



Roscommon County Veterans Affairs
Monthly Newsletter

Website: <http://www.roscommoncounty.net/201/Veterans>

“Serving those who Served”

Month: December, 2015 2nd Edition

Deadline for January’s Newsletter: December 21, 2015

Greetings, the office of the Roscommon County Veterans Affairs has decided to publish a monthly newsletter which will be shared with all of our Service Organizations within the county on a regular basis. This newsletter will also be placed on our Roscommon County Veterans Affairs website (<http://www.roscommoncounty.net/311/Veteran-Services>).

It is our hope that this information will be of value to your members and displayed within your organization in a location that your members are aware of and have access to. We have enlarged the font for the newsletter based on feedback, hopefully, it will be easier to read. We would like to also announce any future events and/or activities your post is sponsoring that we can help spread the news under the Service Organizations section. If your post has an email address that this can be sent that would be helpful as occasionally this may be published to advertise a special event involving Veterans in your area.

Electronic copies of the newsletter will allow the reader to have access to the various links found in this newsletter. If individual Veterans wish to receive these newsletters electronically have the Veteran send an email to veterans@roscommoncounty.net with a Subject Line: Request for RCVA monthly newsletter. Our office will also provide our minutes of our Board meeting monthly as well as the Accumulative Total spreadsheet showing our office service to Veterans in our measurable categories.

The format for this newsletter will be by War Periods, but is not limited to only war time Veterans; **Peacetime Veterans have benefits**, too. For VA benefits available for Veterans during a certain War Period, see the November 2015 1st Edition for specific information.

World War II (April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918);

World War II Veterans

World War II (WWII) was the most widespread war in history with more than 100 million people serving in military units. About 16 million Americans served during WWII, and many of



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those Veterans are now receiving VA benefits including Pension and Health Care. WWII Veterans who were a part of the Occupation Forces assigned to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan soon after the detonation of Atomic-Bombs over those respective cities, and those American prisoners of war (POW's) who were housed in close proximity to those cities are sometimes called "Atomic Veterans."

Korea Conflict (June 27, 1950-January 31, 1955)

Approximately 5.7 million Veterans served in the Korean War. Korean War Veterans are more prone to suffer from disabilities related to cold injuries as a result of exposure to severe cold climates. Cold weather accounted for 16% of Army non-battle injuries and over 5,000 U.S. casualties of cold injury required evacuation from Korea during the winter of 1950-1951. In many instances, Servicemembers could not seek or were unable to obtain medical care for cold injuries because of battlefield conditions.

Korea ReBorn A Grateful Nation Book – is “a commemorative gift published and produced with cooperation from the Republic of Korea and the United States and honor and remember all those who bravely served during the Korean War.” The Roscommon County Veteran Affairs office has two copies left of 30 that are free to Korean Veterans (a small donation is requested for shipping and handling charges). Our office will be willing to order additional copies if there is enough interest, so please contact our office at (989) 275-6047 and we will be happy to order more, if enough interest is generated.

Vietnam Era (August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975)

Vietnam Veterans

United States military involvement in the Vietnam War officially began on August 5, 1964; however, the first U.S. casualty in Vietnam occurred on July 8, 1959. Approximately 2.7 million American men and women served in Vietnam. During the war, over 58,000 U.S. military members lost their lives and 153,000 were wounded. There were 766 prisoners of war of



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which 114 died in captivity. The war was officially ended by Presidential Proclamation on May 7, 1975.

VA Updates Agent Orange Ship List: This week (November 25), VA added six new ships and expanded the dates for some already on the list of ships that operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam. Veterans whose military records confirm they were aboard these ships qualify for presumption of herbicide exposure. To check if your ship or boat has been added to the list, visit: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/list.asp>.

Persian Gulf War/OIF/OEF... (August 2, 1990 through a date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation)

Gulf War Veterans

More than 650,000 Service members served in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm from August 2, 1990 to July 31, 1991. For VA benefits eligibility purposes, the Gulf War period is still in effect. This means that anyone who served on active duty from August 2, 1990, to present is considered a Gulf War Veteran. For example, the Veterans Pension benefit requires service during a wartime period. Therefore, any Veteran who served on active military service for any period from August 2, 1990, to the present meets the wartime service requirement.

