

1ST DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICER VA & R REPORT FOR MARCH 2022



By Richard Strehlow 262-641-0977

Notes of Interest;

P Many veterans are turning to telehealth to get care from VA. But if you live in a rural area or have trouble affording an internet connection, it can be tricky using VA telehealth services. For help, the new Affordable Connectivity Program may give you up to \$100 to purchase a computer or tablet. It can also provide \$30 per month towards your internet bill and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying tribal lands. Some people may be eligible for both.

You can use this service if you meet at least one of the criteria below:

- Your income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- You participate in assistance programs.
- You're in Tribal programs.
- You receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility.
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year.
- Meets the criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income program.

For more information on this benefit, call the support center at 877-384-2575 between 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. EST.

Did you know bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and parkinsonism were added to the Agent Orange Presumptive List when the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act was passed? Veterans who previously filed and were denied claims involving these conditions will be eligible for VA disability benefits. The VA was ordered under the Defense Authorization Act to locate and contact the veterans who were denied their claims for these conditions so that appropriate reconsideration by the VA could be conducted. If you are a veteran whose disability claim for any of these three new presumptive conditions was denied and the VA has not contacted you, please contact your VSO (preferably the VSO who assisted in the filing of the original claim) to take further action on your claim.

Did you know assisted living communities are places where veterans can reside in an apartment or a house room? There are many benefits available for veterans. According to a recent research by BoomersHub, up to 44% of U.S. male seniors over 75 are veterans who can seek assisted living veteran benefits. Also, according to Boomers Hub researcher and writer, "You can obtain assisted living benefits from the VA or apply for a veterans' home residency. Here, you can live out the rest of your days surrounded by veterans such as yourself.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is planning to expand several programs that allow senior veterans to age in their homes or live in home-like settings as alternatives to elder care facilities. VA officials announced Monday they will expand the Home-Based Primary Care and Veteran-Directed Care programs, which provide medical care and caregiver services to housebound older veterans, and its Medical Foster Home program, which provides housing and services to veterans who otherwise would be in nursing homes. The expansion is needed, said officials with the VA's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care, to ensure that the department can support a growing number of veterans eligible for nursing home care.

With cost imperiling a \$282 billion Bill that would help those exposed to burn pits, as well as Vietnam veterans with hypertension, two senators are proposing a much less expensive compromise that could still

help more than 1 million veterans get Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care. Committee Chairman Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, and Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran, the committee's ranking Republican, introduced a Bill February 1, 2022, that would create a one-year enrollment period for VA medical care for post-9/11 combat veterans who served after 1998 and never enrolled. It would also extend the enrollment period for all formerly deployed post-9/11 combat veterans from five years to 10. The Bill, called the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act, would allow veterans discharged after September 11, 2001, to qualify.

Just in case you didn't know, VA benefits have been extended from August 1953 to December 1987 for former residents of Camp Lejeune. From the 1950s through the 1980s, people living or working at the U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, may have been exposed to drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, benzene and other chemicals. Veterans, and non-veterans, who served (lived) at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, may be eligible for cost-free medical care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a variety of health conditions. Contact a Veterans Service Officer for details and/or to file a claim.

Did you know the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) considers Type 2 diabetes—which most often develops in adults due to several factors, including genetics, physical inactivity, and environmental factors—to be associated with exposure to herbicides used in the Vietnam War? VA does not assume the same association exists with Type 1 diabetes, for which the exact causes are unknown but most often develops in children and teens.

Did you know VA will process DIC claims automatically for survivors of veterans rated 100 percent disabled for 10 years or more, upon notification of the death? Apart from these cases, VA benefits and services are not automatically awarded to survivors. There is a bureaucratic process that requires specific forms and documentation necessary for each of the different benefits. A survivor may go through the process to arrange the burial of the veteran, but will have to go through a completely separate process to apply for DIC and another process to access the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will change its disability ratings criteria for mental health conditions, sleep apnea and tinnitus, as part of a major overhaul of the review process to ensure that compensation matches veterans' medical conditions and needs, department officials say. The VA plans to update its Schedule for Rating Disabilities -- its guide for determining how it evaluates and provides benefits for service-connected disabilities -- for mental health conditions, to include their impact on veterans' lives, and abolish the "0%" disability rating for any service-connected mental health diagnosis in favor of a 10% minimum, according to a notice published Tuesday in the Federal Register. For tinnitus, the department will get rid of its stand-alone rating and consider the condition a symptom of whatever underlying disease is its cause. As for sleep apnea, ratings will be assessed based on the effectiveness of treatment and the condition's impact on "earning impairment," according to the notice.

Officials say the changes, which would go into effect after a period for the public to comment and a final version is published, likely will result in higher disability ratings for veterans with mental health conditions, but fewer qualifying for disability compensation for tinnitus and sleep apnea.

Did you know as is the case in practically all asbestos and mesothelioma lawsuits, a claim is filed against the manufacturers of asbestos products, not employers that used asbestos products without knowledge of the hazardous effects? Aside from filing a claim against the asbestos manufacturer responsible for exposure, ailing veterans do have the legal option to seek assistance through The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA).

Did you know a spouse may be able to collect survivor social security benefits from a partner they never "officially" married? Some states recognize Common Law Marriage if the relationship was initiated in

their state. Social Security's rules specify that for a Common Law relationship to be recognized as a "marriage" for Social Security benefit purposes, it must have been established in a U.S. State which recognizes "common law" marriage.



lease Remember..... That all gave some, but many gave all!