



131st BW RAO Newsletter



Serving all branches

July - September 2020, 3rd Quarter Issue

The O'Fallon Veterans Office/131st BW Retirees Activities Office, MOANG, is committed to providing its retirees the best support possible. The office is staffed with former members of the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines. We have been lucky in having these veterans and retirees volunteer to provide this support. The RAO has an on-going need for volunteers to assist and inform the retiree. We offer service five days a week from 9 AM to 4 PM Monday thru Friday.

At the present time the Veterans Office /131st BW RAO is closed due to Covid-19 virus but we are monitoring emails and phone messages received and are responding to your messages. We will send out a notice when our office will open and available for walk-in consultation.

Honor Flight Cancels All Trips for 2020, Affecting 20,000 Veterans

WASHINGTON -- The Honor Flight Network, which sends veterans to tour the war memorials in Washington, said Thursday it would cancel all trips to the nation's capital through the end of 2020.

Under normal circumstances, the network would have transported about 20,000 to Washington this year, the group estimated. It was on track to reach the milestone of providing 250,000 trips to veterans in the 15 years since Honor Flight was founded.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit the United States, the network canceled trips through April 30 and later extended the cancellations through June, then August. The board of directors that governs the network decided to end all trips through 2020 because of the ongoing risks. As of Thursday, more than 2 million Americans had been infected with the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended people at higher risk for the disease, including older adults and people with chronic medical conditions, avoid nonessential travel. Priority for the honor flights is often given to terminally ill and older veterans, many of whom live in nursing homes.

"Unfortunately, large-group travel is expected to remain a risk for the remainder of the year for the vulnerable population of veterans served by Honor Flight," the organization said in a statement. "The vast majority of these veterans fall into the CDC's high-risk category. Many of

the veterans also live in community settings, such as retirement homes or assisted living facilities, where the risk of spreading illness is extremely high."

The Honor Flight Network is made up of 125 chapters that help send veterans in their communities to Washington. Because of the cancellations this year, the chapters are brainstorming other ways to honor veterans. They've arranged card campaigns, virtual birthday celebrations and virtual classroom appearances.

The network believes it will resume flights in 2021.

Upcoming Events

Lindbergh's Own Reunion Party 2020

Saturday, August 22nd
3:00pm to 10:00pm
Creve Coeur Airport, main hangar
donations accepted at <https://gf.me/u/x6u9k6>

Changes Coming Soon for Some TRICARE Select Retired Beneficiaries

6/22/2020

Starting on Jan. 1, 2021, TRICARE Select Group A retired beneficiaries must pay monthly enrollment fees in order to maintain their TRICARE health coverage. This is a change, and the first time this beneficiary group will pay enrollment fees.

"In 2021, some TRICARE beneficiaries will pay enrollment fees for the first time, a change mandated by Congress," said Dr. Danita Hunter, director of the TRICARE Health Plan at the Defense Health Agency. "We're communicating this well before the change is implemented so beneficiaries can be informed about the change, as well as their TRICARE plan and cost options."

Here are the key points you need to know.

What's happening?

Retired TRICARE Select beneficiaries will have to pay enrollment fees. This change was mandated by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year October 1 - September 30 2017. Congress granted the Defense Health Agency a delay in implementation to calendar year 2021.

Who's impacted?

This change only affects Group A If you or your sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before January 1, 2018, you are in Group A. retirees and their family members enrolled in TRICARE Select. You're in Group A if your initial enlistment or appointment or that of your

uniformed services sponsor began before Jan. 1, 2018. Active duty family members enrolled in TRICARE Select will experience no change, and won't pay enrollment fees.

This applies to me. When do I need to take action?

You must set up a monthly allotment through your Department of Defense (DoD) pay center, where feasible, for your monthly payments to start on Jan. 1, 2021. For sponsors who don't receive funds through a DoD pay center, you can establish payments via electronic funds transfer, credit card, or debit card. Your regional contractor will soon issue instructions to set up payment.

What are the 2021 enrollment fees for TRICARE Select Group A retirees?

The enrollment fees will be collected via monthly installments from the sponsor's military pay system where retired pay is disbursed.

- Individual plan: \$12.50 per month
- Family plan: \$25 per month

How can I stay informed and prepare for this change?

Visit the TRICARE Select Enrollment Fees page on the TRICARE website for updates and sign up for email alerts. TRICARE will inform you of specific actions you need to take in the coming months. Take command of your health and your health care benefits in 2020.

