



IOWA COUNTY VETERANS NEWSLETTER

Published by the Iowa County Veterans Service Office: 303 W. Chapel Street, Suite 1300, Dodgeville, WI 53533
Office Hours: M-F 8:30 am-4:30 pm Phone: 608/930-9865 Fax: 608/935-0358 Email: vet@iowacounty.org
Jeffrey T. Lindeman, County Veterans Service Officer

FALL, 2016

MEDICAL IDENTITY THEFT

Watch for the Signs

Did you know that health care is the number one target, nearly as much as retail, finance, and banking combined, for identity theft and fraud? Your health information is important to you and your health care provider. But in the wrong hands, it can be valuable to someone else. Would you know if someone stole your medical identity? Identity theft affects millions of people every year. The Federal Trade Commission offers several steps you can take to make sure your health care information remains secure.

□ First, read your medical and insurance statements regularly and completely. They can show warning signs of identity theft. Look for services you did not receive or providers you did not see. This is like seeing charges on your credit card statement that were not yours.

□ Next, read the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) statement or Medicare Summary Notice that your health plan sends after each treatment. Again, check the name of the provider, the date of service, and the service provided. Do the claims paid match the care you received? If you see a mistake, contact your health plan and report the problem.

□ You should also watch for bills if you know part of your care was not covered. If a bill doesn't show up when you expect it, look into it.

Being cyber fit requires us to be mindful of your health information even when you're not using

healthcare information technology. You are the center of your healthcare. Empower yourself to protect your information.

MADISON VA HOSPITAL FACILITY UPDATE

The Madison VA Hospital is a 129-bed Acute Care Facility which includes 85 acute beds, 18 residential rehabilitation beds, and a 26-bed Community Living Center, including four hospice suites. The service area includes more than 130,000 veterans in 20 counties in Wisconsin and Illinois and includes Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in Baraboo, Beaver Dam and Janesville, Wi. as well as Freeport and Rockford, Il. The facility is also one of only 20 Geriatric Research Education and Clinic Centers (GRECCs) in the U.S. and the only one to receive major funding from the National Institute on Aging for Alzheimer's Disease research. The facility, including CBOCs, has completed 28,530 appointments as of June, 2016, an 11% increase over the same time period in 2015. Through this same time period the Madison VA (including the CBOCs) has completed 96.53% of their appointments in 30 days or less compared to the national average of 96.41% for the same time period.

UPDATE: US COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS: RULING ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL EXPENSES OUTSIDE THE VA

In the last edition of the newsletter I informed the Iowa County Veterans Community of the Board of Veterans Appeals decision regarding VA payment of emergency care treatment provided outside the

VA healthcare system. Reporter Matthew Simon with WSAW TV in Wausaw, WI stated in a piece that aired 28 Jul 2016 "In April the judges sided with Mr. Staab, saying the VA failed to revise their emergency medical expense reimbursement regulations, according to a 2009 congressional mandate. It now appears, the VA is appealing this decision. For quick background the VA would not pay Mr. Staab's \$48,000 bill for emergency care when he had a heart attack/stroke and ended up having open heart surgery because he did not receive the VA's pre-approval for this non-VA hospital care while Mr. Staab was incapacitated." I have been able to work with a few private medical providers that are awaiting payment from the VA that was previously denied to agree not to send outstanding balances through collections while this appeals ruling is being figured out through the courts and various agencies involved. If you think the appeals decision applies to a denial you have received through non-VA care, feel free to contact the office and we can discuss appeal options.

VA CHOICE ACT UPDATE

The Department of Veterans Affairs has scheduled 2 million appointments through the VA Choice program. The network now has 350,000 providers and facilities. The VA has complied with Congress' implementation requirements by removing the enrollment date restriction, implementing the 40-mile driving distance instead of straight line distance, implementing the unusual or excessive burden criteria and expanding the episode of care authorization from 60 days to up to one year. According to the contracted terms of the Choice program, 95% of referrals to the contract company (HealthNet) are to be scheduled within 5 business days, the remaining 5% are allowed 10 days. There will be a Request for Proposal (RFP) issued during the fall for a VA Choice coordination company as the current contract with HeathNet is nearing the end date.

ELECTIONS ARE SOON UPON US

Not to worry fellow veterans, this is not the campaign ad section of the newsletter; I'm already tired of listening to the ads and wouldn't do that to you. According to a study completed by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), after years of declining numbers, there may an increase of former

military seeking office both nationally and at the state level. The research showed that roughly one in seven lawmakers serving in state legislatures is a veteran, which computes to more than 1,000 nationwide. New Hampshire leads the states with 23 percent of the legislative representatives being veterans. Utah has the lowest level of veteran representation in state legislature at 5 percent. Wisconsin lands around the middle of the pack at 13 percent veterans in state offices. On the federal side in the latest Congress, 20 percent of the senators and 18 percent of House members claimed military service. Rebecca Burgess, manager of AEI's Program on American Citizenship and the author of the report stated, she thinks we will see an increase in the number of veteran candidates at the federal level in the coming years. I personally think that more veterans seeking these offices is a good thing.

