



JUN - SEP 2018



A MESSAGE FROM THE SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

Greetings, Soldiers for Life!

It's great to have another opportunity to share some of the Army's recent developments to improve our Soldiers' quality of life over the past year or so. We have made progress in many areas relating to helping our Soldiers perform better in their daily duties, and in their transition to civilian life upon completion of their service to the nation.

Some of the most prominent changes are related to credentialing, academic equivalency, deployability and a possible change to the "Pink and Green" uniform. These are just a handful of the initiatives the Army has worked hard to implement for our Soldiers, their families, and our veteran community.

We are doing all we can to provide credentialing opportunities to our Soldiers. Not only will it enhance career progression and Army readiness, but credentialing also creates Soldiers who are competitive when they enter the civilian workforce. We have already identified 580 civilian-recognized equivalent Army credentials and more than 100 credentials for promotion points.

Regarding education, we have also worked to ensure Soldiers receive academic college equivalency for their training. Our goal is to match every MOS with a civilian equivalent, and we're working with national accrediting agencies to ensure Soldiers transition from service with the same academic credit and credentials as civilians who attend college or trade schools.

The Army, as directed by the Department of Defense, has sought to improve personnel readiness by reducing the number of nondeployable Soldiers. The DOD policy states Soldiers who are nondeployable for more than 12 consecutive months, for any reason, will be processed for administrative separation.

That does not mean the Army will neglect its obligation to take care of those Soldiers. We will certainly honor our commitment to them. However, it is clear, the amount of nondeployable Soldiers is unsustainable in terms of Army readiness. Therefore, we will administratively separate those Soldiers while treating them with respect and dignity. That is what our promise of "Soldier for Life" is all about.

A potential change of interest to our retired community is the Army's consideration of re-instituting "Pink and Green" uniforms, worn by the "Greatest Generation." Still pre-decisional, this change would attract the best and brightest, honor our heritage and instill pride in future generations of Soldiers.

I understand there isn't an ideal time to make this change, because it will always come at a cost. If the change is approved, the "Pink and Green" uniform would serve as the middle ground between the utilitarian Operational Camouflage Pattern uniform and the formal Army Service Uniform. The latter would return to its previous status as an optional, formal uniform. I look forward to hearing more of your thoughts on this potential change.

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Editorial

The Army's 4th Component

By Mark E. Overberg, Director, Army Retirement Services

Most people know the Army components as the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve. But there is a fourth component. And it's bigger than the other three . . . combined. The Army's fourth component is its 979,000 Retired Soldiers and 247,000 surviving spouses.

Some would ask when was the last time Retired Soldiers won a battle. Others might scoff or doubt the Army's need for Retired Soldiers.

As a young cavalry officer, I watched my squadron commander tear into one of my peers who volunteered that the supply personnel, mechanics and cooks weren't needed; they weren't war fighters. That squadron commander educated that lieutenant about how everyone has a different role, but all are necessary for winning wars. Then he asked the lieutenant how far he thought he could drive his tank without fuel or what he would do when he was out of rounds for his main gun or machine guns, or how he was going to fix his tank when it broke down again - without repair parts, tools and the experience to fix it. After absorbing that sabot round to the chest, the now silent lieutenant apologized. The squadron commander

told him not to apologize, but to recognize the work of the supporters and their value in accomplishing the mission.

Retired Soldiers don't fight our nation's wars any more, but, as with the supporters in the story above, our contribution is important. We talk to Congressmen in a way Soldiers cannot, and some of us are even lobbyists. We explain to Americans in towns across the country what Soldiers do for them and how the Army spends their tax dollars. We talk to parents of young Americans who are thinking about joining the Army. We open doors that are closed to the Army's recruiters. We help veterans get jobs, so the Army can spend less on unemployment compensation and more on training and equipment.

The mission statement for the Army's fourth component is: Our mission has changed, but our duty has not.

