

18 December 2017



Hangar Flying Newsletter

A Publication of the JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors.
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Season's Greetings, yet another year has too quickly flown by. We the staff and volunteers of the JBLM McChord Field RAO wish each and every one of you the **Happiest of Holidays** and a bright, prosperous, and eventful **New Year** for 2018.

Take Command: TRICARE Payment Types for Calendar Year 2018: With the Jan. 1, 2018 changes to [new stateside regions and contractors](#), you may need to update your [payment option](#) to guarantee continued payment of your TRICARE enrollment fees and monthly premiums.

There are currently three TRICARE regions in the United States. In the new year, TRICARE North and TRICARE South will combine to form TRICARE East. TRICARE West will largely remain the same.

TRICARE Is Changing. Here Is What You Need To Know: You will no longer be able to make payments via paper check. Acceptable [methods of payment](#) will continue to be allotment, electronic funds transfer, and debit or credit card. If you sign in to your regional contractor's website to make payments online, this option will also still exist.

If You Pay By Allotment Directly from Your Paycheck: If you currently pay your enrollment fees or premiums by allotment through a Defense Financing and Accounting Service (DFAS) or other Uniformed Services Pay Center, you will not need to update your payment information. Your payments will automatically transfer to the new regional contractor on Jan. 1, 2018. Unless you cancel your allotment, TRICARE will continue to deduct your enrollment fees and premiums.

If You Pay Through Electronic Funds Transfer or via Debit or Credit Card: If you live in an area where a new regional contractor will be delivering services, you'll need to update your payment information to go to your new regional contractor. This applies if you currently pay enrollment fees or premiums by electronic funds transfer from your checking or savings account or via a debit or credit card. Your new regional contractor will contact you with instructions on how to update your payment information.

You must proactively update your payment information to make sure payments start going to your new regional contractor and stop going to your previous regional contractor. This action will help you avoid disenrollment from TRICARE. The best way to prepare is to [update your information in DEERS](#), [sign up for TRICARE benefit updates](#) and visit the [TRICARE Changes](#) page.

Tricare Changes: How to find out if your doctor is still in the Tricare network? You can check to see if you'll be able to keep your current doctors and other health care providers after the change in Tricare contractors on Jan. 1.

Tricare West won't change, but the contractor will: Health Net Federal Services takes over as of Jan. 1. TRICARE West Provider Directory
<https://tricare-West.com/content/hnfs/home/tw/bene/provider-directory.html>

The Tricare West won't change, but the contractor will: Health Net Federal Services takes over as of Jan. 1. You should check the new directory to make sure your provider is still in the network. If you choose a health care provider that is not in the Tricare network, you may incur higher out-of-pocket costs.

Also if you have ongoing treatment pre-approval, you need to find out whether the new contractor accepts that authorization from the previous contractor. For More Information: UPCOMING TRICARE CHANGES - <https://tricare.mil/about/changes/> (Source: Health.mil)

Increases to TRICARE Pharmacy Copayments Starting Feb. 1, 2018: Feb. 1, 2018, copayments for prescription drugs at [TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery](#) and [retail pharmacies](#) will increase. The changes are required by law and affect TRICARE beneficiaries who are not active duty service members. While retail pharmacy and home delivery copayments will increase, prescriptions filled at [military pharmacies](#) remain available at no cost. You can save the most money by filling your prescriptions at military pharmacies.

“Military pharmacies and TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery will remain the lowest cost pharmacy option for TRICARE beneficiaries,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Ann McManis, Pharmacy Operations Division at the Defense Health Agency.

Using home delivery, the copayments for a 90-day supply of generic formulary drugs will increase from \$0 to \$7. For brand-name formulary drugs, copayments will increase from \$20 to \$24, and copayments for [non-formulary drugs](#) without a medical necessity will increase from \$49 to \$53.

At a retail network pharmacy, copayments for a 30-day supply of generic formulary drugs will increase from \$10 to \$11 and from \$24 to \$28 for brand-name formulary drugs. In some cases, survivors of active duty service members may be eligible for lower cost-sharing amounts.

TRICARE groups pharmacy drugs into three categories: generic formulary, brand-name formulary and non-formulary. You pay the least for generic formulary drugs and the most for non-formulary drugs, regardless of whether you get them from home delivery or a retail pharmacy.

To see the new TRICARE pharmacy copayments, visit www.tricare.mil/pharmacycosts. To learn more about the TRICARE Pharmacy Program, or move your prescriptions to home delivery, visit www.tricare.mil/pharmacy. (Source: *TriCare Communications Bulletin*)

DFAS ASK, IS YOUR BROWSER UP TO DATE? If you're using Internet Explorer, make sure it's version IE11 before accessing your *myPay* account. Beginning July 12, IE10 (and earlier versions) of internet explorer won't be able to get you to your account.

