

CalVet CONNECT

Soto, Ernest L., 37, USAF
on, Ralph H., 19, USMC * PFC, Brooks.
Chappell, James D., 21,
Granville, John E., 58, USMC * Capt.
Richard M., 59, USA * Lt., Swick,
SA * PO3C. Van Wyk,
hon. Robert G., 23, USN * SN, Clute,
21, USN * GAC,
10, USN * GAC,
19, USN * SA, Ken
19, USN * SA, Ken



CALVET
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Remembering
— CALIFORNIA'S —
Heroes



Acting Secretary's Message

During April, cooler Winter temperatures give way to warm Spring days, and nature's blooms add beauty to our world. This month, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) also changes in preparation for major Veterans events taking place statewide.

In this month's CalVet Connect, we offer more news and information important to our Veterans' and their families. First of all, we are pleased that Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. appointed Lancaster Veterans Home resident John Gonzalez to the California Veterans Board. Gonzalez, who served in the U.S. Army from 1960 to 1968, also continues serving as Treasurer of our Lancaster Veterans Home Resident Council.

The Monterey Bay area community recently rolled out the red carpet and broke ground at the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery site on the former Fort Ord Army post. Though it took 25 years to break ground, once completed, the 17-acre cemetery provides a final resting place and lasting tribute for Veterans and spouses who served to preserve our freedoms.

I am very pleased to have been part of the unveiling of 32 additional names on the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento on March 29. The historic event brought together Vietnam Veterans and their families in a solemn and patriotic ceremony honoring the sacrifices made by Californians during the Vietnam War.

Thanks to a funding from CalVet, Contra Costa County Veterans now enjoy "Veterans' Voices," a public access television program hosted by Kevin Graves, a CalVet Local Interagency Network Coordinator. The monthly program provides information for and about Veterans and their families. Invited guests speak about posttraumatic stress disorder, suicide prevention, Veteran caregiver support, and other topics that spur live discussion with callers.

Memorial Day is fast approaching, and we look forward to participating in community events taking place statewide. CalVet is also gearing up for Veterans Service Organization conventions in June as well as stand downs for homeless Veterans statewide during July.

Our efforts to recruit compassionate, professional, and dedicated staff continue at our Veterans Homes as well as our efforts to admit new Veteran residents.

As you enjoy our warmer weather, please remember the freedoms that we enjoy are based on the dedication and sacrifice of our service members, Veterans, and their families.

Sincerely,

Debbie Endsley
Acting Secretary
California Department of Veterans Affairs



Hidden Voices: Mexican American Women and War

On March 26, 2015, Sierra College in Rocklin presented “Hidden Voices: Mexican American Women of WWII” as part of its annual César E. Chávez Higher Education Speaker Series.

Among other notable speakers, this popular event featured two well-known California women Veterans: Brigadier General Sylvia Crockett, California Military Department, and Mirtha Villarreal-Younger, Deputy Secretary, Minority Veterans Affairs, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). Each spoke about their own experience as a military woman.

The speaker series is intended to advance the social justice and cultural awareness agenda César Chávez and others worked so hard to achieve. The focus of this year’s event was the

silent voices of our Veterans who served in our Armed Forces during World War II and the family members who suffered alongside their uniformed loved ones. Their silent, patriotic voices help widen our understanding of nationalism, pride, and honor.

Described as a “very rare national gem,” Consuelo Macias Hartsell, who served as a sergeant with the United States Marine Corps during World War II, spoke at the event. In addition, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, University of Texas at Austin, associate professor and author, shared her work as founder and national director of the Voces Oral History Project that documents the contributions of U.S. Latinos and Latinas of the WWII, Korean War and Vietnam War generations.

CalVet Announces Veteran Stand Down Funding Availability

On March 9, 2015, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) announced funding available to organizations conducting homeless Veteran outreach events (i.e., stand downs, Veteran health fairs, etc.). The funding announced for Fiscal Year 2015-16 is available for events held from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

If you are interested in applying, you must complete the funding application package and Form STD 204 found under the Resources tab at www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/Stand-Downs.aspx. The application deadline is April 30, 2015.