Services/Benefits for All Service Members

Veteran designation on Michigan Driver’s licenses and state IDs: More than 57,000 Michigan Veterans have taken advantage of this program to have their licenses and/or IDs identified with a Veteran status. Veterans may receive this designation **free during renewal** or pay a small fee before or after renewal dates to have it placed on your license. Proof of service, such as a discharge document (DD-214) is required at the Secretary of State office. Any questions, please call our County office at (989) 275-6047. This Veteran designation **does not** meet several of the chain stores (i.e., Home Depot, Lowes) requirements for a Veteran



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discount. It never hurts to ask any business/restaurant if they offer a discount to Veterans. Do us a favor and let us know if it is in Roscommon County and we will add it to our list.

Certified Veteran –Friendly Employer program: Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency (MVAA) has recognized 34 organizations for their efforts to hire and support Veteran talent in the workforce.



57 schools earn veteran-friendly status: Student veterans and their dependents can choose from more than 50 veteran-friendly schools committed to providing on-campus, veteran-centric services to better support their academic and transitional needs. MVAA's Veteran-Friendly School program recognizes institutions of higher learning for their dedication to student veterans and dependents utilizing their G.I. Bill and other educational benefits. Michigan 43 colleges and universities are 100 % compliant with the Choice Act, offering in-state tuition to all recently released Veterans and their families.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund: In FY 2014, \$2,482,845 dollars distributed to 2,157 Veterans and their families in need of emergency assistance. These funds are only available to war time Veterans.

Radical Individual Ready Reserves (IRR) Plan to Call Back Veterans: The goal is to make this historically disorganized component into a more integrated, reliable and useful part of the “total force” in an era when the services are under pressure to reduce active-duty personnel strength and its associated high costs. If you have members in your organization who have not serve their total service obligation, they need to be aware of this plan and the potential implications.



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Reserve and Guard Retirees

The Senate recently passed a bill with language to grant “honorary” veteran status to as many as 200,000 Reserve and National Guard retirees — those not deemed veterans now because they did not serve a qualifying period of active service under federal orders. The House is expected to adopt similar language soon. Impacted retirees are those who left service without a DD-214 or Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. Though they had 20 or more “good” years of drill points earned on weekends and through annual training, they were never called to active duty.

Helpful Veterans Information

Michigan is home to the 11th largest Veterans population in the country with 658,469 Veterans; here in Roscommon County we have 2,821 Veterans.

Michigan Veterans receive capita federal spending ranked at 48th out of 53 states and territories, which is an improvement as several years ago Michigan was dead last or 53rd of 53 states and territories.

Michigan is projecting 30,000 plus Michigan Veterans returning to Michigan due to the recent drawdown. A lot of the younger Veterans are having a hard time transferring their skills to civilian workplaces. Unemployment rate for Michigan Veterans was 7.3% in 2013.

More than half of Michigan’s 658,469 Veterans are not officially counted in the labor force. Only about 44% of our Veterans are in the workforce.

Michigan Veteran Community Action Teams (VCAT) are forming around our Communities. Roscommon County falls into Region 3 of the Governor’s Prosperity Regions who just had their “kickoff” meeting on Tuesday, November 3rd in Gaylord. The concept behind these VCAT is to



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implement the no wrong door concept among service providers to Veterans **and their families**. A “warm hand off” is the operational concept of making sure the Veteran is not only given the service provider information but for the agency to call the service provider while the Veteran is still in the office and provide the Veteran a Point of Contact within the service agency. Please call the Roscommon County Veterans Affairs office for more information.

In Michigan, nearly three quarters (72%) of Veterans are aged 55 and older.

Michigan’s Veteran population is older than that of the U.S. Veteran population as a whole, with a significantly higher proportion Vietnam Veterans residing in the state.

No Wrong Door for Michigan Veterans: The Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center (MVRSC) and MichiganVeterans.com provide one-stop access for Veterans and their families seeking information, resources and support as they transition through each chapter of their lives. Callers to 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838) are provide about Veteran-specific programs as well as a warm hand-off to programs available to all Michigan citizens.

Veteran Homes in Michigan – Michigan is home to two (2) superb state owned Veteran homes in Michigan.

Compensation 101

Disability Compensation is a tax-free monetary benefit paid to Veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service.

Pension

Supplemental Income for Wartime Veterans

VA helps Veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income through the Veterans Pension benefit. Veterans Pension is a tax-free monetary benefit payable to **low-income wartime Veterans**.



