

VA OCONUS Connection



A Newsletter for Veterans Residing Abroad

Issue Number Five | April 2018

From the Director's Desk



We continue to get great feedback to VA OCONUS Connection! The consistent message is that you want more tips and helpful information on filing claims. I hear this same request from Veterans in and around Pittsburgh. There is a lot of information from VA, Veteran Service Organizations, and other sources that can be overwhelming. VA has a YouTube Channel to help provide information about available benefits and our modernization efforts. Check out these helpful videos about what to expect at a VA

examination: https://www.youtube.com/user/vavetbenefits/videos?disable_polymer=1

I also wanted to highlight some of the significant changes made to the Post-9/11 GI Bill by the "Forever GI Bill" act. The Post 9/11 GI Bill is now a life time benefit with no 15-year limit. VA has notified over **half a million** beneficiaries that they may no longer have a delimited date to use this benefit. If you have any questions about how this impacts your entitlement, please go to <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/> for more information.

Veterans Residing in the Philippines

U.S. Veterans who live in the Philippines are entitled to certain VA benefits. Veterans can visit the [VA Manila Regional Benefit Office](#) and the [VA Manila Outpatient Clinic](#) for benefit assistance and information about available services in the clinic.

VA Manila Outpatient Clinic:

We have attached the 2018 VA Manila Benefits Fact Sheet of all the eligibility requirements for healthcare.

Important Points

- The eligibility requirements for medical services are different for Veterans outside the U.S. than for Veterans within the U.S. The VA Manila Outpatient Clinic and Foreign Medical Program (FMP) provides medical care for U.S. Veterans only for a

VA-rated service-connected disability, or any disability associated with and held to be aggravating a VA-rated, service-connected disability (38 CFR 17.35).

- A service-connected U.S Veteran may be treated for non-service connected disabilities within the limits of the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic, as stated in 38 U.S.C. § 1724(e). Follow up services and medications required for non-service connected conditions will be the Veteran's responsibility, including obtaining services and paying all related cost.
- U.S. Veterans are responsible for the entire cost of treatment for non-service connected disabilities when care is provided by non-VA care provider(s) and/or non-VA medical facility.

VA Manila Regional Office

The VA Manila Regional Office is co-located with the VA Outpatient Clinic. Some services such as home loans, life insurance and education benefits for Veterans have been specialized at certain locations in the U.S. The Regional Office can receive claims regarding these services, but they will be routed to the appropriate location.

VA benefits and services offered at the Manila Regional Office:

- Compensation: This is based on disabilities or certain diseases recognized as due to the Veteran's military service.
- Pension: Paid to wartime veterans who must meet certain criteria for service, income and permanent and total disability/ies, or Veterans over the age 65
- Vocational rehabilitation and employment
- Dependents and survivors benefits (to include education and training)
- Burial benefits

Any questions regarding the Manila Regional Office can also be sent to VAMANILA.VBAMPI@va.gov.

2018 VA Manila Benefits Fact Sheet



Department of Veterans Affairs

2018 VA MANILA BENEFITS FACT SHEET

The eligibility requirements for medical services are different for Veterans outside the United States than for Veterans within the United States. The VA Manila Outpatient Clinic and Foreign Medical Program provides medical care for U.S. Veterans only for a VA-rated service-connected disability, or any disability associated with and held to be aggravating a VA-rated, service-connected disability (38 CFR 17.35). Veterans are advised to enroll in both the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic and the Foreign Medical Program.

* A service connected Veteran may be treated for non-service connected disabilities within the limits of the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic, as stated in 38 U.S.C. § 1724(e). Follow up services and medications required for non-service connected conditions will be the Veteran's responsibility, including obtaining services and paying all related cost. The Foreign Medical Program is not authorized to treat non-service connected conditions.

VA BENEFITS AND SERVICES	UNITED STATES	VA MANILA OUTPATIENT CLINIC		FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM	
		Service Connected	Non-Service Connected	Service Connected	Non-Service Connected
Primary and Specialty Care	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No
Inpatient Hospitalization	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Emergency Care in Community	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Prescription Drugs	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No
X-Ray, ECG, PFT	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No
Diagnostic Services	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Laboratory Services	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No
Dental – *based on eligibility	Yes*	No	No	Yes	No
Eye –* based on eligibility	Yes*	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No
Ears, Nose, Throat (ENT) and Audiology	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No
Mental Health	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Physical Therapy	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Durable Medical Equipment and Prosthetic Items	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Beneficiary Travel	Yes	No	No	No	No
Domiciliary nursing home and community based residential care	Yes	No	No	No	No
Homeless Veterans Program	Yes	No	No	No	No
Alcohol and drug dependency treatment	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Readjustment Counseling	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Specialized health care for women Veterans	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Caregivers	Yes	No	No	No	No
Vet Centers	Yes	No	No	No	No
OEF/OIF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specially Adapted Housing Grants and Special Home Adaptation **approval required from the VA Regional Office	Yes	Yes**	No	Yes	No
Home Improvement and Structural Alterations (HISA)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Voc Rehab ***authorized treatment form required for non-S/C conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes***	Yes	Yes***