If you have questions about the funding availability or the application process, you may call our Veterans Services Division at (916) 653-2573 or (877) 741-8532 toll free.



Governor Appoints Lancaster Veterans Home Resident to CalVet Board

By Jeanne Bonfilio

The William J. "Pete" Knight Veterans Home of California – Lancaster proudly announces the appointment of resident John Gonzalez to the California Veterans Board. Home Administrator Norman Andrews administered the oath at the swearing-in ceremony on February 26, 2015.

The seven-member Board, appointed by the Governor and subject to State Senate confirmation, advocates for Veterans and works to ensure and enhance our Veterans' rights and benefits and those of their dependents and survivors. The Board meets every other month throughout the state.

"We are all excited to have a representative from our Lancaster Home serving on the

CalVet Board," said Andrews. "I appreciate John's willingness to serve!" Gonzalez's term is four years.

Gonzalez moved into our Veterans home three years ago. "Becoming a resident at the Lancaster Veterans Home was the best choice I ever made in my life," Gonzalez said. "They take great care of everything!"

Gonzalez served in the U.S. Army from 1960 to 1968. "It was my honor and duty to serve in the military, and becoming a Board member is continuing that honor and duty," Gonzalez said. Gonzalez also serves as Treasurer for the Lancaster Veterans Home Resident Council.

* WO Storey, Robert L., 22, USA * LCpl. Lake, Harold L., 19, USMC
 * HM3 Parsons, Douglas B., 22, USN * Sgt. Webster, Christopher C., 21, USA * SSgt. Schoepflin, Charles D.,
 37, USA * Maj. Baldwin, Robert L., 34, USAF * Col. DeSoto, Ernest L., 37, USAF
 * PFC Whiting, Malcolm D. III, 21, USMC * PFC Johnson, Ralph H., 19, USMC * PFC, Brooks,
 Johnny O., 62, USA * SSgt., Carson, Donald S., 32, USAF * SPC, Chappell, James D., 21,
 USA * Lt.JG, Desilets, David M., 26, USN * LCpl., Granville, John E., 58, USMC * Capt.,
 McCormick, Thomas R., 26, USAF * Sgt., Pruett, Richard M., 59, USA * Lt., Swick, Robert
 M., 49, USA * CWO., Tortorice, Richard J., 34, USA * PO3C, Van Wyk, John H., 23, USN
 * YN3, Botto, Andrew J., 21, USN * ENS, Brandon, Robert G., 23, USN * BT2, Brown,
 William D., II, 23, USN * RD2, Carlson, Christopher J., 24, USN * SN, Clute, Danny V.,
 19, USN * SA, Craig, Joe E., 20, USN * SA, Deal, Leon L., 19, USN * SA, Frye, Henry K., 21, USN *
 Steven F., 20, USN * SA, Fields, William D., 18, USN * SA, Devere R., Jr., 19, USN * SA, Kerr, James
 SN, Garcia, Francis J., 21, USN * SA, Grissom, Devere R., Jr., 19, USN * SA, Melendrez, Andrew M., 19, USN *
 W., 18, USN * SA, Lyons, Issac, Jr., 19, USN * SA, Pennell, Craig A., 19, USN * STG2, Spray, John
 R., 25, USN * Lt.JG, Stever, Jon K., 24, USN * RD2, Thibodeau, Ronald A., 23, USN *
 SA, Tolar, John T., 18, USN * BT3, Reilly, Lawrence J., Jr., 20, USN

32 Names added to California Vietnam Veterans Memorial

On Sunday, March 29, 2015, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Honor Committee, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 500 Sacramento Valley hosted a ceremony unveiling 32 new names engraved on the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento's Capitol Park.

"CalVet is privileged to honor our Vietnam Veterans who died in service to our country," said CalVet Acting Secretary Debbie Endsley. "Sunday's poignant ceremony provides our state an opportunity to display our everlasting gratitude."

