



BULLETIN

October

2009

STATE OF IDAHO

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GOVERNOR

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To be connected with a VA suicide prevention and mental health professional,
call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a veteran.
(800) 273-8255

ALL EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES ARE ADMINISTERED IN A NONDISCRIMINATORY
MANNER IN CONFORMANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE EEO AND CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS



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If you would like to receive the bulletin via email,
 just email Jennel Binsky at
jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov



VA'S SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM ADDS CHAT SERVICE

News Release, July 31, 2009

The Suicide Prevention campaign of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its outreach to all Veterans by piloting an online, one-to-one "chat service" for veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the internet.

Called "Veterans Chat," the new service enables veterans, their families, and their friends to go online, where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If a "chatter" is determined to be in a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the person to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.

"This online feature is intended to reach out to all veterans who may or may not be enrolled in the VA health care system and provide them with online access to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline," said Dr. Gerald Cross, the VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "It is meant to provide veterans with an anonymous way to access VA's suicide prevention services."

Veterans, family members, or friends can access Veterans Chat through the suicide prevention Web site, www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. There is a veterans tab on the left-hand side of the website that will take them directly to veteran resource information. On this page, they can see the hotline number, 1-800-273-TALK, and click on the Veterans Chat tab on the right side of the web page to enter.

Veterans retain anonymity by entering whatever names they choose once they enter the one-on-one chat. They are then joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller. If the counselor decides the caller is in a crisis, the counselor will encourage the veteran to call the Suicide Prevention Hotline, where a trained suicide prevention counselor will determine whether crisis intervention techniques are required.

The pilot program, which has been in operation since July 3rd, has already had positive results. In one instance, the online counselor determined that a veteran in the chat required immediate assistance. The counselor convinced the veteran to provide the counselor with a home telephone number and then remained in the chat room with the veteran while the hotline staff called the number and talked to the veteran's mother. The hotline counselor worked with the veteran's mother to convince the veteran to be admitted to a medical facility for further treatment.

"The chat line is not intended to be a crisis response line," said Dr. Janet Kemp, the VA's National Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the VA Medical Center in Canandaigua, N.Y., where the VA's trained counselors staff the chat line from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. The VA's suicide prevention hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven day a week. "Chat responders are trained in an intervention method specifically developed for the chat line to assist people with emotional distress and concerns," Kemp said. "We have procedures they can use to transfer chatters in crisis to the hotline for more immediate assistance."

Both Veterans Chat and the VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline have been established under the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which was established through collaboration between the VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services. Since becoming operational in July 2007, the VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline has received more than 150,000 calls, resulting in 4,000 rescues.

VA WARNS VETERANS OF TELEPHONE PRESCRIPTION SCAM

News Release, September 10, 2009

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reported the "Patient Care Group" is conducting a scam operation against veterans who receive VA prescriptions.

Veteran Service Organizations have brought to the VA's attention that callers are misrepresenting the VA to gain personal information over the phone. Callers claiming to be representatives of this group tell veterans their prescriptions are being administered by the company, and that the VA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions. They then ask for credit card information so the veteran can continue to receive their medications. The VA is warning veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information.

The VA Secretary stated the VA has made no change to its prescription system, and that veterans should not provide any information to callers from this group. It is not the VA's practice to call veterans requesting disclosure of personal financial information over the phone. "America's veterans have become targets in an inexcusable scam that dishonors their service and misrepresents the Department built for them," said Dr. Gerald Cross, the VA's Under Secretary for Health. "VA simply does not call veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone." "VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines," Cross said. "Nor has VA changed its long-standing commitment to protect the personal information of this nation's Veterans."

Veterans with questions about VA services should contact the nearest VA Medical Center or call, toll-free (877) 222-8387.

SECRETARY SHINSEKI ANNOUNCES \$8.8 MILLION FOR WASHINGTON CEMETERY

News Release, September 20, 2009

Ensuring that military veterans living in eastern Washington have a final resting place honoring their service to the nation, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the award of \$8.8 million to establish the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake. "This is our first opportunity to partner with the state's Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a state Veterans cemetery," Secretary Shinseki said. "We are proud to work with them to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Washington's Veterans."

The project will provide construction of the main entrance, a committal shelter, pre-placed crypts, standard burial areas, columbarium, in-ground cremains burial areas, roads, a maintenance facility, an assembly area, and supporting infrastructure. Interment areas and facilities will include 1,280 standard burial plots; 2,000 pre-placed crypts; 1,370 in-ground cremain sites and 2,240 columbarium niches.

The cemetery will serve approximately 90,000 Washington Veterans and their families. The nearest national cemetery is VA's Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent, Washington, approximately 250 miles away. The 80-acre site is located northwest of Medical Lake just off West Espanola Road and about 15 miles southwest of Spokane. The first phase of the project will develop approximately 15-20 acres.

