

June 2018

Retired Military Newsletter

Table of Contents

VA Appointments	1
VA Communications .	1
Pain Compensation ...	1
Nurse advise	1
Legal assist	2
Family benefits	2
National Parks	2
Spousal Benefits	2
Caregivers	3
COLA	3
RAD	4
Rec Lodging	4
RAO Help	4

VA Appointments. You can now manage your primary care and certain specialty care Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) appointments online at participating VA facilities. You will need a Premium My HealthVet Account to use online scheduling. If you do not have a Premium account, [visit My HealthVet](#) or contact the My HealthVet Coordinator at your [nearest VA facility](#). Currently, online scheduling is available at more than 100 VA facilities and their associated Community Based Outpatient Clinics. VA plans to add more appointment types in the future and is working to make online scheduling available at nearly all VA facilities next year. [Check to see if your VA facility offers online scheduling online](#). For more information, [visit the VA website](#).

VA Comms program. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has deployed the Centralized Benefits Communications Management Program (CBCM) nationally. The program is a new centralized printing and mailing process system designed to streamline correspondence with Veterans on compensation benefits and pension burial claims. Prior to CBCM, which went into effect March 23, VBA's 56 regional offices were responsible individually for their manual processing of outbound mail. Under CBCM, claims processors across the country now submit letters electronically to one central location for printing and distribution. For more information or questions about CBCM, email VAPublicAffairs@va.gov. (Source©Military.com Week of April 16, 2018)

Pain compensation. A [recent ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims](#) may have a major effect on the outcome of many veteran's disability claims. On April 3, the court ruled that pain, without any underlying disability, may be a valid reason for awarding [VA compensation benefits](#). For more details, see [this Military Advantage article](#).

Nurse advice. The [Military Health System Nurse Advice Line](#) (MHS NAL), a service available to TRICARE beneficiaries living in the U.S. and Europe, is now available to those living in Japan and South Korea. The MHS NAL allows you to speak with a registered nurse 24/7 for no cost. In Japan, you can reach the MHS NAL at 0066-33-821820. In South Korea, you can reach the MHS NAL from DSN by dialing 94-888-901-7144 or 888-901-7144. The MHS NAL toll-



free number for South Korea is coming soon. The new [MHS NAL Beneficiary Portal](#) also gives you the option to discuss your health concerns with a registered nurse in a secure web chat or video chat.

Legal Assist. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), together with the American Bar Association, has signed a Memorandum of Agreement aimed at improving veterans' access to free legal services. VA is encouraging VA Medical Centers and other VA facilities to engage with their local communities to establish legal clinics and Medical Legal Partnerships to address Veterans' legal needs. Currently, VA hosts at least 165 free legal clinics in its VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers across the country. For more information, visit the [VA Office of General Counsel website](#). For more on legal assistance for the military, visit the [Military.com Legal Matters section](#).

Family benefits. Do you know your veteran family benefits? This new guide from Military.com spells out veteran family programs and entitlements from the Department of Veterans Affairs including health insurance, education benefits and payments. For more details, visit the [Military.com Benefits section](#). (Source: Military.com Week of April 16, 2018)

FREE Lifetime Access Pass to National Parks. A little known benefit gives veterans with any disability rating from the VA a free lifetime pass. According to a National Parks spokesperson any level of disability qualifies (from 10% or more).

The pass may be obtained two ways, either at a federal recreation site where entrance or standard amenities are charged or through the mail. To obtain a Pass you must have identification to verify you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, which could include: A U.S. State or Territory issued Driver's License, ID or Birth Certificate

A U.S. Passport or Passport Card

A permanent Resident Card (Green Card)

You must also provide documentation that you have a permanent disability:

A document issued by a Federal agency, such as the VA which attests that you have been medically determined to receive Federal benefits as a result of blindness or permanent disability.

A document issued by a state agency such as a vocational rehabilitation agency, which attests that you have been medically determined to be eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation agency benefits or services as a result of blindness or permanent disability. A State motor vehicle department disability sticker, license plate or hang tag are not acceptable documentation.

You can obtain an application online at:

https://www.recreation.gov/brands/rec.gov/.../Access_Pass_Application1930.pdf

, or by writing Attn: Access Pass, P.O. Box 25286, Denver, CO 80225. Questions:

fedrepass@usgs.gov or 1-888-275-8747 Source: National Park Service.

Spousal Benefits. While it's likely most of the VA benefits are specifically for your veteran, some of them might be for you, too. And if your veteran is receiving any amount of disability pay, the benefits likely impact the whole family because they change what cash comes into your family bank account each month. Whether or not you're new to the VA, it's likely that there are

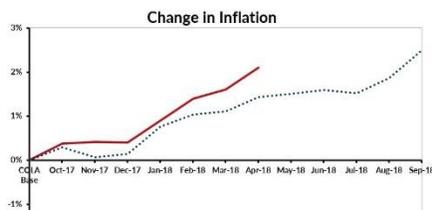


benefits that you just don't know you or your veteran has. Take a look at the following to ensure you're taking advantage of everything you can.