Among the 32 additions are the names of 10 California Veterans already engraved on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC and inadvertently not placed

on California's memorial. The remaining 22 names represent California Veterans who died aboard the USS Frank E. Evans when the ship sank in the South China Sea on June 3, 1969. The ship's home port was Long Beach.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Honor Committee was created when Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed Assembly Bill 287 into law on September 6, 2013. The Committee is tasked with compiling a list of names of Vietnam Veterans from California to be added to the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Committee is also tasked with including the names of California Veterans who later died as a result of illness or injuries, including physical or mental injuries documented by the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, or licensed medical professionals, that can

reasonably be assumed to have resulted from military service in the Vietnam War. Under the provisions of the law, written by Assemblymember Jim Frazier, Jr., the Committee must compile a list of names to be added to the memorial by November 1 of each year. The unveiling occurs March 29, the day before "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" events scheduled for March 30.

For more information on the 32 Veteran names added or how to request a Veteran name be added, please visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Honor Committee webpage at www.calvet.ca.gov/vietnam.





Japanese Healthcare Professionals Tour West LA Veterans Home

By Jeanne Bonfilio

Two delegations of Japanese physicians, social workers, physical therapists, dieticians, marketing professionals, and students recently toured our Veterans Home of California - West Los Angeles.

Our guests were in town to gather state-of-the-art healthcare information and share best practices with Home staff and other West Coast healthcare professionals. The tour was coordinated by Dr. Cantrell along with Acting Administrator Manalo and Nurse Practitioner Keiko Kanzaki.

Staff found the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with their Japanese visitors especially meaningful and enjoyable. Our visitors appreciated chatting with several Home residents, who, having spent time in Japan during their military careers, showed an impressive command of the Japanese language.

The Japanese delegations from Kyushu Island in Northern Japan, had extensive experience in acute hospital care, rehabilitation care, skilled nursing facility care, outpatient clinic care, and senior daycare.

Community Breaks Ground on the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery

On March 13, 2015, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), the Fort Ord Reuse Authority, the County of Monterey, and the City of Seaside broke ground on the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery (CCCVC) in Seaside, California. The site covers more than 78 acres on the former Fort Ord Army post and provides a final resting place and lasting tribute for Veterans and spouses who served to preserve our freedoms. The location memorializes the Monterey Bay area's rich military history.

"Establishing our new Veterans cemetery has been the mission of highly dedicated Veterans and family members in the community for nearly 25 years," said CalVet's Keith Boylan, Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services. "Today, we move one giant step closer toward making their dream a reality."

Construction is made possible by a \$6.8 million grant to CalVet by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In February 2015, Phase I initial construction preparation began at the beautiful location designed to provide a place of final rest for Veterans and their spouses. Phase I will include the construction of the main entrance, roads, an assembly area, a committal shelter, columbaria, 5,000 columbarium niches, landscaping, a memorial walkway, and supporting infrastructure for 17 acres. Phase I has an anticipated completion date of July 2016.

To help determine if you and your spouse are eligible for burial in a Veterans cemetery, please visit www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/Cemeteries-and-Burials.aspx. If you would like to receive CCCVC burial updates, please visit the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery Foundation web site at www.ccvcf.com or call (831) 218-7180.



Access Television Program Funded by CalVet Helps Local Veterans

A special television program in Contra Costa County is providing details about Veterans benefits and bringing important news to Veterans and their families.

Veterans' Voices, a once-a-month public access television program funded by a \$25,000 grant from the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), is dedicated to providing information to help Veterans transition into the civilian world and improving quality of life for Veterans and their families.

Marine Corps Veteran Nathan Johnson, Contra Costa County Veteran Service Officer, and CalVet Local Interagency Network Coordinator (LINC) Kevin Graves serve as the show's hosts. Graves's son, Army Specialist Joseph Graves,

was killed in action while on patrol in Iraq in 2006.

Veterans' Voices covers a wide range of topics, including post-traumatic stress recognition and assistance, suicide prevention, and caregiver support for Veterans.

The interviews with special guests, such as former combat medic Jason Deitch, powerfully impact viewers. Deitch's highly acclaimed virtual online exhibit, War Ink, featured in California State Libraries, visually describes Veterans' journeys through combat and back as told by their tattoos.

The heart of the Veterans' Voices broadcast is the interaction with Veterans who stop by to relate their diverse experiences. "It may be

an event they've experienced or a challenge they've overcome, or even just who they are as people, who they are as service members," said Johnson.