**To Lt. Col. Charles F. Sparks, U.S. Army Retired:
Thank you for the lesson in teamwork you gave my
peer. It still applies today.**

Army Echoes is the U. S. Army's official news for Retired Soldiers, surviving spouses and their families. *Army Echoes'* mission is to educate Retired Soldiers about their benefits and changes within the U. S. Army and to urge them to remain Soldiers for Life, representing the Army in their civilian communities.

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Inquiries and comments about *Army Echoes* should be sent to Army Retirement Services, Attention: *Army Echoes* Editor, 251 18th Street South, Suite 210, Arlington, VA 22202-3531 or ArmyEchoes@mail.mil. Direct all other questions to the Retirement Services Officers listed on pg. 23.

Prior to using or reprinting any portion of *Army Echoes*, please contact the editor at ArmyEchoes@mail.mil.

Leadership

Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1: Lt. Gen. Thomas C. Seamands

Co-Chairs, Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council: Lt. Gen. James J. Lovelace, Jr. (USA Retired) and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler (USA Retired)

Director, Army Retirement Services: Mark E. Overberg

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Echoes from the past

The more things change, the more they stay the same!

The **June 1958** issue of the **Retired Army Personnel Bulletin** explained Public Law 85-376, which, for the first time, allowed Army Reservists retired for length of service to waive a portion of their retired pay to accept VA disability compensation. Prior to the law, Reservists without a medical retirement had to waive all of their retired pay to receive any disability compensation. A separate note explained that members retired for disability, but who had no wartime service, would now be permitted to receive care in VA hospitals. However, members retired for length of service without wartime service were still prohibited from seeking care in VA hospitals. [Ed. Note: All retired members may now seek care in VA hospitals, and will receive free care for service-connected illnesses or injuries.]

In the **July 1958** issue, Secretary of the Army William M. Brucker urged retiring and Retired Soldiers to become teachers. "The Department of the Army is initiating an action program designed to inform, motivate, and assist its personnel in preparing themselves as appropriate, and offering their services as teachers in the Nation's schools." [Ed. Note: The Army's Troops to Teachers program is still encouraging Soldiers to become teachers in our nation's schools.]

The **August 1958** issue explained that the "Strategic Army Corps (STRAC) was an infantry-airborne combination maintained in the continental United States but specially tailored to move promptly to trouble spots anywhere in the world. Called the 'fire brigade,' STRAC stands ready to extinguish 'brushfire' or limited wars before they become conflagrations. STRAC is presently composed of the Headquarters XVIII Airborne Corps, 101st Airborne Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 4th Infantry Division, 1st Infantry Division and supporting units." [Ed. Note: The XVIII Airborne Corps and its subordinate elements, including the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions and 3rd Infantry Division, remains the Army's strategic response force capability to deploy on short-notice anywhere in the world by air, land, or sea to conduct unified land operations as an Army, Joint, or Combined Task Force.]

The **September 1958** issue explained that the Army's Enlisted Scientific and Professional Personnel Program was providing "highly skilled personnel in all grades and in many fields. One of the most notable scientific achievements in recent years was the successful launching by the Army of the Explorer, the first United States satellite. Many members of the team that launched the satellite were enlisted men, primarily inducted personnel, with degrees in physics; chemistry; and related subjects pertinent to astronautics and rocket engineering . . . enlisted men currently on active military service are now contributing to further Army research in guided missiles, artificial satellites, and such advanced projects as the lunar probe rockets." [Ed. Note: Enlisted Soldiers now commonly hold advanced degrees in many technical subjects. Graduates of the Sergeants Major Academy will soon receive masters degrees.]

A Message from the SMA (Continued from page 1)

And I will continue to do all I can to listen to your thoughts and concerns. In April, I had an opportunity to talk with the Army Chief of Staff's Retired Soldier Council. And in May, my executive officer met with 20 military and veteran service organizations to better understand how to leverage their services and resources for Soldiers, families and veterans. So your feedback is very important to the Army.