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Eligibility

Generally, a Veteran must have at least 90 days of active duty service, with at least one day during a [wartime period](#) to qualify for a VA Pension. If you entered active duty after September 7, 1980, generally you must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty (with some exceptions), with at least one day during a [wartime period](#).

In addition to meeting minimum service requirements, the Veteran must be:

- Age 65 or older, **OR**
- Totally and permanently disabled, **OR**
- A patient in a nursing home receiving skilled nursing care, **OR**
- Receiving Social Security Disability Insurance, **OR**
- Receiving Supplemental Security Income

Your yearly family income must be less than the amount set by Congress to qualify for the Veterans Pension benefit. Learn more about [income and net worth limitation](#), and see an example of how [VA calculates](#) the VA Pension benefit.

Additional Pension Allowances

Veterans or surviving spouses who are eligible for VA pension and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person may be eligible for an [additional monetary payment](#).

Roscommon County Helpful Information

Roscommon County Veterans Affairs (RCVA) office is open five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the County Building in Roscommon and has started offering office hours every Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Houghton Lake Community Center (aka Houghton Lake Senior Center) starting Thursday, December 3, 2015.

On Thursday, December 17, 2015 at 11:00 a.m., there will be a class on Spouse and Survivors Benefits available through the Veteran Administration will be held at the Houghton Lake Community Center (aka Senior Center).



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The RCVA office recently requested local businesses to identify if they provide any type of Veterans discounts here in Roscommon County. Sadly, only one business responded to this attempt though our office is aware that there are more service providers and/or businesses in Roscommon County who do offer Veterans discount. Our office is asking for your help in developing this list for Roscommon County. Our office is also aware certain “chains” may offer Veterans discount but this varies from one business to another.

The one business who did reply was:

Family Eye Care, P.C., Dr. Jay C. Jenkins in Houghton Lake and Roscommon

- 40% off materials from usual and customary on any spectacle orders
- 30% off services, to include specialty testing such as Visual fields, Ocular coherence and Visual Evoked Potentials for disease management

Minutes of our November Roscommon County Veterans Affairs monthly meeting are as follows:

Meeting called to order at 12:00 noon by Chairman Don Mraz.

Pledge of Allegiance was given to the National Flag.

Members present: Don Mraz; Ken Melvin, Ron Schrieber and Tom Sheppard; Staff: Director of Veterans Affairs: Kevin C. Sherman and Heath Nemeth, Work Study Intern. Excused: None
Guests: None

Public Comments – None.

Minutes of last meeting and Office Report Accumulative Totals for October 2015 were presented, accepted and filed. Motion by Ron Schrieber and seconded by Ken Melvin to approved minutes and Office Report. Motion Carried.



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Correspondence. Letter to Editor (Saginaw VA Director), HB 4970 and November RCVA Monthly Newsletter was reviewed and discussed.

Burial and Graver Markers:

Roscommon County had expenses for 11 burials at \$3300.00. Motion by Ron Schrieber and seconded by Ken Melvin to approved burial expenses. Motion Carried.

Medical Transportation

We had 16 trips for medical transportation for \$1,390.27. Collections from the office throughout the month was \$357.85. Motion by Ken Melvin, seconded by Tom Sheppard to pay transportation claims for \$1,390.27. Carried.

Monthly Office Expenses:

Claims and Accounts for monthly office expenses submitted for \$762.56. Motion by Ron Schrieber, seconded by Ken Melvin to pay monthly office expenses. Carried.

Veteran’s Relief Fund Application:

Three applications were presented. One application for \$137 (Voucher 226) was approved by the Director for a Veteran’s spouse to pay for her expired license plate tabs to allow her to drive Veteran to his various medical appointments. Board reviewed and approved. Second application for auto repairs was for \$480.74(Voucher 229) and approved by the Board. Third relief application was for a homeless Veteran and daughter and is still pending as Veteran and daughter is living in a local hotel as several parties are working on securing housing. The Board approved ongoing assistance not to exceed 30 days. Motion by Ron Schrieber and seconded by Ken Melvin to approve all three applications. Motion carried.

Director’s Report



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See Director’s written report. 1st Thursday in December we will start our weekly presence in Houghton Lake at the Houghton Lake Community Center from 10 a.m. through 3 p.m.. This has been shared at this week’s Veteran Day celebrations and Director has two interviews set with the local papers next week to publicize this endeavor.

Discussion was also held on our County’s Transportation policy. The Committee chose to leave the program policies as published but allow the Director to deviate from the policy as needed by exception.