Veterans, family members, caregivers, and friends all are encouraged to call in or e-mail during live broadcast of the show.

According to CalVet LINC Graves, "It takes a complete community to help reintegrate and support our Veterans. A show like this allows us to bring guests on who make the public more aware of what Veterans' needs are. The intent of the show is that those needs will be better met."

For more information about the program and links to recordings of prior broadcasts, please visit www.contracosta.ca.gov/5163/Veterans-Voices.

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**Veterans
Choice Card
Temporary Program****Name:** PAUL HARRIS**Member ID:****Date of Issuance:** January 2015

Call 1-866-606-8198 for information or to make an appointment

This card does not provide pre-approval. Veterans may be liable for the cost of care that is not pre-approved

Clearing Up Veterans Choice Card Confusion

By California Association of County Veterans Service Officers

Many Veterans recently received a white card in the mail from the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA) card is named after a law enacted by Congress and signed by President Obama in August 2014, to improve health care for Veterans.

The VACAA or "Choice" cards do not give Veterans permission to go wherever they want, whenever they want for health care, and it is not a fee-basis card for emergency treatment. Before using the card, a Veteran must call the USDVA at (866) 606-8198 to get permission. The Veteran who mistakenly uses the Choice card without USDVA pre-approval will most likely be held responsible for the medical charges.

Distribution of the cards began on November 4, 2014, and ended in January 2015. All cards should have been received by mid-February 2015.

In light of health care system problems revealed last year, the cards were born out of USDVA's desire to ensure Veterans do not have to wait to see a primary care physician. The Choice card is designed to supplement the care Veterans receive at local USDVA medical facilities

The Choice card provides a safety net for Veterans who are on a USDVA waiting list because a health care appointment was not available to them within 30 days of their preferred date or the date determined medically necessary by their physician. The card also services those who live more than 40 miles from the closest USDVA medical facility.

If you believe any of those circumstances apply to you, contact the USDVA at (866) 606-8198 to verify you are eligible to use your card. Once USDVA determines eligibility, USDVA will help you through the process of obtaining an appointment for care.

If you would like to obtain a regular Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), you can apply at your local County Veteran Service Office (CVSO). To view a list of CVSO offices, please visit <http://www.cacvso.org/county-contacts>. The VHIC is issued only to Veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system.

Auto Repair Licensing Assistance for Military Personnel and Veterans

By Bureau of Automotive Repair

Veterans gain valuable occupational skills, experience, and training while serving in the military. However, for some Veterans seeking civilian jobs, translating military know-how into civilian employment is often a challenge.

To address these needs, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed a comprehensive package of laws in September 2012, that improved services and established opportunities for transitioning military Veterans. The Department of Consumer Affairs and the California Military Department worked together to create special programs to assist Veterans in their transition to civilian employment.

Citing large numbers of Veterans with the necessary skills for and interest in automotive careers, the vocational field of automotive repair was established as a Veteran pathway to civilian employment. In particular, Smog Check stations benefit by hiring a highly skilled Veteran workforce. Besides technical skills, Veterans bring with them professionalism, leadership, and motivation that contribute directly to businesses' bottom lines and our economy.

The Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) is pleased to offer Veterans who want a career as a licensed Smog Check Inspector or Technician a streamlined, just-for-Vets program called Military Veterans Application Assistance.

The program assists Veterans by providing:

- » Specially trained staff to evaluate transferable military training and experience that meets minimum licensure requirements;
- » Expedited application processing; and
- » Direct phone and e-mail contact with BAR licensing staff.

In addition to Veterans, the program offers assistance to military personnel and their spouses or domestic partners.

If you have questions or believe you qualify for any of the above programs, contact the BAR Licensing Unit at (916) 403-8477 or toll-free at (855) 735-0462.

Visit www.bar.ca.gov for more information and to download a licensing application.

USDVA Changes its 40-Mile Rule

On March 24, 2015, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) announced it will change the calculation used to determine the distance between a Veteran's residence and the nearest USDVA medical facility. That calculation is used to determine Veteran eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program. The policy change will be made through regulatory action in the coming weeks. USDVA estimates the change to roughly double the number of Veterans eligible for the program.