The VA's State Cemetery Grants Program is designed to complement the VA's 130 national cemeteries across the country. Since 1980, the program has awarded grants totaling more than \$349 million to establish, expand, or improve 74 veterans cemeteries in 38 states or territories including Guam and Saipan. These state cemeteries provided nearly 25,000 burials in 2008. Residents of Washington who are Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses, and their eligible dependent children can be buried in the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake.

For more information about the Washington State Veterans Cemetery at Medical Lake, visit the Web site at www.dva.wa.gov/eastern_wa_vet_cemetery.html or call (509) 496-0796. Information about VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the internet at www.cem.va.gov, or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at (800) 827-1000.

HOW LONG DOES THE VA TAKE?

As of September 2009, the VA Regional Office in Boise reports the following figures. The average time to process disability claims is:

	Boise	Nation
Original claims (7 issues or less):	136 days	184 days
Original claims (8 issues or more):	153 days	164 days
Reopened and claims for increase:	103 days	173 days
Service connected death claims:	95 days	110 days

The Boise VA Regional Office had 286 Global War on Terror (GWOT) claims pending. On average, these claims had been pending 84 days, compared to a national average of 103 days. They have identified 27 severely injured GWOT veterans in Idaho. Claims from four of them are still active and have been pending an average of 36 days. Boise has 1,426 disability claims pending. Of those, 87 (6.1%) have been pending more than six months, and only six (0.4%) have been pending more than one year.

In August, the VA conducted 425 personal interviews with an average wait time of less than two minutes. The worst time to visit? The first three days of the month and any Monday.

In August, it took approximately 22 days from receipt of an application for rehabilitation to the date the VA notified the veteran of the decision on eligibility.

In 2009, the VA issued benefits amounting to \$18,256,948 to Idaho's veterans, and issues benefits to 1,805 widows, orphans, and dependent parents of Idaho's veterans. That totals over \$200 million per year to support Idaho's disabled veterans, their dependents, and their survivors.

DAV VAN SCHEDULES TO AND FROM VA MEDICAL CENTERS

LEWISTON & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE AND WALLA WALLA VAMC'S

Wednesdays: Spokane VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Genesee, Moscow, Viola, Potlatch, Tensed, Plummer, and Worley. Arrives Spokane at 9:30 a.m.

Fridays: Spokane VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Uniontown, Colton, Pullman, Colfax, Steptoe, Rosalia, and Spangle, WA. Arrives Spokane at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

Thursdays: Walla Walla VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Clarkston, Pomeroy, Dayton, Waitsburg, and Dixie, WA. Arrives at Walla Walla at 8:30 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center (888) 687-8863 ext. 22529

*****If you are interested in being a volunteer driver, please call Voluntary Services at (509) 434-7503*****

LIBBY & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 6:00 a.m. departure from Libby, MT.

Picks up in Troy MT, Bonner's Ferry, Sandpoint, Priest River, and Newport WA. Arrives at Spokane VA Medical Center at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

COEUR D'ALENE & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Daily: Door to door pick up and return, times variable.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

SANDPOINT & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays:

Picks up in Noxon, Clark Fork, Hope, Sandpoint, Laclede, Priest River, Newport, Diamond Lake, Chattaroy. Arrives at Walla Walla at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940 ext. 7019.

SALT LAKE CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER

October 2, 6, 8, 14, 16, 20, 22, 26, 28, 30

November 3, 5, 9, 13, 17, 19, 23, 25, 27

December 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 21, 23, 29, 31

All appointments for rides should be made 24 hours in advance.

Call Heidi Hopper at the DAV Transportation Office (208) 221-0362 or (800) 613-4012 ext. 2003.



MOBILE CLINIC

OCTOBER ~ 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 <i>On Station</i>	2	3
4	5	6 Kettle Falls	7 Republic	8 Okanogan	9 Okanogan	10
11	12	13 Moses Lake	14 Moses Lake	15 Moses Lake	16	17
18	19	20 Libby	21 Libby	22 Libby	23 Bonners Ferry	24
25	26 Moscow	27 Osburn	28 Osburn	29 <i>On Station</i>	30	31

NOVEMBER ~ 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Kettle Falls	4 Republic	5 Okanogan	6 Okanogan	7
8	9 Moses Lake	10 Moses Lake	11	12 <i>On Station</i>	13	14
15	16	17 Libby	18 Libby	19 Libby	20 Bonners Ferry	21
22	23 Moscow	24 Osburn	25 Osburn	26	27	28
29	30					

DECEMBER ~ 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Moses Lake	2 Moses Lake	3 Moses Lake	4	5
6	7	8 Kettle Falls	9 Republic	10 Okanogan	11 Okanogan	12
13	14	15 Libby	16 Libby	17 Libby	18 Bonners Ferry	19
20	21 Moscow	22 Osburn	23 <i>On Station</i>	24 <i>On Station</i>	25	26
27	28 <i>On Station</i>	29 <i>On Station</i>	30 <i>On Station</i>	31 <i>On Station</i>		