

August 2017



## Hangar Flying Newsletter

A Publication of the JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors. Department of the Air Force, 100 Joe Jackson Blvd, Customer Service Mall Rm 1001, JBLM McChord Field WA 98438-1114; Phone (253) 982-3214 (Voice Mail 24 hours a day) Fax 253-982-5234. Email – [retaffairs@us.af.mil](mailto:retaffairs@us.af.mil) Web Site [www.mcchordrao.com](http://www.mcchordrao.com) Retiree Activities Office: Open 0900-1200 Monday - Friday

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**The Veterans Choice Program (VCP)** is a benefit that allows eligible Veterans to receive health care from a community provider rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. Ten things to know about the program.

### 1. Am I eligible for the Veterans Choice Program?

To be eligible for the program, you must be enrolled in VA health care and must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- You are told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment.
- Your residence is more than a 40 mile driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full time primary care physician.
- You need to travel by air, boat, or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to your house.
- You face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on a geographic challenge, environmental factor, medical condition, or other specific clinical decisions. Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine if you are eligible for any of these reasons.
- You reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services and surgical care, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility. Note: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC and are therefore not eligible for the Veterans Choice Program.

### 2. What if I think I am eligible?

- Call the VCP Call Center at 866-606-8198 or visit the Veterans Choice Program website to verify eligibility and set up an appointment at <https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>.

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### **3. Can I call my non-VA doctor to make an appointment?**

- No, please call the VCP call center at 866-606-8198 to verify eligibility and set up an appointment.

### **4. How is the 40 mile calculation determined?**

- This calculation is based on the driving distance from your permanent residence (or active temporary address) to the closest VA facility, including Community-Based Outpatient Clinics and VA Medical Centers. You are eligible if you live more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest medical facility that has a full-time primary care physician.

### **5. If I am eligible for the Veterans Choice Program, can I receive Beneficiary Travel for travel to appointments with a VCP provider?**

- Yes, the Choice Act does provide funding to pay for travel to VCP providers for Veterans who are eligible for Beneficiary Travel. However, it did not provide any new Beneficiary Travel eligibility.

### **6. If I didn't get my Choice Card or I lost my Choice Card, what do I do?**

- You do not need your Choice Card to access the VCP. If you didn't receive a Choice Card or lost your Choice Card, simply call 866-606-8198 to find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment.

### **7. How do I get my prescription filled if I use the Veterans Choice Program?**

- The community provider you see through the VCP can issue a prescription for up to a 14 day supply of a national formulary drug. You may have the 14 day supply filled at any non-VA pharmacy of your choosing.
- Prescriptions can be reimbursed through the Business Office/Non-VA Care Coordination Office at VA facilities. This reimbursement may take 30-45 days to process, and requires a copy of the prescription and the original receipt. Veterans cannot be reimbursed at the VA Pharmacy.
- For prescriptions needed past 14 days, please follow standard procedures to fill a prescription at the VA pharmacy.

### **8. If I use the Veterans Choice Program, does that affect my VA health care?**

- No, not at all. You do not have to choose between the two. The VCP is here to make it easier to access the care you need. VA is building a high-performing integrated health care network to deliver the best of VA and the community. This integrated network will give Veterans more choices to access care and ensure care is delivered where and when you need it.

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## 9. What is my responsibility for co-payments to my other insurance?

- Nothing. VA is now the primary coordinator of benefits for VCP, so you are only responsible for your VA copayment.
- Your VA copayment will be determined by VA after the care is provided. VA copayments will be billed by VA after the appointment.

## 10. How does the new VCP extension law affect me?

- Public Law 115-26, enacted April 19, 2017, made three key changes to help improve the VCP. The law removed the expiration date for the program, made VA primary coordinator of benefits for services provided to you, and it removed barriers with sharing necessary health information with community providers.