- 1) **Free counseling.** You knew about the free counseling offered through Military OneSource while your service member was active duty, but did you know the VA has a similar program? Unlike the Military OneSource service, which works with local therapists, the VA readjustment counseling service is operated out of the VA's veteran centers. For veterans or their family members to use the service, the veteran must qualify under a set of guidelines. But they are broad, and most post-9/11 troops meet the basic requirements. There are plenty of emotional or life- change battles to face as you move from military to civilian life. And as long as your family qualifies, you may be able to sit down with a counselor to tackle working through PTSD, military-to-civilian transition issues and more.
- 2) **Appointment travel reimbursements.** Unless you happen to live right down the street from the VA hospital or clinic or are using VA Choice, your veteran is likely traveling for any medical appointments he has through the VA. That means he or she qualifies for a travel reimbursement for each and every trip to and from those appointments. Filing for reimbursement is easy -- simply fill out the form at: www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-3542-fill.pdf and hand it in at the VA or mail it to the address provided.
- 3) **Shopping and MWR on base.** If your service member has been ruled 100 percent service-connected disabled, your family still has access to commissary Exchange shopping and MWR activities on base. If your veteran is not 100 percent disabled, he or she can have access to the Exchanges online. Although you won't be able to have your own login, you can shop under your veteran's account.
- 4) **Caregiver support.** Depending on your veteran's injury and how involved you are in his everyday care, you may qualify for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. That program gives qualifying users a cash stipend for taking care of their veteran. But even if you don't qualify for the payments, the VA offers other caregiver support resources and information that you might find helpful.
- 5) **Free health care .** If your veteran has been ruled permanently and totally disabled, you could qualify for free healthcare through the CHAMPVA program.
- 6) **State benefits.** Did you know all states have their own benefits for disabled veterans? New Jersey, for example, offers veterans state employment hiring preference, while Alaska gives major breaks on property taxes. [Source: Military.com www.military.com/benefits/spouse-family | August 25, 2017)

Caregivers. Being a caregiver for a veteran can bring around-the-clock responsibilities. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is here to support you! VA's Caregiver Support Program offers a range of online courses, face-to face classes, telephone support, and peer mentoring to caregivers of Veterans from all eras. Learn more by visiting the [VA Caregiver Support website](#). (Source: Military.com | Week of November 13, 2017)

COLA. The April 2018 CPI is 2.1 percent above the FY 2018 COLA baseline. The CPI for May 2018 is scheduled to be released on June 12.



RADs. Retirement appreciation days (RAD) are excellent events designed to keep you informed about your benefits. The current Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule is available in the following three formats. After connecting to the website, click on the appropriate state, territory or country to check for events scheduled for your area.

HTML: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.html. • PDF: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.pdf. • Word: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.doc. [Source: Retiree/Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell| 30 April 2018]. In Southern California, **the LA Airforce RAD will be on 2 June starting at 0800.**

Rec lodging. Periodically we highlight various military lodging places you might be interested in visiting. The website: <https://www.dodlodging.com> is a site that covers the waterfront so to speak. It pretty much covers the world. Even if you are not planning a trip at this time, you can dream.

Opportunity to Help. The Seal Beach, California Retired Activities Office (RAO), like some other RAOs, is looking for an additional staff (volunteer) member. You may ask “What is involved?” The main attribute is being willing to help military retirees by assisting in daily office operations assisting military retirees, widows, spouses, and active duty personnel with retiree benefits and entitlements.



No special skills are required. Just be willing to learn issues relevant to retiree benefits and entitlements, and be able to relay resource information about benefits and documentation needed to claim those benefits and communicate with people from a broad range of backgrounds; many of whom are quite elderly. Overall, not to worry. You will receive on-the-job training. If you are interested in volunteering at Seal Beach, give the office a call at (562) 626-7152.



We serve all the men and women of the
Armed Forces of the United States of America

How to contact us

The Retired Activities Office, Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California is located at 800 Seal Beach Blvd in Bldg. 22, Rm 2, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5000. We are here to serve all Armed Forces retirees and are open M-Th 0900 to 1500; Fri 0900 to 1200. You may contact us at (562)-626-7152 or by emailing us at rao-nwssb@navy.mil

John Ryan, RAO Director/Publisher, Captain, USN (Ret).
James Angeley, Bill Eveland, and Rick Fuller—Editors



[Retired Activities Website](#)