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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2014

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to learn about and secure the benefits they have earned is by visiting their local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org.

REGISTER FOR CALVET WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, AUGUST 24-25

Excitement grows as the 7th annual CalVet Summit for Women Veterans approaches. The Summit, titled "Bridging Gaps, Breaking Barriers," is scheduled for August 24-25, 2014 at the Sacramento Sheraton Grand Hotel.

The event features an array of dynamic speakers and offers workshops for educating women Veterans about how to access educational benefits, how to become financially astute and how to start a business. Attendees will also hear from employers from a variety of industries who offer information about how to get hired. The Summit also will have a clothes closet from which Women Veterans can select gently used and new business attire to look and feel their best at job interviews.

Keynote Speaker

Liz Perez–Halperin, a U.S. Navy Veteran who was deployed to Iraq and worked as an Aviation Logistics Specialist, will be Keynote Speaker. A successful entrepreneur, she is the founder and CEO of GC Green Incorporated, a general contracting and consulting firm focused on getting veterans into the green energy industry. In 2013, the White House named her a Champion of Change for her widely respected work on clean energy and environmental issues.

Ms. Perez-Halperin's address will focus on women transitioning from the military to successful careers, business ownership, and community service. These topics are of great importance to the hundreds of women expected to attend the Summit.

Awards at the Event

In addition, CalVet will present awards for Woman Veteran Leader of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Outstanding Volunteer, and California Corporate Leadership. The awards will be given to individuals who do an outstanding job serving Veterans in their community and women Veterans who demonstrate exemplary leadership in their communities.

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Secretary's Message

Please Join Us at 7th Annual Summit on Women Veterans

I cordially invite you to join Lindsey Sin, our Deputy Secretary of Women Veterans, and me at this year's exciting 7th annual CalVet Summit on Women Veterans

Our 2014 Summit is scheduled to be held from August 24-25, at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Sacramento. Our Summit theme this year is "Bridging Gaps, Breaking Barriers."

The event is open to the public. The cost is $45 to attend.

I truly believe our dynamic speakers, educational workshops, and other services have sparked a high level of interest so women Veterans from all over the Golden State are expected to attend.

Women Veterans can even select business attire from our "Dress Code Closet" and get tips on how to dress for interviews. In addition, our Summit offers information about educational benefits, financial literacy and healthcare.

My personal call to action to you is to attend our Summit. Next, please use your e-mail and social media and encourage others to register and attend.

I look forward to seeing you there and showing you how CalVet is an innovative agency focusing on the needs of all of our Veterans and families here in California.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Gravett

Peter J. Gravett, Major General (Ret)
Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON VETERAN SUICIDE INTERVENTION

By Roberto Herrera, ICV Health Workgroup Coordinator

The Gulf War, including Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and New Dawn, represent the longest conflict in our nation's history and the longest fought by our all-volunteer force. With 40% of service members deploying to war twice or more, the need for a robust public health model that is trained in military and Veteran culture is paramount. VA confirms 22 Veterans complete suicide every day. The Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans (ICV) Veteran Suicide Intervention and Prevention Sub-workgroup is currently exploring innovative ways to enhance behavioral health care for those who continue to sacrifice so much.

On July 10, 2014, the ICV Sub-workgroup presented to the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California. With more than 60 behavioral health staff in attendance, the one-hour presentation included segments from Army OneSource, the California Air National Guard, the California Department of Health Care Services, and the ICV.

Speaker Topics

Monica Pelaez, Army OneSource Community Support Coordinator, provided the context behind the most recent statistics regarding Veteran suicide. Lt. Col Susan Pangelinan, California Air National Guard, presented the conditions of combat deployment and the salience of the military population within the public health model. Duane Shaul, California Department of Health Care Services, provided the behavioral health directors examples of Veteran-specific treatment models currently taking place at California's county level. Pamela Rasada, ICV Administrative Officer, introduced the structure and history of the ICV, as well as an overview of the outreach and training resources provided to the audience.

Resource Packet

The ICV supplied each attendee with a resource packet that included little-to-no-cost outreach and training materials to implement within their respective counties. These resource packets included information on clinician specific CEU earning courses from Army OneSource and UCLA's Star Behavioral Health Providers Program. Additionally, each director was supplied with the instructions on how to acquire licenses for the LivingWorks suicide training "eSuicideTALK" as well as information on how to receive additional no-cost LivingWorks trainings through one of three CalMHSA Suicide Prevention Training Coordinators. Further, the ICV distributed outreach materials for the "Have You Ever Served" campaign, and with the support of CalVet's Veteran Services Division, each attendee received a copy of the California Department of Veteran Affair's 2014 "California Veterans Resource Book" and "If You Served You Earned" trifold.