I would like to reiterate how grateful we are to you for your service and sacrifice to this nation. You are an inspiration to the next generation of young men and women who will serve our country. Special thanks to you and your families representing the Army in our communities across America. Your commitment is why we remain the best!

Army Strong! Soldier for Life!

Email: army.smaweb@mail.mil

Website: <https://www.army.mil/leaders/sma/>

Twitter: [@15thSMA](https://twitter.com/15thSMA)



Retired Soldiers bolstering Army recruiting efforts

By Joe Lacdan, Army News Service

WASHINGTON -- A generation gap hasn't stopped the Army's retired community from using its circles of influence to help the service gain new recruits. As Army Recruiting Command continues its push toward its 2018 recruitment goals, it has increasingly turned toward Retired Soldiers for help.

Late last year, the Army announced that it will attempt to recruit 80,000 new Soldiers, a 14 percent increase over its 2017 goal. While there is a vast age difference between Retired Soldiers and potential recruits, Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler said Retired Soldiers have access to resources that can impact recruiting differently than recruiters.

Chandler, who serves as a Co-Chairman of the Army Chief of Staff's Retired Soldier Council, said members of the Army's retirement community can also help alleviate some of the burden Army recruiters face when competing with colleges and other military branches for talent.

"There are not enough recruiters to go to every single town across the entire nation," Chandler said. "A lot of America doesn't know the Army anymore; the Army is much smaller and hasn't had a draft for decades. So what they see of the Army is what's on TV or something they've seen in a movie or read in a newspaper and it's not always the best representation of what the Army actually is."

"A Retired Soldier may have connections to academic institutions and potential venues where recruiters can meet potential candidates, Chandler said.

A high school may restrict recruiters' access to students, for example. But a Retired Soldier may have a connection to the school that allows them to help change that policy, Chandler said.

Near his residence in the Orlando, Fla., area, Chandler has spoken to high school and college-age students about the potential benefits of joining the Army. He has also shared with those students some of the realities and benefits of joining the Army, which can contrast with public misconceptions.

"So if you've got a person that has credibility inside of the town that can dispel those myths and help the Army with trying to get to the amount of people it's trying to get to, you make a difference," Chandler said.



Members of the 2018 Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council (From L to R, front row): SMA (Ret) Raymond Chandler , LTG (Ret) James Lovelace, (second row): CSM (Ret) Divina Bobb, CSM (Ret) Sandra Matlock-Williams, (third row): COL (Ret) Many-Bears Grinder, CSM (Ret) William Grant, MSG (Ret) Miguel Padilla, LTC (Ret) David Fulton, CSM (Ret) Tommy Williams, COL (Ret) Lenore Enzel, (fourth row): CSM Ralph Rusch, COL (Ret) Norris Posehn, MG (Ret) Robert Kasulke and CW5 (Ret) David Ratliff. Photo by Army Multimedia & Visual Information Directorate.

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A MIX OF MEMBERS

Every Army installation has a Retired Soldier Council. However, the CSA Retired Soldier Council is comprised of seven retired officers and seven enlisted members from different installations. The Council members include a retired lieutenant general and sergeant major of the Army as co-chairs of the Council, one service connected disabled, one Reserve, one National Guard, at least two females, no more than two permanently residing outside of the U.S. (one must be from Europe), and one warrant officer.

Retired Lt. Gen. James Lovelace, who serves as a Co-Chairman for consistency of the Council alongside Chandler, said the Army has prioritized fostering a mutually-beneficial relationship with more than 900,000 Retired Soldiers and 250,000 surviving Army spouses.

"There's energy out there," said Lovelace. "There's people who can and want to help the Army hire and inspire."

Since its inception, the Chief's Council also acts as a liaison between the Army retirement community and the Army chief of staff.

"There's people who can and want to help the Army hire and inspire."