Under the new distance calculation, a Veteran who lives less than 40 miles, straight-line distance, from the nearest USDVA medical

facility, but who needs to physically drive more than 40 miles to get there would be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. Under the previous straight-line distance calculation, this Veteran would not be eligible for the Program unless they were waiting for an appointment longer than 30 days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.

The Veterans Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows eligible Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a USDVA appointment or traveling to a USDVA facility. Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program should call (866) 606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment.

A fact sheet on the USDVA 40-mile-rule change can be found at www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/FactSheets/Progress-Report-March-2015-Fact-Sheet.pdf.

Scammers Pose as Charities for Veterans

Many community organizations raise funds to support members of our Armed Forces, Veterans, and their families. But not all of these “charities” are the real deal. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) encourage you to do some research to make sure the contribution you are about to make will go to a legitimate organization and not into scammers’ pockets.

How the Scam Works

You receive a solicitation from a charity that claims to be collecting donations to help our troops, Veterans, and their families. The solicitation may take the form of a postcard sent via U.S. Mail, an e-mail message, a social media post, or a plea by someone asking

for donations by going door-to-door. Sometimes you’ll see people collecting donations at patriotically decorated tables during sporting events and other public gatherings.

But just because the solicitation claims to be collecting money for military and Veterans’ causes, doesn’t mean the funds are really going there. Charity fraud varies from outright scams to a misrepresentation of the percentage of each donation actually going to support the cause.

In February, Grass Valley police arrested a Citrus Heights man after they discovered the man was collecting donations for a nonprofit group that helps Veterans in need. The man was allegedly collecting donations for Veterans but pocketing the money himself. At this writing, the amount of money the man collected is not yet known, but the investigation remains ongoing.

Protect yourself from charity scammers

- » Verify the organization name. Many scammers name their charities using virtually the same words as a legitimate nonprofit organization, but in a different order or slightly different form.
- » Look for a clear description of the organization’s programs. Is there an explanation of the organization’s services (e.g., financial assistance, shelter, counseling) on the organization’s fundraising flyer or web site? Is it clear where the services are available, how they are provided, who is eligible to receive them, and how to apply for them?
- » Don’t be pressured into acting immediately. However you are solicited, take as much time as you need to consider any plea for donation before giving money.

Scams>



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- » Ask for written information about the charity before making a donation.
- » Check with outside sources before giving. Visit www.give.org to access reports that summarize rigorous evaluations in relation to 20 holistic Better Business Bureau Charity Standards related to governance, results reporting, finances and appeal accuracy. Also, you can find a list of Veteran Service Organizations by visiting the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website: www1.va.gov/vso/index.asp and information about Military Service Organizations (MSO) by visiting the U.S. Military Community Information and Outreach website at www.bullseyelocations.com/pages/MCO.

To read the FTC alert about scammers posing as Veterans' charities, visit www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/veterans-empowered-fight-fraud.



New Phone Scam Targeting Veterans

Unscrupulous scammers are targeting America's Veterans, especially our older Veterans. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) warns Veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update USDVA prescription information. USDVA does not call Veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone.

The latest scam comes from callers who identify themselves as working for the "Patient Care Group." They say USDVA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the Veteran's credit card number. However, according to USDVA, its processes for dispensing prescription medicines have not been changed and neither has its long-standing commitment to protect the personal information of our Veterans.

Veterans with questions about USDVA services should contact the nearest USDVA medical center or call (877) 222-8387, toll free.



CALVET
HOME LOANS

**VETERANS
PURCHASING A HOME
IN CALIFORNIA**

RATES AS LOW AS

3.75%*

NO MONEY DOWN**

For more information contact
(866) 653-2510 or
loanapps@calvet.ca.gov



*4.09% - Estimated total monthly payment/APR based on a \$200K sales price, no down payment & financing of the VA funding fee under the CalVet/VA program, \$200K assessed value, mandatory hazard, and disaster indemnity insurance. Limited to available funds. Rates are subject to change.
** Not all buyers will qualify.



and family activities—creating lasting memories and easing transition. The service is free and creates no obligation on the part of users.