Through educating the briefing attendees, this presentation serves to enhance Veteran behavioral health outcomes and raise public awareness of the suicide epidemic currently taking place within the nation's Veteran population.

"It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion . . . " Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, 1863

For general ICV inquires or to participate within any meeting, please contact the Health Workgroup Coordinator Roberto Herrera at (916) 503-8048 or Roberto.Herrera@icv.ca.gov.

CALVET LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP GROWS

The amazing Veterans service partnership between CalVet and the California State Library continues growing! Our relationship began in 2012 when the two state agencies began a year-long pilot program to establish Veterans resource centers in Bakersfield, San Diego and Redding library branches. The pilot program was successful, and continued funding supports ongoing efforts to take the program statewide.

"We are opening our Veterans Resource Centers to make it easier for our Veterans and their families to connect with state and federal benefits earned through their military service," said Keith Boylan, CalVet Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services. "Making benefits information and assistance available in branch libraries is a great way to reach our Veterans close to where they live and work."

There are currently nine grant-funded libraries throughout the state and an additional seven libraries agreed to provide veteran information and assistance even though they are not receiving the grant funding. Participating libraries are located in Bakersfield, El Centro, Folsom, Fresno, Los Angeles, Oceanside, Perris, Pleasanton, Redding, Sacramento, San Diego, San Rafael, Santa Ana, Santa Cruz, Ventura, and Whittier.

That list might expand by as many as 15 more libraries thanks to approval of Veterans Connect @ the Library grant funding for Fiscal Year 2014-15. A recent webinar hosted by Infopeople, an arm of the California State Library, and open to libraries statewide, educated libraries unfamiliar with the program and generated widespread interest in joining the Veterans Resource Center collaborative.

In addition, Pacific Library Partnership, a joint powers agency working in partnership with the California State Library, recently was awarded a California Volunteers Planning Grant to develop an AmeriCorps program in public libraries. Beginning in October 2015, the grant will be used to determine how best to expand the existing public library program.

AmeriCorps members, placed in and working from libraries whose communities have large Veteran populations and/or limited Veteran services, will provide the needed resources to expand and impact the efforts of CalVet and other Veteran service organizations to increase usage of state and federal Veterans benefits. AmeriCorps members will also Veterans and their families to library services and programming.

The program is funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services with direction and volunteer staff training provided by CalVet and program administration provided by Pacific Library Partnership, an organization that works to consolidate library systems throughout the state to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale.

For partner library locations and contact information, go to http://caveterans.org/resources-for-veterans.

<< CONFERENCE

Thank You to our Sponsors

This year's Summit is possible due to funding provided by VetFund Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit promoting the interests of California Veterans and active duty service members. Additional sponsors include Wells Fargo, PG&E, USAA, Disabled American Veterans, Oracle, Kaiser Permanente, Deloitte, the California State University, CA Technologies, the California Lottery, Drexel University Sacramento, the California Veterans Benefit Fund, Ashford University, and the Association of California Commissions for Women.

This summit is open to the public. Pre-register at www.calvet.ca.gov/womenvets or call (916) 916-503-8334 for more information.

VETERAN STUDENTS ATTENDING CORINTHIAN COLLEGES SHOULD CONTINUE RECEIVING GI BILL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Veteran students enrolled in schools owned by Corinthian Colleges, Inc. (CCI) should continue to receive their GI Bill housing allowance for another term, thanks to an agreement reached between CCI and the California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education (CSAAVE), a unit of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet).

The agreement precludes CCI from charging tuition and fees for GI Bill-eligible students for upcoming enrollment periods at Everest, Heald, and Wyotech colleges in California. It also allows students additional time to consider other schools while CCI addresses CSAAVE's concerns.

The combination of the concession by CCI and the modified action by CSAAVE agreed to today, ensures that the approximately 1,200 GI Bill students at California CCI schools face no immediate impact while continuing their training, while also preserving their tax-supported veterans benefit.

"CalVet is working to mitigate the negative impact on our Veterans, while still holding CCI accountable," said Keith Boylan, CalVet Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services. "The modified suspension gives our Veterans attending CCI schools additional time to make informed decisions regarding their educational path."