Each year, Lovelace and Chandler meet with Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley to discuss the most pressing issues concerning the retired community, and brief him on some of the work Retired Soldiers have been doing in their communities. Lovelace noted while the discussions with Milley are private, the chief has made listening to Retired Soldiers' concerns a priority.

"(Working on the Chief's Council) is an opportunity to give back and serve," retired Command Sgt. Maj. Sandra Matlock-Williams said. "It's really a humbling experience to be able to come in and be an advocate for retirees and to be able to talk Retired Soldier issues, because they're important, and to be able to represent Soldiers across the world. I really think that is an opportunity to be a voice and to be heard."

Recently, an increased Army emphasis on telling Soldier stories has prompted retirees who serve on those councils to tell their stories more often in their representative communities.

"Our role is important," said Matlock-Williams. "Everybody has a circle of influence. We all do. And then we represent so many people. When we talk more and more about our career or just tell folks about the Army, our story is told. And those folks that we know and interact with can learn more and more."

Matlock-Williams retired as the garrison command sergeant major at Fort Meade, Md., in 2002 after 26 years of service. She said she applied for a place on the Council so she could continue serving the Army. Today, she works at the Warrior Family Center at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland. As part of her work now, she said she has had the opportunity to advise Soldiers. She said one such Soldier, who volunteers at the center, recently approached her for advice on promotions and later achieved a successful promotion.

Chandler, now a senior business consultant for a defense contracting company, said he briefs military veterans at his company and also listens to their concerns. He also meets regularly with a veterans' employee resource group.

'Soldier for Life' window sticker?

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service sells the SFL window sticker. If your local store doesn't have it, ask the manager. It is also available from retailers. Retirement Services Officers are also authorized to order and distribute the SFL window sticker.



There is no sticker with the word "Retired" because the sticker represents the entire Soldier for Life program, including veterans who didn't retire.



Changes coming to the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program

WASHINGTON — Do you have TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) coverage? If so, you need to know that the TRDP will end on December 31, 2018. But, don't worry. Anyone who was in TRDP this year, or who would have been eligible for the TRDP plan, will be able to choose a dental plan from among 10 dental carriers, (one of which is Delta Dental, current administrator of the TRDP), in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). You can begin reviewing program options now at www.opm.gov/fedvip. You'll be able to enroll in FEDVIP during the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from November 12 to December 10, 2018; coverage will begin on January 1, 2019.

Previously, FEDVIP wasn't available to Department of Defense military beneficiaries, but it will now be available to those who would have been eligible for TRDP. As an added bonus, they will also be able to enroll in FEDVIP vision coverage, along with most active duty family members.

More than 3.3 million people are currently covered by FEDVIP. You can choose from dental plans offered by 10 different carriers. To enroll in FEDVIP Vision, you must be enrolled in a TRICARE health plan. You can decide if one of four vision plans meets your family's needs.

You may only enroll in a FEDVIP plan outside of open season if you experience a qualifying life event. Any election in a FEDVIP plan remains in effect for the entire calendar year.

For more information, visit the FEDVIP website at <https://tricare.benefeds.com> and sign up for email notifications. You'll get an email when new information is available and key dates approach. Future updates will include eligibility information, plans, carriers, rates, educational webinars and more.

VA launches Concierge for Care program

WASHINGTON — Recently, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of Concierge for Care, a health-care enrollment initiative that connects with former service members shortly after they separate from the service.

"Our goal is to give transitioning service members one less thing to worry about," said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin. "We know that more than a third of veterans who haven't yet visited our facilities indicated they are not aware of VA health care benefits, while a quarter reported they do not know how to apply."

As part of Concierge for Care, VA staff members are personally contacting recently separated service members to answer questions, process their health-care enrollment applications over the phone and help schedule eligible veterans' first VA medical appointment, if needed.

Each week, VA receives a list of separating service members from the Department of Defense. The goal is to make contact with them within a month of discharge.