CAMP LEJEUNE – PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

The Veterans Affairs Department has determined that eight medical conditions are linked to service at Camp Lejeune, N.C. from 1953 to 1987, and veterans with these diseases who were stationed at the sprawling Marine Corps base are eligible for disability compensation. VA officials said that these eight diseases have been determined to be service-connected to consuming contaminated drinking water at the base: **kidney cancer, liver cancer, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, leukemia, multiple myeloma, scleroderma, Parkinson's disease and aplastic anemia or other myelodysplastic syndromes.** Nearly a million people, including troops, family members and civilian employees working at Camp Lejeune from the 1950s through the 1980s were exposed to these chemicals and other cancer-causing agents in the base's drinking water, supplied by two water treatment facilities polluted by dry cleaning compounds, leaking underground storage tanks, industrial spills and poor disposal practices. The VA has provided health care or reimbursement for medical costs for veterans who served at Camp Lejeune at least 30 days during the affected period or family members with 15 illnesses related to exposure to water contaminated by solvents and fuels, but it had not awarded "presumptive status" to any condition until now.

The changes will take effect after VA publishes regulations regarding these presumptions, and will apply to new disability claims. Veterans who have previously been denied on such claims may seek to be re-evaluated. Also, any pending claims that might be denied under current regulations will be placed on hold until the VA issues its final rules, according to a department press release.

The bedrock eligibility rules will be that veterans must have one of the eight specified conditions and must have served at Camp Lejeune between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987. The new rules also will expand eligibility to reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for any length of time during that period. A VA spokeswoman said compensation awarded as a result of the proposed regulations, if adopted, will "be effective no earlier than the date the final rule is published."

WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

The Wisconsin Veteran's Museum has a new program called "Mess Night at the Museum". The next program is "WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE" Authors Doug Bradley and Craig Werner place popular music at the heart of the American experience in Vietnam. Join them as they explore how U.S. troops used music as a way of connecting to each other, the world back home, and as a coping tool to deal with the complexities of the war they had been sent to fight. October 20, 2016 at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, 30 W. Mifflin St., Madison, WI. Contact Erin Hoag at (608)264-7663 to register for the meal and presentation.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - 2016 WOMEN VETERAN CONFERENCE

This year's conference will be held at the Country Springs Hotel in Pewaukee on October 13th. Registration for the conference opened in August. A room block is already available for those who wish to stay at the hotel. Simply ask for the special WDVA Women Veterans Conference room rate when you call.

The keynote speaker this year is Brigadier General Joane Mathews, Wisconsin's first female general in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. The

conference will also feature Erica Hartless, Director of Military Women eMentor, a mentoring program that pairs military women with mentors for personalized career guidance, advice, support and inspiration.

VETERANS AFFAIRS DENTAL INSURANCE PROGRAM (VADIP)

The VA Dental Insurance Reauthorization Act, which effectively keeps the VADIP going for another 5 years, has been signed by the President. With the program set to move forward as a permanent benefit, now is the time for those in the VA healthcare system and VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) to enroll in VADIP. By enrolling today, Veterans can take care of their dental and overall health right away and in the years ahead, \$5 billion yearly under the current program.

2016 HEALTH and WELLNESS EXPO

On September 30, 2016, the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Iowa County and Upland Hills Health are sponsoring the 5th annual Health and Wellness Expo. The event runs from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at Hidden Valley Church in Dodgeville, WI. There will be numerous informational displays secure, environmentally sound prescription medication drop-off. The event is free to attend. Attendees can receive free health screenings and a chance at some door prizes as well.

BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS

A step closer to Agent Orange exposure becoming presumptive for blue water navy veterans happened through House passage of a measure that could expand their Veterans Affairs benefits.

An amendment added to the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs funding bill would require the department to presume these veterans were exposed to the toxic herbicide and provide health care and compensation if they are sick as a result.

The initiative still must pass the Senate before it becomes law, but it marks a major step forward for a cause that has languished in Congress and at the VA for entirely too long in my opinion.

Iowa County Veterans Service Office
303 W. Chapel Street – Suite 1300
Dodgeville, WI 53533

Veterans Newsletter

IMPORTANT DATES

September 7th – Labor Day
November 6th – Daylight Saving Time ends
November 11th – Veterans Day

September 22nd – Autumn Begin
November 8th – Election Day
November 24th – Thanksgiving Day

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE CLOSINGS IN 2015

Labor Day
Veterans Officer Training Conference
Thanksgiving Holiday
Christmas Holiday

Monday, September 5th
October 3-7, 2016
Thursday/Friday, November 24th & 25th
Friday/Monday, December 23rd & 26th