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VETERAN LICENSE PLATE

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All proceeds from the sale of Veteran plates will be used to expand veterans services in your community.

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VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND LAUNCHES SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) announced the nationwide launch of the Hometown Heroes Service Learning Project. The Hometown Heroes curriculum is designed to give students an opportunity to learn about local Veterans who served and sacrificed during the Vietnam War and in other military conflicts in our nation's history.

VVMF developed the Hometown Heroes Service Learning Project curriculum in conjunction with educators, corporate partners, and the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress. Participating students have the opportunity to hear personal stories from Veterans and their loved ones as well as to plan a commemoration to honor their Hometown Heroes or to design a local memorial to honor Veterans.

Hometown Heroes Service Project curriculum:

- encourages students to learn more about local Veterans whose names are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. by researching their biographical information, gathering photos, and identifying them by hometown or locality.
- encourages students to preserve the oral histories of local Veterans who served in all of our nation's military conflicts through research and personal interviews.
- encourages students to volunteer in their community or plan a ceremony honoring local Veterans to coincide with Memorial Day or Veterans Day.
- encourages teachers and students to take a field trip to The Wall in Washington, D.C., visit The Wall That Heals (a traveling half-scale replica of The Wall), or visit a local war memorial.

To learn more about VVMG and the project, visit www.vvmg.org.

SOURCE Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

<< ALLOWANCE

The suspension of enrolling any new GI Bill students remains in effect, and CCI still needs to demonstrate their ability to comply with the requirements of the suspension. If CCI does not meet the terms of the suspension letters by August 23, 2014, then CSAAVE will have no choice but to withdraw approval of CCI schools.

In California, CSAAVE continues working for Veterans and closely monitoring CCI, as their financial difficulties escalated, to assess their situation and ensure that no Veteran loses GI Bill benefits due to a sudden closure of any CCI campus. The original CCI suspension was critical as Veteran's education benefits are finite and generally limited to 36 full-time months. Prior to the suspension, CCI schools could bill as far as one year ahead, meaning any immediate closure could result in Veterans using GI Bill benefits losing as much as one-third of all their education funds.

For more information about schools affected by this suspension and options available to students, go to

https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/FAQ-GI-Bill-Schools-Closures.aspx.

For status information on specific CCI school campuses, go to https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/Corinthian-Colleges-Directory-of-Schools.aspx.

CALVET AWARDS VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES GRANTS

By Phillip Leggit
CalVet Veterans Services Division

The passage of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), better known as Proposition 63, in November 2004, increased funding to support county mental health programs including services for our Veterans returning to California with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), and other mental health related issues. To adequately meet the needs of our California Veterans and their families, CalVet created and distributed a Request for Application (RFA) that invited the County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) to submit proposals to obtain funding for the purposes of mental health outreach and support services in their respective region.

For Fiscal Year 14-15, CalVet awarded 12 CVSO's a total of $270,000 to enhance and promote mental health services for Veterans and their families. Counties awarded include: Contra Costa, Fresno, Imperial, Lassen, Monterey, Nevada, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Solano, Sonoma, and Stanislaus. Each of the twelve CVSOs researched the best available options to improve and support mental health services and programs in their community. With the research conducted by the CVSOs and the funds provided by CalVet, veterans and their families should be able to receive efficient and reputable mental health services.

CALVET HOME LOANS

VETERANS IN CALIFORNIA PURCHASING HOMES

RATES AS LOW AS 3.90%*

NO MONEY DOWN**

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

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

*4.25% - 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. Your actual payment can vary due to replacement costs for your home, location, local taxes, fees, and assessments and subsequent use of VA benefit, etc.
** Not all buyers will qualify.

CSP-SOLANO VETERANS FIND SUPPORT IN INMATE GROUP

By Krissi Khokhobashvili

An unusual group of Veterans is growing at California State Prison-Solano (SOL), as more than 100 inmates have started gathering on a regular basis to discuss Veterans' issues and prepare for life outside of prison.

"The main purpose is to have the opportunity for the Veterans to get together to discuss concerns," said Steve Drown, an inmate coordinator for the Veterans Group of Solano.

He said it's important for Veterans to share their experiences, as they face challenges others might not understand. For example, one Vietnam Veteran became distressed upon smelling a certain food that brought back memories hard to deal with.