Vet Tix already donated more than one million event tickets nationwide to currently serving military, honorably discharged Veterans, and primary next of kin of service members killed in action. Spouses of those deployed can use the tickets in the service members' absence.

Vet Tix is one of many community service organizations listed on the U.S. Department of Defense website at www.ourmilitary.mil/comprehensive-list-of-community-support-groups.

To sign up for Vet Tix, visit www.vettix.org/ref/167415. To read thank-you notes from those who have received Vet Tix services, visit www.vettix.org/feedback.php.

Nonprofit Offers Free Tickets to Active Military, Veterans, Families

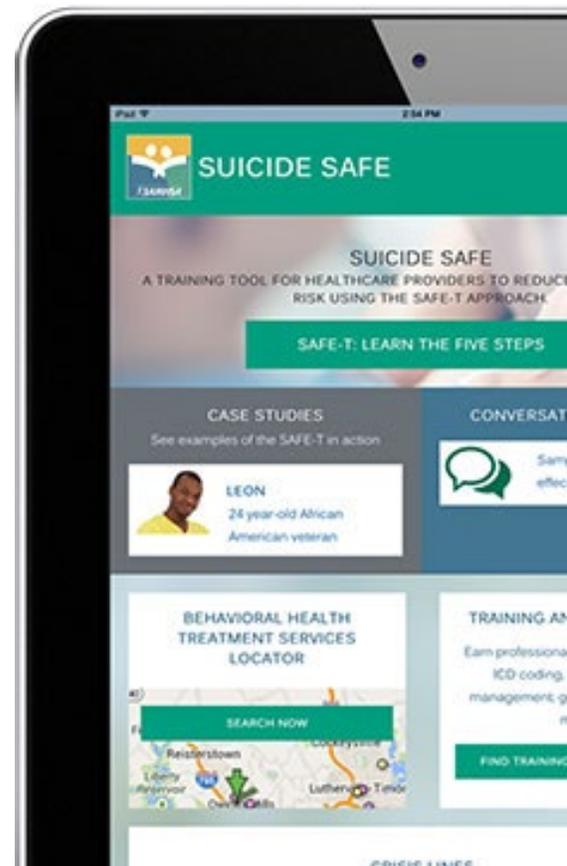
The Veteran Tickets Foundation, also known as Vet Tix, is a nationally recognized nonprofit Veterans support organization whose mission is to give something to those who gave. Vet Tix teams up with major sports teams, leagues, promoters, organizations, companies, venues and everyday event ticket holders to provide free and discounted tickets to the more than 26 million active military, Veterans, and their families. Tickets are available to sporting events, concerts,

Suicide Safe App Available

At a recent National Press Club event, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Administrator Pamela S. Hyde unveiled Suicide Safe, the latest mobile app from SAMHSA.

The app, based on the nationally recognized Suicide Assessment Five-Step Evaluation and Triage (SAFE-T) card (<http://1.usa.gov/1FbJ8JE>), is designed to help primary care and behavioral health providers integrate suicide prevention strategies into their practices and address suicide risk among their patients.

Suicide Safe is now available for free on iOS® and Android™ mobile devices.



Individual Unemployability: Understanding the Basics

By Dominique Joseph, USDVA Claims Processor

As a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) claims processor, Veterans often ask me about Individual Unemployability (IU), also called Total Disability based on Individual Unemployability (TDIU). The following is a more formal version of what I tell them.

What is IU?

Individual Unemployability allows USDVA to pay certain Veterans at the 100-percent disability rate, even though their service-connected disabilities are not rated as 100-percent disabling. Veterans may be eligible for this rating increase if they are either unemployed or unable to maintain substantially gainful employment as a result of their service-connected disability (or disabilities).

What is substantially gainful employment?

Substantially gainful employment is simply full-time employment that provides a wage greater than the poverty level. (Note: In 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau considered a poverty-level, yearly wage for a person under the age of 65 to be \$12,316.) For instance, if a Veteran has been trained to drive a truck, but can't work because of service-connected back and stomach conditions, he or she may qualify for IU.