Old Business:

Open Full Time Position/January 2016 – The Committee interviewed two candidates earlier in the day and made their decision as to these two candidates. Motion by Ron Schrieber and seconded by Ken Melvin to offer the position to Heath Nemeth with a starting date to be 1 January 2016. The Committee chose Heath based on the facts that Heath Nemeth is already accredited with Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency and has completed the Training, Responsibility, Involvement, Preparation of Claims (TRIP) Program set his starting salary at \$14 per hour. Motion Carried.

The Committee indicated Heath Nemeth salary package should follow the same increases as the current Director which is a \$1,820.00 increase in salary upon completion of national accreditation and Vetra Spec certification. This salary package also includes three steps increases after 1, 2 and 3 years of service of \$2,500 each year.

New Business:

Advertising Office Presence. The Director provided the Committee with estimates of cost for running an ad in two local newspapers for a year. Committee directed the Director to see if a Public Service Announcement could be utilized instead.



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Budget Discussion – Resources. Director would like to create a Resource Library within the office to help with claims. The Committee approved the concept and these resource guides will be funded through existing line items of our budget.

Good of the Order: None

Public Comments: None

Motion by Ron Schrieber, seconded by Ken Melvin to adjourn, Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Minutes taken by: Ron Schrieber, Secretary

Q&A/ 1) **What is Saginaw VA Medical Marijuana policy?**

Saginaw VA response: VHA policy does not administratively prohibit Veterans who participate in State marijuana programs from also participating in VHA substance abuse programs, pain control programs, or other clinical programs where the use of marijuana may be considered inconsistent with treatment goals. **While patients participating in State marijuana programs must not be denied VHA services, the decisions to modify treatment plans in those situations need to be made by individual providers in partnership with their patients.** VHA endorses a step-care model for the treatment of patients with chronic pain: any prescription(s) for chronic pain needs be managed under the auspices of such programs described in current VHA policy regarding Pain Management.

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RELATED



VA could prescribe pot to veterans under new bill

VA doctors could refer veterans to state medical marijuana programs under a landmark reform bill floated in the Senate on Tuesday.



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• **[VA policy on marijuana and painkillers lacks consistency, veterans say](#)**

As a federal agency, the VA is in an unusual position. It recognizes marijuana possession as a federal offense, but its policy doesn't prohibit veterans who get state-sanctioned medical marijuana from participating in VA pain control programs.



• **[Veterans with PTSD call for medical marijuana expansion](#)**

Pennsylvania allows marijuana to be sold only to those with about a dozen qualifying ailments, including terminal cancer, multiple sclerosis, AIDS, glaucoma, and seizure disorders.

- **[Illinois panel: Medical pot OK for PTSD, migraines, but not for anxiety, diabetes](#)**
- **[Advocates concerned New York medical marijuana rules omit approval for PTSD treatment](#)**

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs said Friday it was reviewing a bill in Congress that could give sick vets across the country access to medical marijuana as early as next month.

The Senate passed the department’s annual budget bill earlier this week, and it would bar the VA from punishing its doctors when they recommend pot as treatment for vets.

Medical marijuana has been approved by 23 states and the District of Columbia for treatment of a variety of afflictions, including glaucoma, cancer and HIV – and there is some evidence it could also help with post-traumatic stress. But the VA prohibits its health care staff from participating in state-sanctioned medical marijuana programs and follows federal law that still deems pot an illegal drug.

“We are reviewing the provisions and their potential impact on VA,” spokeswoman Linda West wrote in an email response to Stars and Stripes.

The VA said vets who participate in the state marijuana treatment programs are not prohibited from also using the VA substance abuse and pain control programs, although they face being treated for “misuse” of the drug.

The language and intent of the bill is to allow veterans seeking information about medicinal marijuana in states where it is legal to discuss options with their doctors at the VA, said Martina McLennan, spokeswoman for sponsor Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.

“Should the president sign this bill or any omnibus with this language, Sen. Merkley expects the VA to follow the law and permit VA doctors to answer patients’ questions and provide any necessary



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documentation for their patients to comply with the law in their state relating to medicinal marijuana,” McLennan wrote in an email.

For now, veterans who suffer from any conditions that states consider treatable by marijuana must go outside their VA health care system to get the treatment.

“The notion that somehow veterans would not be able to work with their primary care provider and would have to go track somebody down at their own expense to treat them is lunacy,” said Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore.