"The other vets talked him down and worked with him," Drown said. "I can understand, see what he's going through."

Drown was one of five inmates who founded SOL's inmate Veteran group in 2007. The group was active until last year, when staff sponsor David Van Bemmell passed away. The Veterans' group faded until the beginning of 2014, when CDCR Office Assistant Tami Miles was asked to bring it back.

"I am proud to hold this position," shared Miles, who serves as secretary to two Level II CDCR captains. "My late father was a Veteran, so I have a personal connection to them."

By the time the re-formed group held its quarterly meeting in May, 114 inmate Veterans had signed up to be a part of it. Miles said the next step is to establish a sub-group for Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

"It's just awesome to watch them help each other out," Miles said. "I'm proud to be a sponsor. I know my father is looking down at me going, 'There you go girl, – do it!'"

While peer support and counseling are big parts of the group's mission, so too are community resources Veterans can use when they are released.

At the quarterly meeting, representatives from local Veterans' service organization Community Action North Bay were on hand to share information for Veterans soon to return to their communities.

"I thank you all for your service," said Executive Director Ruth Matz. "You've done a lot for your country, and it's our turn to serve you."

Matz and CAN-B Board Chairman Mark Corioso discussed Veterans' programs available both locally and throughout the state, including housing assistance, disability and medical benefits, pensions, rental assistance and even supplemental food programs.

Veterans' issues are important to Corioso, who worked with numerous Veterans during his career as a corrections counselor at SOL. A Veteran parolee with a support system in his or her community is less likely to re-offend.

"It is in everyone's best interest that you are successful once you leave here," Corioso told the group.

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<< INMATE

The group is also a way for inmates from diverse backgrounds to interact, resulting in acceptance of different races, religions and ages.

"The Veterans group seems to bring all races together," said Army Veteran Darryl Chatman. "We all have something in common."

Navy Veteran Richard Connick founded the Veterans' group along with Drown and other Veterans in 2007. He said that his years of learning about Veterans' concerns and resources available have given him a dream for life on the outside: He wants to start a Veterans re-entry facility in his native Kern County.

As Chatman pulled out his trumpet, the Veterans bowed their heads in reverence, the notes of "Taps" sounding through the room.

"This program to me is second to none," Connick noted. "We know what we've been through. We know what we stood for."

Posted on Friday, June 6, 2014 on CDCR website.

Krissi Khokhobashvili is Public Information Officer for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Office of Public and Employee Communications.

Also read: "**CalVet Works to Assist Incarcerated Veterans**" published in the CalVet July Newsletter: https://www.calvet.ca.gov/documents/CalVet%201407.pdf#page=6.

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON VETERANS WORKING TO BOOST APPRENTICESHIPS

By Pamela Rasada, Interagency Council on Veterans

Hands-on apprenticeships, where workers earn while they learn, are a proven path to good, secure middle-class jobs. In fact, 87 percent of apprentices are employed after completing their programs, with an average starting wage above $50,000. What's more, apprentices earn a significant premium for their skills — as much as $300,000 more than their peers over a lifetime, according to some studies.

That value is not lost on the White House. In January of this year, for the first time in the history of our nation, a seated President spoke during a State of the Union Address about the need for the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities in the United States.

In April, Dennis Petrie, Chair of the California Interagency Council on Veterans (ICV) Employment workgroup, began working on the apprenticeship issue by creating a group focusing on expanding opportunities for our Veterans. Petrie, who is also Deputy Director of the California Employment Development Workforce Services Branch worked with Keith Boylan, CalVet Deputy Secretary Veterans Services, to identify issues and define focus priorities. Later that month, the California Conference on Apprenticeship celebrated 75 years of apprenticeships. With ICV coordination assistance, Petrie and Boylan spoke as featured panelists at the event.

In mid-July, the White House convened the first ever Summit on Apprenticeships to gather the best ideas and to catalyze action to dramatically increase apprenticeship in America. More than 60 attendees presented their ideas, including leading employers, like IBM, Bank of America, Blue Cross/Blue Shield; labor unions like the IBEW, and SEIU; training providers like Ivy Tech and Lone Star Community Colleges; and local workforce leaders from various states.

Keeping pace with the Federal process, the ICV appointed leadership for its Expansion of Apprenticeships for Veterans group. Co-chairs are Shane Ferrebee from CalVet's Title 38 Division and Don Merrill from the California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards. The group will meet for the first time in the fall.