Updated browsers lower the risk from potentially compromised security protocols. Make sure you're using the latest version of your favorite web browser. [Learn more here.](#)

BEWARE! Smart Docs Scam: Several *myPay* customers have informed DFAS that fraudulent SmartDocs email messages are being sent that could put your information and finances at risk.

The reported invalid emails contain what appears to be from a valid SmartDocs email address. The originators of these emails have “spoofed” their messages to hide their true origin and placed the SmartDocs address in the “From” line to make the email appear legitimate.

Valid SmartDocs messages from DFAS are always sent in plain text, do not include attachments and do not ask you to send any information in response. Your email program may automatically convert a valid SmartDocs message into HTML and convert some text into clickable links. We recommend that you do NOT click on any links within any email message. To access a site referenced in an email, open your browser and type the link (URL) directly into the browser.

Don't get fooled. If you receive a SmartDocs message that contains a link, don't click on it. If a URL is listed in the message type it in manually within your browser. Delete unexpected or unsolicited messages that contain attachments or that request you to send information back.

Becoming a victim is easy. Utilizing a few basic precautions with email handling are critical to protecting your information, finances and identity. (*Source: DFAS*)

VA Announces Rollout and Application Process for New Veterans ID Card:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for Veterans — yet another action honoring their service.

This has been mandated through legislation since 2015 to honor Veterans, and this rollout of the ID card fulfills that overdue promise.

Only those Veterans with honorable service will be able to apply for the ID card, which will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to Veterans.

“The new Veterans Identification Card provides a safer and more convenient and efficient way for most Veterans to show proof of service,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “With the card, Veterans with honorable service to our nation will no longer need to carry around their paper DD-214s to obtain Veteran discounts and other services.” (*Continued on the next page*)

The VIC provides a more portable and secure alternative for those who served the minimum obligated time in service, but did not meet the retirement or medical discharge threshold. Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have a discharge of honorable or general (under honorable conditions) can request a VIC.

To request a VIC, Veterans must visit [vets.gov](https://www.vets.gov) <<https://www.vets.gov>> click on “Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card <<https://www.vets.gov/veteran-id-card/>>” on the bottom left of the page and sign in or create an account. Veterans who apply for a card should receive it within 60 days and can check delivery status of their cards at [vets.gov](https://www.vets.gov). A digital version of the VIC will be available online by mid-December. (SOURCE: *US Department of Veterans Affairs article, 29 November, at: <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=3979>*) **Addendum:** the program has temporarily been suspended due to an overwhelming demand for the card which overloaded the system.

VA Announces Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences

(CARE) Act: This Act will replace the current 30-day/40-mile System with Patient/Provider-centric Decision-making. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has presented the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees with the administrations draft proposal of the Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences (CARE) Act, designed to improve Veterans experiences with and access to health care, building on the best features of VAs existing community care programs and strengthening VAs ability to furnish care in its facilities.

In order to meet Veterans needs quickly and in a way that is easy to understand, the bill aims to:

- Clarify and simplify eligibility requirements,
- Set the framework for VA to continue to build a high-performing network,
- Streamline clinical and administrative processes,
- Implement new care coordination support for Veterans, and Merge and modernize community care programs.

We want Veterans to work with their VA physicians to make informed decisions that are best for their clinical needs, whether in the VA or in the community, and this bill does just that, while strengthening VA services at the same time, said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin.

The bill would replace the current wait-time and distance eligibility criteria under the Choice Program (30-day/40-mile) with criteria that will:

- Place the Veteran and his or her physician at the center of the decision process on how and where to get the best care available,
- Ensure VA is improving medical facilities and staffing levels to meet Veterans needs in areas where VA care is substandard, and
- Offer options for Veterans to use a network of walk-in clinics for minor illnesses and injuries.

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The CARE Act also includes:

- Proposals for new workforce tools to assist in maintaining and strengthening VAs world-class medical staff,
- A number of business process enhancements to improve financial management of the Community Care program,
- Provisions that would strengthen VAs ability to partner with other federal agencies and streamline VAs real property management authorities.

More information about access to care at the VA can be found at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/>.

(Source: VA. News releases)

Veterans AFFAIRS (VA) Prioritizes Improving Veterans Access to Pro Bono Legal Services: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), together with the American Bar Association, The Veterans Consortium and National Law School Veterans Clinic Consortium, signed a Memorandum of Agreement aimed at improving Veterans access to free legal services.

