me, and I couldn’t think of a better place to be than where I am right now.”

King intends to continue doing Chaplain duties along with the new job as he’s used to multitasking and refuses to lose the bonds and relationships, he’s built with the veterans over two and a half years.

“It really means the world to me,” King said. “They bless my life far more than I could ever bless theirs. I’m simply saying they’ve given so much more to me, and you know, there aren’t all that many jobs left in the world where you could get that kind of return on what you put into it.”



Construction for Robert E. Spiller Veteran Center



Check out the construction progress for the Robert E. Spiller Veteran Center in Bowling Green, KY (Pics from August 2023).

Kentucky State Fair and Medal of Honor Recipient Don Jenkins





KDVA participated in the Kentucky State Fair by featuring a booth where veterans could get some information on their benefits and contact info for starting their benefits journey. Additionally KDVA hosted Don Jenkins, Medal of Honor recipient as a guest at the booth for anyone to meet and learn about his experiences.

Upcoming Events

PATRIOT DAY CEREMONY



**Kentucky Veterans Cemetery - Central
Radcliff, Kentucky
September 11, 2023
8:15 A.M**



For the full program, visit our website here.

KENTUCKY LEADERS CARE ABOUT YOU:

SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR
SERVICEMEMBERS, VETERANS, THEIR
FAMILIES, AND THEIR COMMUNITY

KDVA VIRTUAL SUICIDE PREVENTION SUMMIT

Hear from and interact with Federal and State leaders
and Mental Health Professionals as they share
resources available to YOU.

Save the Date!

SEP 29, 2023, 9AM-3PM

The event will be streamed live on our Facebook
at: [facebook.com/KentuckyVeterans](https://www.facebook.com/KentuckyVeterans)





Vietnam Women's Memorial to Commemorate 30th Anniversary

Veterans Day weekend events set to honor women veterans of the Vietnam era.

Veterans Day weekend marks the 30th anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial on the National Mall. To commemorate this milestone, a weekend of poignant events will honor the service and sacrifice of the 265,000 women veterans—military and civilian—who served during the Vietnam era.

Hosted by Eastern National in coordination with the Vietnam Women's Memorial Advisory Group, the National Park Service, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, programs will include a candlelight ceremony on Friday evening, November 10, 2023, at 6 pm and a storytelling program on Saturday morning, Veterans Day, November 11, 2023, from 10:00 am to noon. The weekend will culminate in a 1 pm Veterans Day ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where the annual Observance at the Wall will be dedicated to the commemoration of the [Vietnam Women's Memorial 30th Anniversary](#).

The master of ceremonies for the Veterans Day Observance at the Wall will be Dr. Sharon R. Bannister Major General, United States Air Force (ret.), who serves on

the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. She has also been a volunteer assisting visitors to the Wall since 2017. Dr. Bannister is a Gold Star daughter.

The Keynote Speaker will be [Diane Carlson Evans](#), chair of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Advisory Group and founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial. A former Army combat nurse and Vietnam veteran, Ms. Evans led a 10-year mission to complete the circle of healing and place a memorial on the National Mall to honor the women who served in the Vietnam era. With the 1993 dedication, the Vietnam Women's Memorial became the first in the nation's capital to recognize the service of military women—as well as the patriotic service of civilian women—to their country.

Other noted speakers confirmed at this time include: Jim Knotts, president and CEO of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund; and Vietnam veteran Janis Nark, Lieutenant Colonel, US Army Reserve (ret) and Emeritus Board of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

Anniversary events are open to the public and will be held on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall; the candlelight and storytelling programs will take place at the Vietnam Women's Memorial statue, 300 feet from the Wall.

About the Vietnam Women's Memorial Advisory Group

In 2015, the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation became the Vietnam Women's Memorial Advisory Group when it joined Eastern National. The Vietnam Women's Memorial Advisory Group supports Eastern National in its dedication to honoring the women who served during the Vietnam era.

For additional information on the memorial, related educational programs, research on women who served in the Vietnam era, and commemorative products, please visit the Vietnam Women's Memorial website at www.VietnamWomensMemorial.org. To learn more about the founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial and her efforts, visit www.dianecarlson-evans.com.

About Eastern National

Eastern National, a not-for-profit cooperating association, promotes the public's understanding and support of America's national parks and other public trust partners by providing quality educational experiences, products, and services. Since 1947, Eastern National has provided over \$180 million to the National Park Service in the form of direct and in-kind aid to parks that support vital educational and interpretive programs. Learn more at www.EasternNational.org.



SCAN ME

Register Here

Kentucky Department
of Veterans Affairs

Serving Kentucky's Veterans

KDVA



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



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
 Compensation and Pension (C&P) Exam	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"> » Exams administered as part of the VBA claims process but performed by VHA or contracted providers. » 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.
 Toxic Exposure Screening	<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"> » VA must offer the toxic exposure screening to all enrolled Veterans as required by section 603 of the PACT Act. » The screening will be repeated at least once every 5 years. » Screenings will take 5-10 minutes. » If a Veteran has exposure concerns, VA staff will provide them with additional information and resources and advise them on next steps.
 Registry Evaluation	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"> » VA has six registries: Agent Orange, Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pits, Depleted Uranium, Gulf War, Ionizing Radiation, and Toxic Embedded Fragments. » VA's health registry evaluations are free, voluntary medical assessments for Veterans who may have been exposed to certain environmental hazards during military service. » There is no requirement to be enrolled in VA health care or receive other VA benefits to participate in a registry. » Exams take approximately 60 minutes and are performed by a VA or military health provider. Veterans can contact the nearest local VA medical facility Environmental Health Coordinator about getting a registry evaluation.
 Million Veteran Program (MVP)	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"> » VA will use information to learn how genes, lifestyle, and military experiences and exposures affect health. » Participants provide informed consent, a blood sample, and secure access to their health records with MVP. » There is no requirement to be enrolled in VA health care to enroll in MVP. Participation is entirely voluntary. » Join online at mvp.va.gov or call 866-441-6075 to schedule an appointment.

For more information visit:

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/
www.VA.gov/PACT



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.



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.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health
Administration

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





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 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
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/

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

- National Suicide Prevention Month (**September**)
- Victory Over Japan Day (**Sept. 2**)
- Patriot Day (**Sept. 11**)
- National Buffalo Soldiers Day (**Sept. 15**)
- Air Force Birthday (**Sept. 18**)
- KDVA Virtual Suicide Prevention Event (**Sept. 29**)
- 13th Annual Women Veterans Open House (**Sept. 30**)

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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