### More Information

Please refer to the Veterans Choice Program website for more information about the program, its benefits, and eligibility criteria <https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>. Providers interested in participating must establish a contract with one of the contractors, Health Net Federal, or TriWest Healthcare Alliance. For more information, about how to participate please visit [Veterans Choice Program website for providers](#). (Source: VA. Gov/Advantage)

## VA S.T.O.P. P.A.I.N. Pain Management Information - for the

**Veterans:** Millions of people suffer from pain and are looking for answers. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to separate myths and misunderstanding from facts when it comes to treating pain. The purpose of THE VA Pain Management website [www.va.gov/painmanagement](http://www.va.gov/painmanagement) is to bring you the most current and accurate information on pain management. The VA's goal is to help you work with your medical team so you can make the best decisions about your healthcare.

Modern thinking emphasizes the significant role you must play in your own healthcare. These educational resources provide a starting point for understanding the complexity of pain, the realities of what your healthcare provider can do for you, and the importance of what you must do for yourself.

This section contains information that has been reviewed and approved by the VA. We are in the process of redesigning this website. Please check back for additional resources and tools to help you better understand and manage the problem of pain.

### **Online Classroom: Take charge. Live well...even if you hurt**

VISN 20 developed this educational program for patients as a companion to online training that has been completed by more than 11,000 VA providers since 2008. The program provides customized content based on your own experiences and beliefs about pain and its treatment.

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After completing the course, a personal feedback report is provided with suggestions for steps you can take for better pain management and topics you should discuss with your health care providers. <https://www.va.gov/ChronicPainMgmt/ChronicPainEducationforVeterans>

### **New VA DoD Guidelines for Opioid Medications**

The VA and the DoD were mandated by Congress to develop new guidelines for the prescription of long-term opioid medications for chronic pain. These guidelines were published in February, 2017. [Follow this link](#) - for background information about chronic pain and its treatment as well as answers to common questions you may have regarding these important changes to chronic pain care.

### **Veteran/Public Resources**

- Chronic pain and depression, chronic pain and PTSD. Chronic Pain Management at Real Warriors. Four Tips for Successfully Managing Chronic Pain link: <http://www.realwarriors.net/veterans/treatment/painmanagement.php> \*

Information about the signs and symptoms of chronic pain at VA Make the Connection. Hear stories from other Veterans. Learn about treatment options for chronic pain. Make the Connection Chronic pain stories link: <http://maketheconnection.net/symptoms/chronic-pain> \*

### **CIM (CAM) Recommendations -Complementary Integrated Medicine (CAM)**

[Recommendations](#) All the links marked with asterisk (\*) are External links. By clicking on these links, you will leave the Department of Veterans Affairs Website. VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the linked website. (*Source VA.Gov*)

## **Reaching out to women Veterans: VA launches partnership with**

**LeanIn.Org**, The VA's [Center for Women Veterans](http://www.va.gov/womenvet/) [www.va.gov/womenvet/](http://www.va.gov/womenvet/) is partnering with LeanIn.Org to advance and improve the quality of life for our nation's Women Veterans.

The LeanIn Circle initiative responds to the top issues women Veterans continue to articulate to us and facilitates a stronger connection among women Veterans. For many years, women Veterans have continuously expressed to us that they would like to have a mechanism that allows them to engage with their fellow women Veterans and to make a difference in their communities. We believe this initiative is the perfect match. This strategic partnership will provide women Veterans with tools to enable them to make a difference "after the uniform" in their lives and the lives of their fellow women Veterans.

The *LeanIn.Org Women Veterans' Chapter* [www.leanin.org/womenvet/](http://www.leanin.org/womenvet/) is comprised of two distinct pilot programs: the Veteran-to-Veteran program and a face-to-face pilot circle. The Veteran-to-Veteran program is a virtual program that allows any woman Veteran to participate, no matter where she is located. Meetings will be moderated and attended by women Veterans throughout the United States. The face-to-face pilot circle is created in partnership with the existing LeanIn.Org chapter in Seattle, Washington. (*Continued on the next page*)

This circle is an innovative hybrid of women Veterans and non-military members, providing an environment for both to learn and share leadership skills.

LeanIn provides free tools and resources for creating successful peer mentorship. This program will provide a greater national network, for women Veterans to connect and share their stories. Through these collaborative efforts, women Veterans will be more connected and better equipped to support themselves and their peer Veteran community.