Certain veterans who served in a theater of combat operations are eligible to enroll and receive cost-free health care for medical conditions related to their military service during the five-year period after discharge.

Information about VA health care and the application process can be found at <https://www.vets.gov/health-care/apply/>.



FEDVIP to bring vision coverage to TRICARE beneficiaries

Only half of the 61 million U.S. adults who are at high risk for serious vision loss visited an eye doctor in the past year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Eye exams can help keep your vision strong, diagnose potential issues early, and prevent diseases that may lead to vision loss or blindness.

Beginning with the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season (Nov. 12 to Dec. 10, 2018), beneficiaries enrolled in a TRICARE health plan will be eligible to enroll in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). Coverage will start Jan. 1, 2019.

Beneficiaries enrolled in or are eligible for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will also be able to enroll in one of the FEDVIP dental options for 2019 coverage. TRDP will end on Dec. 31, 2018. FEDVIP offers 10 dental and four vision carrier options. **If you are currently enrolled in the TRDP plan, you will not be automatically enrolled in a FEDVIP plan for 2019.**



You can begin reviewing the 2018 FEDVIP program options now to better understand your coverage and cost options. Please know that benefits and costs may change each year.

The open season will be your annual opportunity to enroll in, change, or cancel a FEDVIP dental or vision plan.

Each year, it runs from the Monday of the second full week in November through the Monday of the second full week in December. You may only enroll in a FEDVIP plan outside of open season if you experience a FEDVIP qualifying life event (QLE). Any election in a FEDVIP plan remains in effect for the entire calendar year, unless you experience a QLE to cancel or change enrollment.

Almost all TRICARE beneficiaries are eligible to enroll in the FEDVIP vision coverage as the sponsor or primary enrollee. Visit the FEDVIP website for more information and to sign up for notifications about this change at <https://tricare.benefeds.com>.

The Human Resource Service Center is an entry point for military-related human resource inquiries. The center responds to Soldiers, Retired Soldiers, veterans, family members, DA civilians and government agencies. Contact HRSC (0800-1800 EST, Monday thru Friday) at (888)-ARMYHRC (276-9472.) For general military HR and veteran issues: usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-ask-hrc@mail.mil

Use the link below to access the Knowledge Base containing answers to Soldiers' and veterans' Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

<https://www.hrc.army.mil/search?c=KB>



Ask Joe: Your Benefits Guru



MyArmyBenefits

The U.S. Army official benefits website



Dear Joe,

My daughter-in-law works in Rapid City, SD, at the Department of Motor Vehicles as a personnel manager and she said she was told to add the wife of a Soldier to a hiring list for a job with Veteran's Preference because her husband was disabled and could not work. This woman was never in the military. How could this be? I'm not sure I like the idea of someone taking a job away from a veteran.

Concerned in Puget Sound

Dear Concerned,

I share your concern, but, in this case it's unwarranted. In South Dakota, if a disabled eligible veteran is unable to exercise their right to a veteran's preference due to disability, the veteran's spouse is entitled to the same preference, provided the spouse has the necessary skills and qualifications for the job to which they are applying. Moreover, the unmarried surviving spouse of a deceased veteran who died while in service, or died later from a service-connected cause, is entitled to the same preference as an eligible veteran provided the spouse has the necessary skills and qualifications for the job to which they are applying.

Now that you have the facts, aren't you glad South Dakota has that law? I am.

Joe

Dear Joe,

Thank you for your service. I'm a 100% disabled Vietnam vet. I get around in a wheel chair pretty good and don't really have any complaints. But I do have a question. We recently moved from California to Oklahoma to get away from all the taxes and a guy in the grocery store saw my Vietnam vets hat and the wheel chair and, putting two and two together, asked me if I knew I didn't have to pay sales tax in Oklahoma. Well, I certainly had just paid taxes on my groceries, so what is he talking about?