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CONNECTING VETERANS WITH TELEHEALTH

by Hans Petersen, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Writer

In fiscal year 2013, more than 600,000 Veteran patients received some element of their health care via telehealth. That's 11 percent of the Veterans in the VA health care system who participated in 1.7 million telehealth episodes of care.

For those thousands of Veterans, the future is now with telehealth, a radically different way for patients to receive and clinicians to provide care.

According to Dr. Adam Darkins, VA's chief consultant for telehealth services, "Telehealth in VA is the forerunner of a wider vision, one in which the relationship between patients and the health care system will dramatically change with the full realization of the 'connected patient'. The high levels of patient satisfaction with telehealth and positive clinical outcome, attest to this direction being the right one."

Telehealth is aimed at making care convenient, accessible and patient-centered. Telehealth helps Veterans live independently in their own homes and local communities. Telehealth…translates into many Veterans receiving care in their own home and local community.

A key component of VA Telehealth is Clinical Video Telehealth, real-time video consultation that covers over 44 clinical specialties including: TeleIntensive Care, TeleMental Health, TeleCardiology, TeleNeurology, TeleSurgery, Women's Telehealth, TelePrimary Care, TeleSCI Care, TeleAmputation Care, TeleAudiology, TeleSpeech, Remote Nursing Home Consultation, TelePathology and more.

Home Telehealth, which provided care for 144,520 Veterans in fiscal year 2013, helps patients with chronic conditions in their homes, providing non-institutional care, chronic care management, acute care management, health promotion and disease prevention. Forty-five percent of these patients live in rural areas and may otherwise have had limited access to VA health care. The number of Veterans receiving care via VA Telehealth services is growing approximately 22 percent annually.

In fiscal year 2013, VA delivered more than 278,000 TeleMental Health patient encounters to over 91,000 patients. The scope of VA's TeleMental Health services includes all mental health conditions with a focus on posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, compensation and pension exams, bipolar disorder, behavioral pain and evidence-based psychotherapy.

The ability to receive and store clinical images via telehealth is called Store-and-Forward Telehealth (SFT). This affected 311,369 Veterans in fiscal year 2013. It enables the

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<< ICV

While we are at the beginning of the road with regard to expansion of apprenticeship opportunities in California, please join me in celebrating the responsiveness of the ICV, EDD, and CalVet leadership to the national directive.

For more information about apprenticeship opportunities in California, go to www.dir.ca.gov/das/das.html. For more information about the ICV, go to www.icv.ca.gov.

<< TELEHEALTH

acquisition of clinical images at sites close to the patient, and for the interpretation and reporting of these to occur remotely and asynchronously.

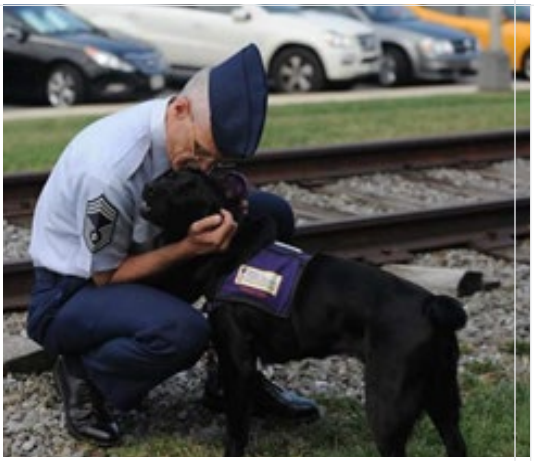
Currently the major areas of SFT care in VA are TeleRetinal Imaging, to screen for diabetic eye disease and prevent avoidable blindness, and TeleDermatology, which has increased by 279 percent over the past three years to more than 45,000 patients receiving care in fiscal year 2013.

New programs under development include TelePathology, TeleWound care, TeleSpirometry and TeleCardiology.

Learn more about VA Telehealth services and watch videos that do a great job of explaining telehealth programs and how they can provide better access to health care for Veterans.

See more at http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/2014/June/Connecting-Veterans-with-Telehealth.asp#sthash.2oWyeyTp.dpuf.

NEW STUDY WILL MEASURE DOGS' USEFULNESS TO VETS WITH PTSD



A much-anticipated Veterans Affairs Department study into the effectiveness of service dogs for treating post-traumatic stress disorder will restart in the coming months with Veterans receiving dog care training in anticipation of being paired with an animal.