Blumenauer has been a top advocate on Capitol Hill for veterans’ access to medical marijuana and has proposed two pieces of legislation this year aimed at open access for vets. He said the department could easily accept the changes in the budget bill if it chooses.

The Obama administration has said it will not challenge state laws on marijuana. Still, the VA maintains that its hands are tied by federal law.

“I think that the Obama administration needs to clarify to get these people in line,” Blumenauer said. “The problem is there are parts of the bureaucracy that are just undercutting the president.”

The rules restricting the VA from punishing doctors, included in the annual appropriations bill, must still make it through the budget process in Congress.

Blumenauer said that is highly likely, but partisan fighting has brought lawmakers into “uncharted waters.” The current federal budget will expire Dec. 11 and the VA budget and medical marijuana measure could be passed into law to replace it.

“This is where America is going, and sooner or later the VA will have to get on board,” he said.

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2) How often are Hearing Aids replaced?

Saginaw VA response: Information on Audiology and Hearing Aids:

http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/Hearing_Aids.asp

b. All Veterans eligible for care and services under 38 CFR 17.38 are eligible for diagnostic and preventive audiology care, and diagnostic and preventive eye care services. These diagnostic and preventive services are separate from VA’s provision of eyeglasses, contact lenses, and hearing aids. Veterans shall not be denied access to audiology and eye care services covered under 38 CFR 17.38 because they do not meet the eligibility criteria for eyeglasses, contact lenses, and hearing aids.



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c. Veterans in all enrollment Priority Groups may be eligible to receive sensori-neural aids (eyeglasses, contact lenses and hearing aids) as authorized under 38 CFR 17.149 provided they are otherwise receiving VA care or services.

Hearing aids are provided to the following Veterans, only if such Veterans are otherwise receiving VA care or services.

- (a) Those with any compensable service connected disability.
- (b) Those who are former Prisoners of War (POWs).
- (c) Those who were awarded a Purple Heart.
- (d) Those in receipt of benefits under 38 U.S.C. 1151.
- (e) Those in receipt of an increased pension based on the need for regular aid and attendance or by reason of being permanently house-bound.
- (f) Those who have a visual or hearing impairment resulting from the existence of another medical condition for which the Veteran is receiving VA care, or which resulted from treatment of that medical condition, e.g., stroke, polytrauma, traumatic brain injury, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, vascular disease, geriatric chronic illnesses, toxicity from drugs, ocular photosensitivity from drugs, cataract surgery, and/or other surgeries performed on the eye, ear, or brain resulting in vision or hearing impairment.
- (g) Those with significant functional or cognitive impairment evidenced by deficiencies in activities of daily living, but not including normally occurring visual or hearing impairments.

NOTE: For the purposes of this Directive, normally occurring visual and hearing impairments are not considered as deficiencies of activities of daily living, as usually defined. Normally occurring impairments are not the same as age-related impairments from disease conditions or disorders (such as age-related macular degeneration, age-related cataract, etc.) that may result in significant functional impairment, including low vision and blindness, adversely impacting activities of daily living. Veterans with normally occurring visual or hearing impairments may be eligible for sensori-neural aids if they meet the criteria in paragraph 4b(1)(h).

(h) Those visually or hearing impaired so severely that the provision of sensori-neural aids is necessary to permit active participation in their own medical treatment. **NOTE:** The term “so severely” is a loss of vision and/or hearing that interferes with or restricts access to, involvement in, or active participation in health care services (e.g. communication or reading medication labels). The term is not to be interpreted that a severe hearing loss or severe vision loss must exist to be eligible for eyeglasses or hearing aids. The clinical indications for prescription and provision of hearing aids, contact lenses and eyeglasses are delineated within the clinical practice prescribing criteria for the audiologist, and eye care provider in paragraphs 4c and 4d.

(i) Those Veterans who have service-connected hearing disabilities rated zero percent if there is organic conductive, mixed, or sensory hearing impairment, and loss of pure tone hearing sensitivity in the low, mid, or high-frequency range, or a combination of frequency ranges which contributes to a loss of communication ability; however, hearing aids are to be provided only as needed for the service-connected hearing disability.

(2) Ensuring that all Veterans receive appropriate diagnostic and preventive audiology care by a state licensed audiologist, and diagnostic and preventive eye care services by an eye care provider (optometrist or ophthalmologist), to determine clinical justification for prescription of eyeglasses, contact lenses, or hearing aids



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under 38 CFR 17.38 for which they are eligible. This diagnostic and preventive care, to include prescription, is separate from eligibility to receive sensori-neural aids under 38 CFR 17.149.