Robert

Hello Robert,

Your new friend is right! In Oklahoma, a veteran who receives compensation at the 100% rate with a permanent, service-connected VA disability qualifies for sales tax exemption up to \$25,000.00 per year. Talk to your tax guy about how to apply. That's a pretty good deal and a nice way to say thank you for your service.

Remember, for all your questions about military and veteran's state or federal benefits, go to the Benefits Libraries in MyArmyBenefits, (<http://MyArmyBenefits.us.army.mil>) or call the Help Desk (888)721-2769 Mon-Fri.

Joe

Army Futures Command

What is it?

WASHINGTON — Establishment of the Army Futures Command is the most significant Army reorganization effort since 1973. Army Futures Command will be the fourth Army Command and will be tasked with driving the Army into the future to achieve clear overmatch in future conflicts. The Army Commands (ACOMs):

- Army Forces Command: Force provider of the Army- trains, prepares a combat ready, globally responsive Total Army Force of U.S. Army Soldiers to build and sustain Army readiness to meet Combatant Command requirements.
- Army Training and Doctrine Command: Architect of the Army- recruits, trains designs, acquires, and builds the Army.
- Army Materiel Command: Sustains the Army- provides materiel readiness by equipping and sustaining the force.
- Army Futures Command: Modernizes the Army for the future- will integrate the future operational environment, threat, and technologies to develop and deliver future force requirements, designing future force organizations, and delivering materiel capabilities.

Characteristics

- Custodian of Army modernization efforts; linking operational concepts to requirements to acquisition to fielding.
- Bring concepts and requirements definitions together with engineering and acquisitions functions into one team.
- Small agile headquarters focused on flexibility, collaboration, and speed. Focus of faster innovation, experimentation, and demonstration.
- Enable rapid prototyping – failing early and cheaply, and then increase learning with increased operational inputs

Structure

- Each Army Futures Command subordinate organization currently exists as an organization within TRADOC, AMC, ASA (ALT) or Army Test and Evaluation Command.
- Army Futures Command's subordinate organizations will remain at their current locations but will be realigned to ensure all Army major commands remain closely linked.
- Cross Functional Teams (CFTs) will report to the Army Futures Command. Program Managers will remain under the control of ASA (ALT) but be teamed with the CFTs.
- Command group headquarters will be located near innovative and agile industrial and academic institutions

to align with these organizations and in a place where the command will inculcate the culture needed to develop the innovation and synergy required to lead the Army's modernization effort.

Organization

Army Futures Command will have three subordinate organizations:

- Futures and Concepts will identify and prioritize capability development needs and opportunities.
- Combat Development will conceptualize and develop solutions for identified needs and opportunities.
- Combat Systems will refine, engineer, and produce developed solutions.

All acquisition authority is derived from Army Acquisition Executive (AAE), to whom the Program Managers report. Futures Command is responsible for requirements and supports the Program Managers. Program managers remain under the control of ASA (ALT) but matrixed against the CFTs.

What is the Army doing/ has done?

WAYS: The Army's modernization strategy has one focus: make Soldiers and units more lethal to win the nation's wars, then come home safely.

MEANS: The modernization process will leverage commercial innovation, cutting-edge science and technology, prototyping and warfighter feedback.

ENDS: Unity of command and unity of effort for the Army's modernization effort ensures accountability, transparency and responsible stewardship of the nation's resources. In support of the overall strategy, Army Futures Command will synchronize efforts among the ACOMs and across the cross functional teams to advance the Army's six modernization priorities:

- Long-Range Precision Fires
- Next Generation Combat Vehicle
- Future Vertical Lift
- Army Network
- Air and Missile Defense
- Soldier Lethality



A U.S. Army crew chief assigned to Task Force Brawler, flying on board a CH-47F Chinook, observe the successful test of threat countermeasures during a training flight in Afghanistan, March 14, 2018.