Veterans often face stressful legal problems such as eviction, foreclosure, child support, or driver's license revocations that can affect their ability to gain or maintain employment and housing or focus on medical treatment. In VAs annual Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups survey, legal assistance repeatedly tops the list of homeless Veterans unmet needs.

We are 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 that threaten their health and well-being, said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. By signing this agreement, we are documenting a shared commitment to better facilitate Veterans access to legal services.

Currently, VA hosts at least 165 free legal clinics in its VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers across the country by partnering with external, legal-service providers, such as local bar associations, legal-aid organizations and law school clinics.

If a Veteran needs legal assistance, they may contact one of the listed legal service clinics, visit www.statesidelegal.org * or [Pro Bono Resources for Veterans](#) *. You may also contact your local VJO Specialist who may know of community resources for legal assistance.

More information on VAs coordination of legal services for Veterans at VA facilities may be found at <https://www.va.gov/OGC/LegalServices.asp>. *(Source: VA News Releases)*

VA to Provide Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy to Some Veterans with Chronic PTSD: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will offer Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) as a treatment option for a small number of Veterans with persistent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms resistant to standard options.
(Continued on the next page)

Providers from the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System and the VA Northern California Health Care System will partner with HBOT providers at the Tulsa Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center at Oklahoma State Medical Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the David Grant Medical Center on Travis Air Force Base, California, respectively, to provide this care.

HBOT is a procedure that increases oxygen in the body, under pressure, to encourage healing. Currently, HBOT is commonly used to treat carbon monoxide poisoning, divers sickness, enhanced healing of some wound problems, skin grafts, heat burns, crush injuries and other acute health-care issues that involve too little blood flow to a part of the body.

This use of HBOT for treatment of PTSD is considered an off-label use and will occur under the supervision of a trained physician. Separately, VA and the Department of Defense are planning a multisite research study to examine more fully the use of HBOT for patients diagnosed with PTSD.

As health-care leaders interested in innovative approaches to care, the VA Center for Compassionate Innovation (CCI) is facilitating use of HBOT for a subset of Veterans who have noticed no decrease of symptoms after receiving at least two evidenced-based treatments. CCI uses innovative approaches to treat conditions where traditional methods have been unsuccessful. VA will monitor the HBOT clinical demonstration project and the HBOT research study to help inform the potential for HBOT usage to treat a larger number of Veterans with PTSD.

For more information about VAs Center for Compassionate Innovation, go to <https://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/>. (Source: VA News Release)

Cost-of- Living Adjustment: In case you hadn't heard, Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employees Retirement System Federal retirees and survivors will receive a 2.0% Cost-of-Living adjustment (COLA) effective December 1, 2017. You will see the increase in your January 2, 2018 payment. (Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management)

Exchange's Extended Holiday Return Policy Gives Shoppers Peace of Mind: To make gift giving easier, the Army & Air Force Exchange service is extending its return policy for items purchased from Nov. 1 to Dec. 24, 2017.

The Exchange's standard policy allows returns anywhere from up to 15 to 90 days of purchase with a sales receipt. The holiday return/exchange policy extends these terms through Jan. 31, 2018. The extended return policy goes the extra mile to make sure everyone gets the perfect gift this year.

Refunds with sales receipts are processed as forms of payment (cash for cash, credit for credit card). Refunds without sales receipts receive an Exchange gift card. For more information about the extended refund policy, shoppers can visit customer service at their nearest Exchange. (Source: Army & Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs NEWS RELEASE: 17-098)

Volunteers Welcomed: Volunteering is a rewarding experience; there are many programs and activities within the military community that could not exist if it were not for the many volunteers doing the work to help make things happen.

Be a Volunteer at the RAO: If you have been looking for a fun, creative and rewarding way to stay involved in the McChord Military Retiree community, then volunteering is the answer. At the McChord Retiree Activities Office, you can easily join our volunteer staff. Hands on training will be provided and you will be working with a great team of volunteers who are military retirees and spouses providing their time, skills, talents and wisdom towards helping both the active military and retiree communities. For more information you can contact us at 253-982-3214 or stop by the office in building 100 Customer Service Mall.

There are many opportunities for volunteers: If you are a retired aircraft mechanic the McChord Heritage Museum can use your help restoring and maintain the Heritage Museum's many aircraft, contact Mr. Jordon at 253-982-2485. The USO, the Red Cross, the base clinic and the American Lake VA Hospital also need volunteers.

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

Air Force Afterburner:

www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner

Marine Corps Semper Fidelis:

[www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MM/SR/RET_ACT/Semper Fidelis](http://www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MM/SR/RET_ACT/Semper+Fidelis)

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.

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 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

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