The study, "Can Service Dogs Improve Activity and Quality of Life in Veterans With PTSD?" will include 220 Veterans, half teamed with a dog trained to address their disability, and the rest paired with an emotional support dog — basically, a pet or companion that has passed a rigorous obedience course but is not specifically trained to perform tasks to mitigate PTSD.

The research aims to determine the impact of a service dog on the quality of life and activities of a Veteran with PTSD compared to a common companion animal or pet.

The differences between the two are notable. Trained, well-bred service dogs can cost upward of $25,000, including purchase, training and care, and are allowed by law to accompany their handlers in public spaces. And, depending on the study outcome, they might become an accepted treatment for PTSD covered by VA.

Emotional support dogs essentially are well-trained pets that provide comfort and support. They do not have the same public access as service dogs under the Americans with Disabilities Act, although they are offered some protections under the Fair Housing Act and on commercial airlines.

The 2010 Defense Authorization Act required VA to study the effectiveness of service dogs for PTSD.

VA provides support and veterinary care for dogs for visual and hearing disabilities, as well as mobility impairments, including traumatic brain injuries that cause seizures or affect a vet's ability to move or make decisions.

But it does not cover service dogs for mental health disorders.

VA has partnered with several service dog organizations to pair Veterans with PTSD with potential service dogs, but the vets in these programs

DOGS, page 12 >>

<< DOGS

are working with dogs that are later trained as guide or service dogs for Veterans with physical disabilities.

VA has said there isn't enough scientific evidence regarding their effectiveness for that purpose to warrant benefits coverage. And when it comes to PTSD, VA officials say they must use proven treatments.

While stories abound about Veterans with PTSD and service dogs, few clinical studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of animals for PTSD.

In April, a Texas State University researcher completed a small study on the topic that found PTSD symptoms were reduced by 22 percent in Veterans who completed training their own psychiatric service dog through the program Train A Dog Save A Warrior.

According to graduate student Jeff Nelson, study participants completed the PTSD Checklist-Military Version, or PCL-M, a self-assessment of PTSD symptoms. Those who finished the program scored nearly 12 points lower — in other words, they had fewer symptoms — than those entering the program.

Nelson acknowledged some limitations in the study. For example, it did not measure results against a control group or incorporate companion dogs.

And because of time constraints, Nelson was not able to administer the PCL-M to the same participants before and after the training — a measure he said would better reflect the effectiveness of the Train A Dog Save A Warrior program.

But, he said, the findings should nonetheless contribute to the somewhat scant clinical research.

"This is a good first step. Serious organizations are not going to give money for more research or programs without evidence of it being effective and, if it works, it hopefully will bring more people into the treatment," Nelson said.

VA's original study on the effectiveness of service dogs for PTSD was suspended in September 2012 amid concerns over the animals' care at some facilities, as well as the dogs' training.

According to VA, 17 dogs were placed with Veterans before the shutdown. Six participants have completed the study, six are still involved and five withdrew. Sixteen Veterans still have their dogs; one was euthanized for health issues, spokeswoman Gina Jackson said.

When the study resumes, the eight Veterans who signed consent forms for the original study but did not receive a dog will be at the top of the list.

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EXPEDITED PROCESSING OF SSA BENEFITS FOR DISABLED VETERANS

If you are a disabled Veteran who has a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) compensation rating of 100% permanent and total (P&T), you can now get expedited processing of your application for Social Security disability benefits.

Both the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the USDVA pay disability benefits. However, the programs, processes and criteria for receiving benefits are very different.

A USDVA compensation rating of 100% P&T does not guarantee that you will receive Social Security disability benefits. To be approved for Social Security benefits, you must meet Social Security's definition of "disability," including:

- You cannot do work that you did before;
- SSA decides that you cannot adjust to other work because of your medical condition(s); and

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<< BENEFITS

- Your disability has lasted or is expected to last for at least one year or to result in death.

Receiving USDVA compensation will not affect your Social Security benefits.

To receive Social Security benefits, you must apply. To receive expedited processing of your Social Security disability application, you must identify yourself as a "Veteran rated 100% P&T" when you apply for benefits either online or by phone and provide your USDVA Notification letter which verifies your 100% P&T rating to Social Security.