Effective: October 1, 2017

Why Does VA Require Multiple Exams to Determine Compensation Awards?

Although each claim has different requirements, often, we do require several exams for our Veterans that reside in the United States, as well as overseas. Typically, if we are requesting multiple exams, there are usually multiple conditions that require separate exams. Traditionally, if we are requesting several exams for one condition, we have received new evidence or our Rating Veterans Service Representative (RVSR) requires clarification from a provider regarding the previously conducted exams. The more information we have from the medical providers, the better evaluation we can provide to our Veterans, so it is in the best interest of the Veteran to attend all exams that we have requested.

Are Veterans Residing Overseas able to Participate in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program?

The VR&E Chapter 31 program is available to Veterans residing overseas. To meet the criteria for VR&E overseas, a Veteran must have legal residence in a foreign area. In order to meet this criteria, a Veteran must have one of the following: Veteran has accepted employment overseas, Veteran is married to a foreign national, Veteran is the spouse of an active duty Servicemember who is assigned overseas, or the Veteran is accompanying his/her spouse who is employed overseas.

If a Veteran meets any of the above criteria, he/she may complete and submit a VA form 28-1900, Application for Vocational Rehabilitation. This application may be completed online via [eBenefits](#). Once this application has been received and processed, the Pittsburgh VR&E will reach out to the Veteran for initial contact via email regarding the VR&E application and will provide documents for the Veteran's completion to assist in the eligibility and entitlement process for VR&E services. The Veteran will then work with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) who will conduct a comprehensive evaluation and entitlement determination for the VR&E program. The VRC will also work closely with the Veteran with vocational exploration efforts in order to identify a suitable career goal that will match the Veteran's interests and aptitudes and will be employable in the area for which the Veteran resides.

A rehabilitation plan will be developed, which will outline the Veteran's selected career goal and objectives to achieve this goal. The VR&E program will cover all of the required tuition, fees, books, and supplies associated with the Veteran's program of study. The Veteran will receive a subsistence allowance that will assist him/her with living expenses while participating in training. If eligible, the Veteran may elect to receive this subsistence allowance at the Post 911 Rate of Pay. In addition to the monetary support, the Veteran will receive case management, follow up counseling, employment assistance, and oversight to facilitate the successful completion of this plan.

Should you have any additional questions regarding the VR&E program overseas, please contact the Pittsburgh VR&E Division at 412-395-6070.

Get to Know Your VA Team: Nicholas Boyko, Change Management Agent (CMA)

Nick Boyko currently serves as the Pittsburgh Regional Office's Change Management Agent/Public Affairs Officer and assists the Regional Office Director and her staff with Transformation and Modernization initiatives in the Regional Office. Nick served from 1999-2007 in the United States Marine Corps where he completed a deployment in 2005 to the Anbar Province of Western Iraq. After service, Nick finished his degree at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and joined the VA Regional Office team in 2009.



Why did you choose to work for VA? I chose to work for the VA Regional Office after finishing college and missing the connection that I had with military members during my 8 years in the Marine Corps.

What advice can you offer to OCONUS Veterans? The best advice I can give to Veterans outside the continental US is, if you have any questions, ask an expert. VBA is easy to reach whether using IRIS, [eBenefits](#), or by contacting the dedicated foreign phone line 1-(412) 395-6272.

What kind of duties do you perform? What kind of service do you provide? As Public Affairs Officer and Change Management Agent, one of my responsibilities is to create and execute change management strategies to RO employees. With that being said, I help to educate and follow up with RO employees and leadership on different software updates and procedures that are passed down from VA Central Office.

Any tips that you have for Veterans filing claims OCONUS? Most VA benefits are payable regardless of your place of residence or nationality and to find out details about these benefits, the following link is very helpful: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-abroad.asp>

What do you want Veterans to know about VA benefits? If a Veteran has a general benefits question or needs assistance, it is easy to reach us by using the following:

For general benefit questions and assistance:

- Call us at (412) 395-6272 from 8:00am to 9:00pm, Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday.
- Send us an email using the [VA Inquiry Routing and Information System](#).