VA Health Handbook

Your Personalized Copy

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to informing enrolled Veterans about VA health benefits and services they have earned and deserve. All new enrollees in the VA health care system receive a personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook, generally two weeks after enrollment has been confirmed. The handbooks are tailored specifically for each Veteran and provide detailed, updated information about the VA health care benefits the Veteran may be eligible to receive, such as medications, prosthetics and dental care. The handbook also provides answers to common questions, contact information for the Veteran's preferred facility, instructions on how to schedule appointments, information regarding the Affordable Care Act, the Veteran's copay responsibilities, if any, and much more. When you receive a new, replacement Handbook, you are encouraged to destroy their old handbook by cutting it up or shredding it, since the handbook contains personal information. For information about the Handbook or to **request a replacement**, contact call 1-877-222-8387. To view a sample copy of the Veterans Health Benefits Handbook

go to https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh/publications/vhbh_sample_handbook_2014.pdf.

[Source: VA News Release | June 1, 2020 ++]

MHS Beneficiaries Turn to Online Resources to Manage Personal Care During Pandemic

Military Health System beneficiaries turned to online resources like the TRICARE Online Patient Portal (TOL) and the MHS GENESIS Patient Portal in record numbers in May to remotely manage their health care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The TOL PP logged a million-plus active users on May 17, the largest total in the portal's 15-year history.

"This is a remarkable achievement," said Army Col. Francisco Dominicci, chief of the Defense Health Agency Solution Delivery Division (SDD, J-6), which manages the TOL PP. "The TOL PP team achieved this milestone by quickly responding to patient and provider needs during the pandemic."

Dominicci stated that, the TOL PP team added several COVID-19-related enhancements to the portal, enabling beneficiaries to manage their care remotely rather than risking exposure to themselves and others by visiting military medical treatment facilities.

In March, the team set up a COVID-19 Virtual Visit functionality within TOL PP that allows patients who believe they are infected with COVID-19 to book virtual visit appointments. Inside the portal, patients provide a phone number and answer two screening questions before being allowed to make a COVID-19 virtual visit appointment. The application facilitated more than 15,000 virtual visit appointments through May.

"The short screening process allows us to quickly assess whether patients have COVID-19 symptoms or some other ailment," said Dominicci. "If they don't have COVID-19 symptoms, they are told so, giving them reassurance. If they do have COVID-19 symptoms, they can make a virtual visit appointment, and a health care provider will contact them at the number they provided."

In April, the TOL PP team updated the portal to provide patients expedited COVID-19 and flu test results after the DHA waived the mandatory four-day wait period for the test results. The functionality allowed patients tested for COVID-19 or the flu at MTFs to receive expedited test results in the blue "Health Record" section of the portal after results are certified.

"Using the TOL PP relieves the anxiety of patients waiting for test results, letting them know if they need to self-isolate," said Dominicci. "It also frees MTF providers from having to field patient calls or contact patients awaiting test results, allowing them to focus on patient care during the pandemic."

Dominicci explained how patients can also find links to COVID-19 updates and resources on TOL PP along with other helpful features.

"Patients can use TOL PP to virtually manage most of their health care needs without placing themselves and others at risk of infection," he said. "They can use the portal to request prescription refills and TOL Secure Messaging for prescription renewal requests. Patients can also request prescription refills and renewals be sent to the TRICARE Home Delivery or a nearby in-network pharmacy. [Source: SDD Stakeholder Engagement Branch]

VA Extends Eligibility Window for Veterans to Apply for VGLI

The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) is extending the eligibility window that recently discharged veterans have to enroll in the [Veterans Group Life Insurance \(VGLI\)](#) program.

Normally, you have one year and 120 days from your discharge date to apply for VGLI. After that, you are no longer eligible for the popular life insurance program. But due to the economic

downturn caused by the COVID-19 emergency, the VA will extend the time period that eligible veterans can enroll in VGLI by 90 days.

The new period of eligibility for enrollment is:

1. 330 days after discharge to submit an application and pay the first month's premium with no health exam required.
2. One year and 210 days (about 18 months) after discharge to enroll if you submit proof of good health with your application and pay the premium.

This extended enrollment and eligibility period will end June 11, 2021.

"As a result of the economic situation, former members, who otherwise may be eligible for VGLI coverage, currently may not be able to afford VGLI coverage or to provide evidence of insurability," the VA said.

So, it has extended the period of VGLI eligibility to allow veterans who may be facing financial issues to regain financial stability while they remain eligible to enroll in the government-sponsored life insurance program.

VGLI is a life insurance program that allows veterans to convert their [Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance \(SGLI\)](#) coverage to renewable term insurance. Service members with full-time SGLI coverage are eligible for VGLI when they leave the military. VGLI, like SGLI, is overseen by the VA, but is administered by the Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

VGLI coverage is issued in multiples of \$10,000, up to a maximum of \$400,000. However, your VGLI coverage amount can't be more than the SGLI coverage you had on active duty.