Afghanistan - Photo by Tech. Sgt. Gregory Brook



National Museum of the United States Army taking shape in Virginia

FORT BELVOIR, Va. — On a crisp morning just before last Thanksgiving, a crowd of Soldiers, Army veterans and Army supporters joined more than 200 steel workers gathered on a construction site at Fort Belvoir to watch as the final steel beam of the National Museum of the United States Army was lifted into place. The historic moment capped a year of tremendous progress building a place that will honor and preserve the service of the 30 million men and women who have served in the United States Army. The Army is our nation's oldest and largest military service, yet it will be the last to see a national museum built to tell its entire history.



The museum will hold some of the Army's most treasured artifacts and compelling works of combat art.

In fact, the first four artifacts are already in place, and they are incredible pieces of our nation's history. These artifacts, which are so large that crews had to build the museum's walls around them, include the only known surviving Renault FT-17 Tank used by U.S. personnel during World War I, a Higgins Boat that brought troops to shore on D-Day, the M4A3E2 Sherman "Jumbo" Tank that first broke through enemy lines during the Battle of the Bulge, and the M3 Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicle that led the charge from Kuwait to Baghdad in 2003.

When the museum opens, it will be a national landmark that serves an important role in strengthening the fabric of the Army Veteran community. The museum will provide a place to reflect on your time in uniform and connect with fellow soldiers across generations. As you visit with loved ones and friends, the exhibits and galleries will help you explain your experience serving your country in a way that is not currently possible. The museum will also have special exhibits and features dedicated to Army families in recognition of their service, and to the network of civilians who have served in support roles.

For the rest of America, the National Army Museum will be an educational institution that teaches how the Army was first established to win our nation's independence, and how it has gone on to shape nearly every major event in our country's history. The more than 700,000 visitors who are expected to walk through the exhibits and galleries every year will gain a better understanding and appreciation of the Army's invaluable role in our society and world. Additionally, they will learn of the Army's contributions outside of conflicts, including peacekeeping and humanitarian relief missions, and in the fields of geography, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Standing up a national museum for the Army is long overdue. Fortunately, the support offered to the project is growing every day. The Army Historical Foundation which was designated by the Secretary of the Army to lead the campaign to build the museum has received more than 699,000 individual donations from more than 161,000 donors. Corporations, foundations, allied nations and grateful Americans have all stepped forward to do their part.

The Foundation has also collected more than 116,000 stories of Soldiers, Army veterans, Army families, Army civilians and support animals in our electronic registries. These registries are currently hosted online and will one-day be accessible from within the museum. They are a free and easy way to see your story, or the story of a battle buddy or loved one, told in the museum. I encourage all those who served to go to armyhistory.org/the-registry/ and enter your story.

The National Museum of the United States Army will serve as our nation's tribute to the U.S. Army. Please share this project with those who served. Encourage them to send us their stories. And let them know that their nation is building a place that will ensure their service is always remembered.



VA offers early participation in a faster new claims decision review process

WASHINGTON — Recently, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is offering two opportunities for early participation in the new, more efficient claims decision review process outlined in the historic Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017.

These two opportunities will allow eligible veterans to receive a review of a decision on a claim much faster than the current appeals process.

“VA is committed to transforming the appeals process,” said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This is evidenced by the success of Rapid Appeals Modernization Program which has seen over 12,000 veterans opt-in. In addition, the Board of Veterans’ Appeals has issued approximately 46,000 decisions this fiscal year — nearly 23,000 more decisions than last year at this time. We are on pace to reach a historical fiscal goal of 81,000 decisions.”

First, VA will expand the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) by removing the requirement that veterans first receive an invitation from VA in order to elect participation in the program.

RAMP, which was initially launched in November 2017 as an invitation only program, allows eligible veterans with a disability compensation appeal early access to the Higher-

Level Review and Supplemental Claim Lanes outlined in the Appeals Modernization Act. By removing the invitation requirement, veterans will have the opportunity to benefit from the new, more efficient decision review process, versus continuing to wait in the legacy appeal process. As of March 31, RAMP reviews were completed in an average of 52 days.