(3) Ensuring that eyeglasses, contact lenses, and hearing aids are provided to Veterans participating in a rehabilitation program under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 31, if necessary to complete the Veteran's rehabilitation plan as determined by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). **NOTE:** See 38 CFR 21.216 and 21.240, and VBA Manual 28R Part I, Section A, Chapter 3.

(4) Replacing, repairing, and providing spare or a second pair of eyeglasses, contact lenses, and hearing aids for Veterans in accordance with VHA Handbooks 1173.12 and 1173.7, as appropriate. That Handbook states:

Replacement

- a. Hearing aids, assistive listening devices, and artificial larynxes will be replaced when the instrument proves to be ineffective, irreparable, or the Veteran's medical condition has changed and a different device is needed. Devices will not be replaced because of age or a new make or model is available.
- b. Devices may be replaced if the item was destroyed or lost due to circumstances beyond the control of the Veteran. If negligence or willful action is suspected, the Chief, Audiology and Speech Pathology Service will determine whether a replacement may be issued, and depending upon the circumstances, VHA Headquarters may be consulted for an opinion.

New VA Choice program proposed to improve vets' access to private care

Acknowledging that the Veterans Affairs Department's private health care referral system is "too complicated" and "saddled with a confusing array of authorizations and mechanisms," VA officials pressed lawmakers Wednesday to consider streamlining several programs into a single initiative designed to improve veterans access to medical services.

The ambitious plan would combine seven VA community health care programs, including the newest and largest, VA Choice, into a New Veterans Choice Program, with clearer eligibility rules, improved access to care and faster payments to participating providers.

Deputy VA Secretary Sloan Gibson told members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that the move is necessary to create the "Choice program of tomorrow."

"Consolidation will improve access and make the process easier for veterans to use," Gibson said. "Veterans will have better access to the best care outside VA, providers will be encouraged to participate and to provide higher-quality care, and VA employees will be able to serve both better, while also being good stewards of taxpayer funds."



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[VA Makes Changes to Veterans Choice Program](#)

12/01/2015 11:09 AM EST

VA Makes Changes to Veterans Choice Program

Changes Remove Barriers and Expands Access to Care

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a number of changes to make participation in the [Veterans Choice Program](#) easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf.

“As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what needs to be refined,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve.” To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014.

Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:

- Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program;
- Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran’s ability to travel;
- Determined eligible based on the Veteran’s current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.

Under the updated eligibility requirements, a Veteran is eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she is enrolled in the VA health care system and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Told by his or her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care within 30 days of the date the Veteran’s physician determines



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he/she needs to be seen or within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his or her physician;

- Lives more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician;
- Needs to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home;
- Faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or simplicity or frequency of the care needed and whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran’s local VA medical facility will work with him or her to determine if the Veteran is eligible for any of these reasons; or
- Lives in a State or Territory without a full-service VA medical facility which includes: Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire (Note: this excludes New Hampshire Veterans who live within 20 miles of the White River Junction VAMC) and the United States Territories (excluding Puerto Rico, which has a full service VA medical facility).

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it, can call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment.

For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA’s progress, visit:

www.va.gov/opa/choiceact.

October Roscommon County Veterans Affairs Office Totals

October Veterans or Dependents Office Visits 96 Coordination of volunteer medical transport 19
Personal Interviews 77 Telephone calls made 191 Telephone calls received 286
Claims submitted/reviewed 62 Home or Nursing Home/Assisted visits 5 Records Request; DD 214 or other 3
County Veteran Relief Fund Requests/Application 3 Medical Transportation: Number of Trips 16
Burials 9



Roscommon County Veterans Affairs
Monthly Newsletter

Website: <http://www.roscommoncounty.net/201/Veterans>

“Serving those who Served”

Month: December, 2015 2nd Edition

Deadline for January’s Newsletter: December 21, 2015

Service Organizations in our County

VFWS Post 4159 (Dues \$50)

Post **4159 Charles M. Engel Post** (11th
District)
PO Box 774

Roscommon, MI 48653
United States
Phone: (989) 275-4136

*Meeting Location &
Time*

219 Terrace Dr
Roscommon, MI 48653
United States
7:00 PM 2nd Wednesday
Commander: David A. Luck
Service Officer: Ronald R. Schrieber
Quartermaster: Gerald McCormick