Joining the LeanIn Women Veterans' Chapter is simple. Just visit [leanin.org/womenvets](http://leanin.org/womenvets) for the Veteran-to-Veteran community, or <http://www.leaninseattle.org/veterans> for the community-to-Veteran meetings.

For more information, please view the Lean In Women Veterans Fact Sheet at [LeanIn.org](http://LeanIn.org) [www.leanin.org/womenvet/](http://www.leanin.org/womenvet/), or submit inquiries to [lean-in-women-Veterans+leaders@leanincircles.org](mailto:lean-in-women-Veterans+leaders@leanincircles.org). (Source: VA Center for Women Veterans)

## **VA staffing new White House VA Hotline Principally with**

**Veterans:** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that the two-month pilot phase of the new White House VA Hotline that began in June has demonstrated that Veterans calling the hotline respond best when their calls are answered by fellow Veterans and others with first-hand experience on their issues.

As a result, VA announced that it will target highly qualified Veterans to staff the hotline going forward, instead of contracting the service to a third-party vendor, and is hiring additional VA personnel to complete the planned move to a 24-hour operation.

“The message we’ve heard loud and clear is Veterans want to talk to other Veterans to help them solve problems and get VA services”, said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin. “Were taking steps to answer that call”.

This decision will delay the full-time stand-up of the 24-hour service by two months, to no later than October 15, in order to ensure the hiring and training processes are complete.

Until that time, the hotlines current pilot program service is available to receive calls from Veterans from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. The hotline number is 1-855-948-2311

## **myPay Support on DFAS** [[myPay.dfas.mil](http://myPay.dfas.mil)]

For problems using myPay, or with your myPay password, contact the DFAS Centralized Customer Support Unit toll-free at 1-888-332-7411 or commercial at (216)552-5096. You can also call DSN to 580 -5096. This support line is available Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm, Eastern Time.  
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The Centralized Customer Support Unit can provide assistance on how to use the options available to you in myPay. The support unit will also provide support for establishing and changing your password. For all other payroll information, please contact your servicing pay office or your customer service representative. *(Continued on the next page)*

Questions concerning specific pay account information should contact the servicing payroll office or the appropriate Customer Service rep as follows:

Military Retirees: 1-800-321-1080

Annuitant: 1-800-321-1080

Former Military Spouses: 1-888-332-7411

Military retirees that are in a non-pay status due to a VA Waiver or Combat Pay can still access myPay but will have limited options available. Questions should be referred to the customer service section listed above. You can also access your pay statement from the Main Menu of the myPay website by clicking on the Payment Information option. If you have trouble reading the graphic version of your pay statement, you can click on the Text Version link. The text version of your pay statement lists all of your pay data item information in a single column. (Source [www.myPay.dfas.mil](http://www.myPay.dfas.mil) )

## myPay on YouTube

If you've never opened a myPay account, need help changing your myPay password, or changing your email address in myPay, check out myPay's new online training tutorials available on [YouTube](#).

*(Source: DFAS myPay)*

**TRICARE Travel Information:** Travel information is available at:

<https://www.tricare.mil/FindDoctor/Traveling>

You're covered while traveling on business, vacation or when moving.

- You should get all routine care before you travel.
- It may not be authorized after you leave for your trip.

Your rules for getting care depend on your plan and travel destination. *(Source: Tricare)*

**How to Build a Better Password:** Use these password tips to protect against even the most powerful hacks and scams. Think of a computer password as being a front door to your wealth and secrets. It can be made of flimsy wood or as impenetrable as a titanium bank vault. Here's how to best secure your digital information.

**Use passphrases;** hackers use sophisticated software that can run millions of combinations of letters and symbols in a short time. Your defense: longer passwords. Former hacker Kevin Mitnick recommends 20 characters or longer. The trick: Use a sentence or phrase you create, such as "My Aunt Sylvia has loved me since I was a child." It's ultra-hard to hack but easy to remember. For even more security, add a number or symbol at the end, along with a capital letter or two.