SGLI and VGLI May Not Be Enough

SGLI and VGLI may not be enough to cover your family's needs. Explore [life insurance options](#) with our free tool, which compares rates and matches you to the coverage your family needs.

Did you know that if you don't update your retired pay account in a timely manner, it could adversely impact your loved ones?

Many issues can arise if DFAS is not notified of life-changing events, especially for your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

Informing DFAS about life-changing events in a timely manner is one way to make sure your dependents are taken care of with the Survivor Benefit Plan. Promptly notifying DFAS ensures the correct premiums are billed and your loved ones will not face challenges in receiving their SBP annuity payments.

Below are examples of common life events and how deadlines impact your SBP coverage:

- At retirement, you are single with no children. After retirement, you marry or have a child. Notify us within ONE YEAR, by sending us a DD Form 2656-6 and a copy of the marriage or birth certificate, if you want SBP coverage.
- You divorce and elect former spouse coverage. Your former spouse passes away and you later re-marry.

Notify us within ONE YEAR of your re-marriage, by sending us a DD Form 2656-6 and a copy of your new marriage certificate, if you want SBP coverage for your new spouse.

Find out more about changing SBP coverage:

<https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/provide/sbp/change>

CORRECTING & REQUESTING MILITARY RECORDS:

Air Force veterans who need to have an error corrected or an injustice removed from their military records should complete a DD Form 149, Application for Correction of Military Record. The form instructions advise mailing the package to the address on the back of the form, but the DD Form 149 is currently being revised for an address change. The intake office on the back of the form has relocated from Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas, to Joint Base Andrews, MD.

To ensure an application is received and processed in a timely manner, mail the DD Form 149, along with any supporting documents, to: SAF/MRBC (AFBCMR), 3351 Celmers Lane, Joint Base Andrews NAF, Washington, MD 20762-6435 or send the package by email to usaf.pentagon.saf-mr.mbx.saf-mrbc@mail.mil.

You can get additional information at the following link: <https://www.afpc.af.mil/Career-Management/Military-Personnel-Records/> Scroll down to the “RECORDS CORRECTION” section for more information. On this same site, in the “REQUEST COPY OF MILITARY RECORDS” section, you will find the following info on how to get a copy of your military records. “Air Force veterans who separated or retired on or after Oct. 1, 2004, may request their records in two ways: register for a free Premium account on the Department of Veterans Affairs’ **eBenefits site**, or email, mail or fax a signed SF-180 to AFPC’s military personnel records section. The form can be emailed to AFPC/DP1OR Military Records Incoming at **dpsomp.incoming@us.af.mil**, faxed to 210-565-3124 (DSN 665-3124) or mailed to the AFPC address on the back of the form. *Requests for records or documents cannot be made by phone.*” You can find additional information on getting copies of your records from the National Archives web site at <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel> or calling 314-801-0800. [Source: Buckley AFB RAO Newsletter June 2020]

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS UNDER TRICARE:

For people who are not aware of their options for getting prescription medications under Tricare - either regular Tricare or Tricare for Life (TFL). So, even though I’m sure most of you already know this, here is some basic info for those who may not. Under Tricare there are four basic options to obtain medication prescribed by your doctor - using these could save you money. From cheapest to most expensive, the options are: a military pharmacy; the Tricare Express Scripts home delivery program; a Tricare retail network pharmacy (~58k locations) and; a non-network pharmacy. Tricare requires your prescription be filled with a generic product if one is available. At a **military pharmacy** you can receive up to a 90 day supply of *most medications at no cost to you*. Using **Express Scripts** home delivery you can receive up to a 90 day supply of *most generic medications* for a \$10 copay and brand-name medications for a \$29 copay. For prescription drugs not on the Tricare’s preferred list the copay is \$60. At an **in network retail pharmacy** (like a Walgreens, Rite Aid, Walmart, etc) you can receive up to a **30** day supply of *most generic medications* for a \$13 copay and \$33 for brand name medications. Prices at non-network pharmacies will vary. If you have any questions you can call the Express Scripts (877-

363-1303, 800-282-2881 or visit <https://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/index.shtml>).
[Source: Buckley AFB RAO Newsletter June 2020]

LINK TO RETIREE PUBLICATIONS

Army Echoes	http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement
Navy Shift Colors:	www.shiftcolors.navy.mil
Air Force Afterburner:	www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner
Marine Corps Semper Fidelis:	www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MM/SR/RET_ACT/ Semper Fidelis
Coast Guard Evening Colors:	http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/psc/ras

INPUT: If you have any suggestions for any type of additional articles you may like to have included in the future newsletters please email us. We look forward for more input from you and other agencies.

We will publish this newsletter four times a year if the supply of information is available.

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