VFWS Post 4034

Post 4034 Fred & Paul Kalis Post

PO Box 591
Houghton Lake Heights, MI 486300591
United States
Phone: (989) 422-6404
Meeting Location & Time
935 Loxley Rd
Houghton Lake Heights, MI 48630-5051
United States
7:00 pm 2nd Wednesday

Quartermaster:
Commander: Steven Bidstrup

VFWS Post 5680 St. Helen Post

PO Box 376
Saint Helen, MI 48656
United States
Phone: (989) 389-7492

Meeting Location & Time

1914 Lake St
Saint Helen, MI 486569756
United States
7:00 PM 1st Wednesday

Quartermaster: Bruce Bridson
Commander: Robert Hurd

Service Organizations in our County

AMERICAN LEGION POSTS

Roscommon Post #96 (Dues \$40)

PO Box 744
Roscommon, MI 48653
United States
Phone: (989) 389-0164

Meeting Location & Time

219 Terrace Dr
Roscommon, MI 48653
United States
7:00 PM 3rd Thursday
Adjutant: Don Croff
Commander: George Ferguson
Service Officer: Kevin C. Sherman



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St. Helen Post #416

10062 Ford Drive, St. Helen, MI 48656

Phone: (989) 389-4630

Meeting Location & Time

10062 Ford Drive, St. Helen, MI 48656

7:00 PM 1st Thursday

Adjutant: Don Mraz

Commander: Phil Maylum

Service Officer:

Prudenville Post #245 (Houghton Lake-
Higgins Lake) Dues \$45 3564 S. Reserve Rd
PO Box 318, Prudenville, MI 48651
United States

Phone: (810) 751-9983

Meeting Location & Time

3564 S. Reserve Rd

Prudenville, MI 48651

United States

7:00 PM 3rd Wed

Adjutant: Elizabeth Cuddington

Commander: Bill Jammer

Service Officer: Tom Sheppard

Deadline for January’s Newsletter: December 21, 2015

Service Organizations in our County

AMVETS

Amvet Post #13 (Dues \$37)

8009 N Ausable Rd

PO Box 335

Higgins Lake, MI 48627

United States

Phone: (989) 821-9838

Meeting Location & Time

2nd Tuesday at 6 pm

8009 N Ausable Rd

Roscommon, MI 48653

United States

Commander: Jerry Kilburn

Service Officer:

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Marine Corps League #684 CPL Jack A.

Davenport

3564 S. Reserve Rd.

Prudenville, MI, 48651

United States

Phone: (989)

Meeting Location & Time

3564 S. Reserve Rd

Prudenville, MI 48651

United States

7:00 PM 2nd Wed

Commander: Jim Bowman



Roscommon County Veterans Affairs
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“Serving those who Served”

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Service Officer: Mel Ward (989) 422-7415

Deadline for January’s Newsletter: December 21, 2015
non-veterans, and comprise only 8.6 of the
homeless population.

Veterans are among our most community-oriented citizens. The study shows that they volunteer an average of 160 hours annually, 25 percent more than non-veterans. **They belong to civic groups and attend neighborhood meetings, often assuming leadership roles. Furthermore, 48 percent of them vote in elections regularly, 16 percent more than non-veterans.**

These findings should surprise no one. Those who serve in today’s all-volunteer military usually do so out of a sense of commitment. Although the government offers educational, health, and other assistance to service members, of the scores of veterans I have interviewed, every single one has named duty to country, not benefits, as his or her primary reason for serving. Furthermore, nearly all -- including severely wounded soldiers -- say they would do it again.

Once soldiers transition to civilian life, many want to continue serving.



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Service Organizations: The Roscommon County Department of Veterans Affairs is asking all of our county service organizations in our county to provide our office with their annual dues and a contact list of their officers. Our office would like to refer returning Veterans to your organization and it would be nice if we can give them a good contact person. I’ve asked in previous correspondence for applications with your dues amount completed, if your organization have not done so, please consider helping us help you in your recruiting.

The Roscommon County Veterans Affairs Committee members and staff says to all of our Veterans and their families, “God bless our Veterans and God bless America.” We also wish all Veterans and their families Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Editor Note: This is our office second newsletter and we are open for articles for future newsletters and/or events you would like us to publicize with this monthly newsletter. Next month deadline is identified above, if you have any questions please call Kevin C. Sherman, Director, at (989)275-6047.