Are there any other eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for IU, you must have one of the following:

1. A 60-percent or more disability evaluation based on a single service-connected disability; or,
2. A 70-percent combined disability evaluation based on multiple service-connected disabilities, with at least one disability rated at 40 percent or more. In these cases, USDVA will consider a Veteran's eligibility for IU, if there is evidence showing he or she cannot work due to service-connected disabilities. In both instances, USDVA reviews all the evidence of record and decides if a Veteran's disability is, by law, severe enough to grant IU.

IU >

CalVet Strike Team Update

CalVet Strike Team claims review efforts in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Oakland as of March 27, 2015.

Number of Claims Reviewed	50,894
Lump Sum Payments Total	\$56,266,608*
Monthly Award Payments Total	\$7,329,744
Annualized Monthly Awards Payment Total	\$87,957,282**

*Retroactive payments based on the time the claim has been sitting at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Payments going to California veterans every year for the rest of their lives.

CalVet Small Business/ DVBE Update

CalVet's February Small Business (SB) / Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) Monthly Report for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 reflected the following estimates:

- Agency Total: **SB increase to 30.22% from 27.93%**
- Agency Total: **DVBE increase to 8.67% from 7.36%**

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Let's use a hypothetical situation. Say a Veteran claims he can't work and doesn't understand why he isn't getting IU. He is service-connected at 30 percent for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 10 percent for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Since the Veteran has only two service-connected disabilities, both the Veteran's PTSD and IBS have to be evaluated at a higher combined rate and be the reason he can't work to receive IU.

How is the way VA decides total disability different from other agencies?

The law requires different criteria for other government agencies that process disability benefit claims. The Social Security Administration, for example, requires a claimant to be totally disabled after considering age, education, and prior work experience in order to be eligible for social security disability. USDVA only considers service-connected disabilities when considering entitlement to IU, and those disabilities must be the reason the Veteran can no longer be gainfully employed. IU is meant to compensate a Veteran for service-connected disability or disabilities which do not meet the scheduler requirements for a total evaluation at the 100-percent rate.

If you think you fall into this category, I encourage you to work with a Veterans Service Organization, a state or county service officer, or see your public contact team at your nearest regional office. You can also find more information on our IU website, www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-individual_unemployability.asp.

Source: USDVA Web Site. Posted March 6, 2015.

USDVA Launches Make the Connection: A New, Comprehensive Resource for Veterans and Families

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recently launched Make the Connection, a one-stop, online resource allowing Veterans and their families to privately explore topics about wellness and mental health. Unlike other mental health outreach programs, Make the Connection features a rich video library of Veterans telling how they overcame mental health challenges to encourage their peers to seek assistance.

The web site allows users to click on tabs that take them to information, resources, and videos specifically for Veterans, friends and family, National Guard and Reserve, active duty, partners, and clinicians. Users can also search content by life events or experiences, including family and relationships, transitioning from service, death of family or friends, and jobs and employment. The site features a self-assessment tool and solutions for self-help.

Take advantage of what Make the Connection has to offer or play a vital role in helping Veterans find the support they need by sharing the Make the Connection link. Visit www.maketheconnection.net today!

Association to Help Veterans Groups Provide Better Services

A first-of-its-kind membership organization is designed to improve Veteran services delivery by stoking information-sharing and coordination among the nation's more than 40,000 Veterans-focused groups.

The National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations (NASVO) recently launched but was two years in the making. According to the organization's Chief Executive, Chris Ford,

one of NASVO's main functions is to maintain a web platform on which like-minded professionals can communicate and share best practices.

To learn more about NASVO, read the full article in the The Chronicle of Philanthropy, <https://philanthropy.com/article/New-Association-Aims-to-Help/228213>, or visit the NASVO website at www.navso.org.



Formalizing the Process: New Law Mandates All Claims, Appeals Begin on Standard Forms

By Joseph R. Chenelly, Disabled American Veterans

The days of being able to informally start disability claims with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) by writing a simple statement on a sheet of paper are over. That will no longer secure an effective date for the evaluation of an award. New regulations going into effect March 24 will require claimants to use specific forms for claims and appeals.

The new regulations require that all claims to the USDVA be filed on standard forms, regardless of the type. The VA states that abolishing the longtime practice of informally initiating Veterans' disability claims will be one way of improving the quality and timeliness of processing.