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) is an annual campaign in April to raise public awareness about sexual assault. In its campaign, VA focuses on sexual assault and sexual

harassment occurring during military service – also known as “[military sexual trauma](#)” or “MST.” VA offers many services to help MST survivors. If you have questions about filing a claim for VA benefits related to MST, one of our MST coordinators can help: Susan.eshleman@va.gov or Jamie.Anderson@va.gov. Please find more information here: <https://www.vets.gov/health-care/health-conditions/military-sexual-trauma/>



What is eBenefits?

Enrolling in eBenefits is easy. Just visit www.eBenefits.va.gov

for more information. If you submit a claim in the future, consider filing through eBenefits. Filing electronically, especially if you participate in our fully developed claim program, may result in a faster decision than if you submit your claim through the mail.

How to get an eBenefits account

You can manage and apply for benefits online using [eBenefits](#). If you don't already have an eBenefits account, you can register on the [DS Logon Registration page](#). Instead of using your APO address for registering on eBenefits, use your last recorded United States address.

For dependents of Veterans without a social security number, you must do the following:

Contact the [Defense Manpower Data Center](#) (DMDC) at 1-800-538-9552.

- Provide your dependent's Foreign ID number.
- Obtain a generated social security number provided by DMDC.
- Use the generated social security number for registration in eBenefits. You can visit the [eBenefits help page](#) for assistance with registering for an account or you can call 1-800 372-7437.

Foreign Medical Program (FMP)

The Foreign Medical Program (FMP) is a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care benefits program for U.S. Veterans who are residing or traveling abroad and have VA-rated, service-connected disabilities. Under FMP, VA assumes payment responsibility for certain necessary health care services received in foreign countries and associated with the treatment of service-connected disabilities, or any disability associated with and held to be aggravating a service-connected condition. Additionally, VA may authorize necessary foreign medical services for any condition for a Veteran participating in the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program (38 U.S.C. 31). For more information, to include submitting claims for reimbursement, please visit [here](#).



Veterans Crisis Line

Crisis feels different for everybody and can be caused by a wide range of situations before, during, or after military service. Whatever's got you down — chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, or even disturbing memories of your tour of duty — a Crisis Line responder can provide support, day or night.

The Military Crisis Line is staffed by caring, qualified responders from VA — some of whom have served in the military themselves. They understand what Servicemembers and Veterans have been through and the challenges members of the military and their loved ones face.

The Military Crisis Line staff can connect you with services to help get your life back on track.

Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year through the Military Crisis Line (**1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**), [online chat](#) and text (**838255**).

There are a number of ways individuals can reach VCL. How they reach the VCL overseas is dependent on location. You can visit this [link](#) to see how Veterans, Service members or their loved ones can reach VCL from Europe, Korea and Afghanistan.

- In Europe call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118 *
- In Korea call 0808 555 118 or DSN 118
- In Afghanistan call 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN 111

* In Europe, toll-free service may not be available through all carriers or in all countries

In addition, as you mentioned, the online chat feature is available anywhere as well as text but note, the text function would probably include additional data charges depending on your carrier roaming and international charges.

How to Contact VA

Since most Veterans residing in foreign countries cannot utilize the 1-800-827-1000 number to contact VA, a separate phone line was established for inquiries from Foreign Veterans. Like the 1-800 number, this phone line is staffed by the National Call Center. How to Contact VA from Outside the United States: 1-412-395-6272.

Contact Information for Benefits Delivery at Discharge Offices in Germany and Korea:

The Landstuhl, Germany office is located in building 3724 at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and can be reached by e-mail at GermanyBDD.vbapit@va.gov or by telephone at 06371-9464-8200.

The Seoul, South Korea office is located in building 4037 on USAG Yongsan and can be reached by email at KoreaBDD.vbapit@va.gov or by telephone at 02-7918-5121.

Help us Spread the Word!

Please encourage Veterans residing abroad with whom you come in contact to subscribe to “Veterans Abroad” to receive bulletins and information specific to Veterans residing abroad. Veterans may subscribe to the email service by clicking [here](#) .

Give Us Your Feedback

We'd love to hear your feedback regarding the VA OCONUS Connection! Please take a few minutes to provide your [feedback](#) . In order to obtain your feedback regarding this specific edition of the newsletter, we ask that you use this link, rather than any links to the survey from previous editions.