**Add a second door;** two-factor authentication services add an extra layer of security to your most vital digital accounts. You log in to an account using your usual password. Next, the two-factor authentication site sends your phone a six-digit code that you must enter before gaining access. For a list of websites that offer two-factor authentication, go to [twofactorauth.org](http://twofactorauth.org).

**Keep your passwords in a vault;** never store passwords in a file on your computer. Instead, use password manager apps that store passwords in a well-protected digital space. All you need is a master password to access the list. Popular versions that use cloud technology include LastPass, Dashlane and 1Password. Apps that put the vault on your hard drive include RoboForm, Password Safe or KeePass.

**Refresh routinely;** once a year, change the passwords on all your important accounts. With hackers stealing data on millions of accounts at a time, this will help keep you protected if their focus turns toward you. Also change your password if you're notified by a website that its security has been breached.

**Vary your passwords;** that's the golden rule, cybersecurity experts say: Why let one key unlock every one of your digital doors? (Source: <http://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-2017/password-protection-tips.html> )

## **Annual Consent for Automatic Prescription Refills Begins September 1**

Beginning 01 September 2017, Express Scripts will need annual consent from patients who want to receive automatic refills of their maintenance medications enrolled in TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery. This means that just before one of your prescriptions runs out of refills, Express Scripts will reach out to you to know if you would like your doctor to be contacted to renew the prescription and if you'd like to continue in the Automatic Refill program.

**RAO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** Is retired life getting you down? Do you need a little something extra to help fill your days? The McChord Retiree Activities Office would like to help you out, we have ongoing needs for dedicated volunteers. The RAO desk is staffed by retiree volunteers, spouses and survivors. Our hours of operation are 0900 to 1200 hours Monday thru Friday. You may volunteer for one day a week, one day a month or as many days as you like, the choice is yours. Volunteers answer phones and do research on questions from fellow retirees, their spouses and survivor's questions on benefits such as Tricare, Tricare for Life, Delta Dental, Retiree Pay matters, and Veterans programs and more. Working with fellow retirees can be extremely enjoyable; it is a satisfying feeling knowing that you have helped a fellow retiree or survivor with their needs. It is also great to get together and rub elbows with your fellow retirees and their spouses all working together to help the local military retiree community. We host a business luncheon at the McChord Club on the second Thursday of each month. Feel free to stop by and check us out or you can call and volunteer at (253) 982-3214 or e-mail us at [rao@mcchord.af.mil](mailto:rao@mcchord.af.mil).

## HELPFUL LINKS

To find your state representative:

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

To find your state senators:

<http://www.senate.gov>

To find the VA:

<http://www.va.gov>

To find DFAS:

<http://www.dfas.mil>

To find Tricare:

<http://www.tricare.mil>

To schedule appointment to renew ID Card

<https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil>

### Link to Retiree Publications

*Army Echoes:*

<http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement>

*Navy Shift Colors:*

[www.shiftcolors.navy.mil](http://www.shiftcolors.navy.mil)

*Air Force Afterburner:*

[www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner](http://www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner)

*Marine Corps Semper Fidelis:*

[www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)

*Coast Guard Evening Colors:*

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/psc/ras>

### List of businesses who give military discounts

<http://www.rather-be-shopping.com/blog/2014/05/29/veteran-military-discounts/>

## VA benefits book available

The Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents & Survivors handbook is available – with 18 pages of new information. The book can be found at,

[http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book/2014\\_Federal\\_Benefits\\_for\\_Veterans\\_English.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/2014_Federal_Benefits_for_Veterans_English.pdf).

### Veterans Crisis Hotline

1-800-273-8255 press 1

#### **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

*Thank you for your support of the Hangar Flyer newsletter. If you have questions about anything pertaining to military retiree benefits and services, email us at; [retaffairs@us.af.mil](mailto:retaffairs@us.af.mil) or call us at the RAO. Hours are 9 to 12 Monday through Friday. After 12 please leave a message and we will call you back. The phone number is 253-982-3214*

*Thank you,*