"These new processes will leave no doubt as to the effective dates of claims," said [Disabled American Veterans (DAV)] National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "Of course, our 3,815 National, Department and Chapter Service Officers, including County Veteran Service Officers accredited by DAV, are ready to help everyone get through and understand these new requirements." The new regulation eliminates the practice of using reports of hospitalizations, examinations and other medical records to serve as the start of informal claims for increase or to reopen while retaining the retroactive effective dates.

The change also affects appeals. Under the new regulations, USDVA will accept an expression of dissatisfaction or disagreement with its decision as a Notice of Disagreement (NOD) only if it is submitted on a standardized USDVA form.

There are three major components to these changes. First, the traditional informal claims

process is being standardized with a new standard form, USDVA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, Survivors Pension, or Other Benefits. The form is designed to capture information necessary to identify and support compensation, pension and other benefit claims.

An individual or their representative can submit this form in order to establish a potential effective date for benefits and then take up to a year to gather the evidence necessary to support the claim. The form may be submitted electronically, on paper or over the phone. The form is electronically available through eBenefits. The form can be submitted there or in hard copy by mailing it to a DAV National Service Office. The form can also be completed by a USDVA call center representative over the phone or by a DAV National Service Officer (NSO).

Forms >

<Forms

Submitting an intent-to-file claim protects an effective date of benefits for up to one year, meaning individuals seeking compensation or pension benefits will have a full year to gather and submit evidence necessary to support their claim. The new rule does not require that evidence necessary to support a claim be submitted in order for the claim to be recognized as complete and for the VA to take action.

The new regulations allow USDVA to award increased benefits retroactive to the date of medical treatment, as long as the form is filed within one year of the treatment and the required claim form is filed within a year after that.

Second, if Veterans want to file for compensation, they can do so online. If that is not possible or desirable, use of the EZ forms becomes mandatory under the new regulations. USDVA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits, is needed for paper submissions. Pension claims must be filed on USDVA Form 21-527EZ, Application for Pension. Survivors' claims for dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), survivors' pension and accrued benefits must be filed on USDVA Form 21-534EZ, Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits.

The EZ forms were previously available on an optional basis. Under the new regulations, the USDVA will mandate their use. Veterans and survivors do not have to file fully developed claims (FDCs) when using these mandatory forms, but USDVA encourages FDC

participation because USDVA can expedite delivery of benefits through the FDC program.

Third, the changes mandate use of a standardized notice of disagreement form when a claimant wishes to initiate an appeal of a USDVA decision. Claimants will initiate the appeal of a decision with which they disagree by explaining their disagreement on USDVA Form 21-0958, Notice of Disagreement.

National Service Officers are being trained in these new regulations and forms, and this will be a key topic in this year's Department and Chapter Service Officer Certification Training Program.

*Source: DAV Magazine, March/April 2015.
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APRIL

CALENDAR

To view full calendar, visit
www.calvet.ca.gov/home/calendar

April 4

Women Veteran Recognition

American Legion Post 419
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
958 Homestead Road, Santa Clara
Contact: SFBaywomanvet@gmail.com

April 9-12

Traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Golden Gate National Cemetery
1300 Sneath Lane, San Bruno
Contact: (650) 589-7737

April 15

Underrepresented Veterans Forum

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
African American Art & Culture Complex
762 Fulton Street, San Francisco
Register: <http://conta.cc/1GMXT6k>

April 16

Career & Job Fair

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
West Hills Community College Gymnasium
300 Cherry Lane, Coalinga
Contact: (559) 934-3153

April 18

Cycle 4 Sight/Rotary Ride for Veterans

7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Justin Sienna High School
4026 Maher Street, Napa
Contact: (707) 257-5611

50th Vietnam Veterans Commemoration

7:45 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
National Training Center
Inner Loop Road & Barstow Road, Ft. Irwin
Contact: (760) 686-8266

April 22*

Veterans Opportunity Day

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Veterans Memorial Building
1771 E. Tulare Avenue, Tulare
Contact: (559) 684-4960
*Registration Closes 4/16/15

April 23

Honor a Hero, Hire a Vet

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
West Hills College Arena
555 College Avenue, Lemoore
Contact: (559) 852-2151

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