The length of time it takes Social Security to make a disability decision depends on a number of factors, but primarily on the nature of your disability; how quickly SSA obtains medical evidence from your doctor or other medical sources; and whether it is necessary to send you for a medical exam to obtain evidence to support your claim. You can help speed up the process by having the needed information on hand when you apply.

The SSA's "Disability Benefits for Wounded Warriors" offers more information and can be found at http://ssa.gov/pubs. The information is offered in print and audio versions in both English and Spanish.

VA RURAL CLERGY TRAINING SESSIONS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The National VA Chaplain Center announced an online training series that will help rural clergy minister to Veterans and their families. "Rural Chaplains and Clergy Caring for Veterans: Paving the Way Home After the Wounds of War" was developed by the Rural Clergy Training Team in cooperation with the VA eHealth University (VeHU). This online training can be viewed on the My VeHU Campus website, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The video sessions are free and can be viewed on a computer or a tablet.

There are four sessions led by staff from the National VA Chaplain Center:

1. Military Culture & the Wounds of War
2. Pastoral Care with Veterans and their Families
3. Mental Health Services and Referrals
4. Building Community Partnerships

For more information about these sessions, view the Clergy Training Session Information page on the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) website at http://go.va.gov/rgz8.

Visit www.myvehucampus.com and enroll today! To help you get started, you can download the Rural Clergy Session QuickStart Guide at http://go.va.gov/rjmp.

WHITE HOUSE UNVEILS EXPANDED SUPPORT FOR MILITARY, VETERAN CAREGIVERS

The White House has announced several programs that would offer additional support to military and Veteran caregivers. New programming and commitments include the following:

CAREGIVER PEER TO PEER SUPPORT INITIATIVE
Provides peer-to-peer support for caregivers at every military installation around the world that

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<< CAREGIVERS

serves wounded warriors and their caregivers. Through online tools and webinars, caregivers who are not able to attend an in-person forum can connect to their peers as well.

MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVER PEER SUPPORT NETWORK
Will train 10 master trainers, 50 trainers and 10,000 peer mentors and provide 50,000 caregivers with peer support using one-on-one mentoring, online communities and community-based peer support groups.

EXPANDED ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR CAREGIVERS
Will provide a series of bi-monthly online educational seminars to provide educational support for military and Veteran caregivers. Topics will focus on gaps as identified in the RAND Study, including self-care, accessing legal and financial resources, and other issues of critical importance to caregivers.

FREE FINANCIAL/LEGAL/SOCIAL RESOURCES FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVERS
A web-based guide to aid caregivers in contingency planning and decision-making. The website will be a major public portal for caregivers across the country to access free financial, legal and social resources, benefitting tens of thousands of military families. Resources include military and Veteran benefits, finance and legal issues counsel and support during or after transitioning from the military and long term planning.

CREATING JOBS FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVERS
Will pilot an initiative aimed at helping caregivers find jobs.

For more information about these caregiver support initiatives and programs, go to http://1.usa.gov/1msw4pF.

For VA caregiver resources, go to www.caregiver.va.gov or call the toll free Caregiver Support Line, (855) 260-3274.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST 9
Vietnam War Veterans Ceremony
Vallejo Memorial Building
Contact: (707) 853-0062

AUGUST 12
Mother Lode Veterans Benefits Orientation
Jackson City Hall Civic Center
33 Broadway, Jackson
Register at http://bit.ly/1un7qPy

AUGUST 12
Hiring our Heroes Job Fair
American Legion Post 509
3509 N. First Street, Freso
Register at:
hiringourheroes@uschamber.com
or call (202) 463-5807

AUGUST 16
Veterans Stand Down
Yosemite Lakes Park Community Church
43840 Patrick Avenue, Coarsegold
Contact: (559) 760-5056

AUGUST 16
Military and Veteran Expo
Camarillo Community Center
1605 Burnley Street, Camarillo
More info at www.military411.org

AUGUST 22
Women Veterans Stand Up
American Legion Post 509
3509 N. First Street, Fresno
Contact: (559) 230-4077

AUGUST 23
5th Annual Veterans Appreciation Picnic
Citrus Heights Women's Club/American Legion
Rusch Park, Citrus Heights
Call (916) 723-2314 to reserve a table

AUGUST 24-25
CalVet Summit on Women Veterans
Sheraton Grand Hotel, Sacramento
Contact: (916) 503-8334 or
womenveterans@calvet.ca.gov

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Note: To view full calendar, visit www.calvet.ca.gov/Files/Events_Calendar.pdf

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