

March 23, 2016

Veterans Service Update

Department Veterans Service Office April Business Hours: This office will be open each Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM until 4:00 PM during the month of April. Appointments are necessary for client visits. You may contact the department veterans service office by calling our direct number of 317-916-3605; calling a long distance toll free number of 1-888-723-7999, extension 1; faxing us at 317-916-3406; or by using the following e-mail address: al.vbaind@va.gov.

Local Service Issues:

Indianapolis Veterans Court Looking for Volunteer Mentors: We recently received the following information from Indianapolis Veterans Court Mentor Coordinator, Gordon E. Smith. Those interested in becoming a Veterans Court Mentor may contact Mr. Smith at: 317-327-1025 (office phone number; 317-503-8417 (cell phone number), or by using the following e-mail address: gordon.smith@indy.gov.

"I am the Indianapolis Veterans Court Mentor Coordinator. I am currently looking for military veterans to volunteer for the Indianapolis Veteran Court as Mentors. A veteran mentor is a resource for our veteran participants, not a counselor but to coach, guide, role model, advocate, and a support for the individual with whom he or she is working. The mission of the Indianapolis Veteran's Court (IVC) is to support the veteran through adjustment to civilian life; to assist the veteran to navigate the court, treatment, VA systems; and to

act as an advocate through this difficult time of restoration with mentorship and accountability. As a veteran mentor you will be asked to:

- *Attend a court session at least once a month*
- *Dedicate at least one hour a week of time for mentoring to the veteran participant.*
- *Commit to participate for at least one year or until the veteran participant has graduated.*
- *Participate in and leading mentoring sessions with veterans who are participating in the IVC Program.*
- *Support veterans in identifying and addressing difficulties.*
- *Adhere to all of the IVC policies and procedures.*
- *Assist the participants as much as possible to resolve their concerns with court procedures and interactions with the VA system.*
- *Support and help other Mentors in the program."*

If you are willing to meet these requirements, please contact Mr. Gordon for an application.

Mr. Gordon will visit our Spring Conference on April 9, 2016 and further discuss the Veterans Court Mentors program during the Veterans Assistance Meeting starting at Noon in Salon D, Marriott Hotel, 7202 East 21st Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Operation Hire a Hoosier Vet: Indiana's largest employment event for service members, veterans and their families will take place on

April 20, 2016 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Indiana State fairgrounds agriculture/horticulture building. There will be up to 200 actively hiring employers. There will also be a job preparedness workshop on April 13, 2016 at 2601 Raymond Street in Indianapolis from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Register on line at: www.ohhv.org.

National Service Issues:

Hepatitis C Treatment at VA: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it is now fund care for all Veterans with hepatitis C for Fiscal Year 2016 regardless of the stage of the patient's liver disease. The move follows increased funding from Congress along with reduced drug prices. In fiscal year 2015, VA allocated \$696 million for new Hepatitis C drugs (17 percent of the VA's total pharmacy budget) and in fiscal year 2016, VA anticipates spending approximately \$1 billion on hepatitis C drugs. VA expects that with the expansion, many more Veterans will be started on hepatitis C treatment every week this fiscal year. For additional information on Hepatitis C treatments, Veterans can [log onto http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/patient/hcv/index.asp](http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/patient/hcv/index.asp) (source: VA News Release 03/09/2016).

VA Attempting to Correct Choice Program Billing Issues: Veterans can now work directly with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to resolve debt collection issues resulting from inappropriate or delayed billing and payment. A Community Care Call Center has been set up for Veterans experiencing adverse credit reporting or debt collection resulting from inappropriately billed Choice Program claims. Veterans experiencing these problems can call 1-877-881-7618 for assistance. The new call center will work to resolve instances of improper Veteran billing and assist community care medical providers with delayed payments. VA staff are also trained and ready to work with the medical providers to expunge adverse credit reporting on Veterans resulting from delayed payments to

providers. VA is urging Veterans to continue working with their VA primary care team to obtain necessary health care services regardless of adverse credit reporting or debt collection activity. (Source: VA news release dated March 4, 2016)

Missing Electronic Claims: On December 10, 2015, VA identified a serious defect in the handling of compensation and claim status document uploads on e-benefits and SEP electronic claims filing systems. The defect may have incorrectly informed users that documents were successfully uploaded, when in actuality the documents may have been rejected by the VA network gateway. The affected timeframe is August 1, 2015 through December 21, 2015, and pertains to documents submitted through either SEP or e-benefits. VA will soon supply personalized letters to those veterans requesting that they resubmit the uploaded documents. When resubmitting the documents, the veteran or the representative will need to also return the first page of the VA development letter or a statement affirming the evidence is a resubmission of the lost documents.

The VA Healthcare System Will Start Accepting Telephonic Health Care Applications: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced it has amended its enrollment regulations to allow veterans to complete applications for enrollment in VA health care by telephone without the need for a signed paper application. The change is effective immediately for Combat Veterans and will be effective July 5, 2016, for all Veterans. By adding this telephone application option to VA's regulations, VA will now offer three ways to enroll including using a VA Form 10-10EZ, and online enrollment. For more information, Veterans can contact the Health Eligibility Center Enrollment and Eligibility Division toll free at 1-855-488-8440. (Source: VA News Release dated 3-16-16)