Second, in May, the Board of Veterans’ Appeals launched its Early Applicability of Appeals Modernization (BEAAM) pilot project. Under this project, the Board will partner with the National Organization of Veterans’ Advocates, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the California Department of Veterans Affairs to identify 50 veterans who are dissatisfied with a recent decision on their benefits claim.

These veterans will participate in a study that allows them the option of appealing directly to the Board or seeking a review in RAMP. In this study, the Board will collect preliminary data about Veteran choices and experiences.

In October, the Board will begin deciding appeals from RAMP decisions using the features of the Appeals Modernization Act, specifically its new, separate Direct, Evidence and Hearing dockets.

The expansion of RAMP, combined with the BEAAM, will allow VA to collect valuable data about implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

RETIREE APPRECIATION DAYS

Attend and receive benefits information, renew acquaintances and ID Cards, get medical checkups, and receive other services. Some RADs include dinners or golf tournaments. For more information, contact the Retirement Services Officer sponsoring the RAD.

Location	Date	Contact	Location	Date	Contact
Fort Wainwright, AK	Aug. 4	(907) 353-2095	Rock Island, IL	Oct. 13	(563) 445-0191
Tobyhanna Army Depot, PA	Aug. 11	(570) 615-7409	Fort Detrick, MD	Oct. 16	(301) 619-3381
Altoona, IA	Aug. 16	(515) 240-1469	USAG-Bavaria	Oct. 16	0964-183-8709
Rosemount, MN (Twin Cities)	Aug. 17	(763) 516-2931	USAG-Ansbach	Oct. 17	0981-183-3301
Fort McCoy, WI	Sep. 7	(608) 388-3716	Rheiland-Pfalz/Ramstein	Oct. 18	0631-411-8838
Camp Zama, Japan	Sep. 7	011-81-46-407-3940	Schinnen, Netherlands	Oct. 19	0032-65-44-7267
Fort Leonard Wood, MO	Sep. 7-8	(573) 596-0947	Fort Bragg, NC	Oct. 19-20	(910) 396-5304
Fort Carson, CO	Sep. 15	(719) 526-2840	BENELUX-Brussels	Oct. 20	0032-65-44-7267
Fort Sill, OK	Sep. 20-22	(580) 442-2645	Schofield Barracks, HI	Oct. 20	(808) 655-1514
Redstone Arsenal, AL	Sep. 21-22	(256) 842-2421	Fort Riley, KS	Oct. 20	(785) 239-3320
Fort Belvoir, VA	Sep. 21	(703) 806-4551	Fort Polk, LA	Oct. 20	(337) 531-0402
JB San Antonio, TX	Sep. 22	(210) 221-9004	Camp Humphreys, Korea	Oct. 20	(315) 753-8839
Fort Drum, NY	Sep. 22	(315) 772-6434	USAG-Stuttgart	Oct. 25	07031-15-3442
Selfridge, MI	Sep. 22	(586) 239-5580	Fort Meade, MD	Oct. 26	(301) 677-9603
Fort Campbell, KY	Sep. 22	(270) 798-5280	Fort Rucker, AL	Oct. 26	(334) 255-9124
Carlton, MN	Sep. 28	(608) 388-3716	Fort Hood, TX	Oct. 26-27	(254) 287-5210
Fort Lee, VA	Sep. 29	(804) 734-6555	USAG-Wiesbaden	Oct. 27	0611-705-5338
Fort Bliss, TX	Sep. 29	(915) 569-6233	Fort Hamilton, NY	Oct. 27	(718) 630-4552
JB Myer-Henderson Hall	Oct. 3	(703) 696-5948	Fort Leavenworth, KS	Oct. 27	(913) 684-2425
Carlisle Barracks, PA	Oct. 6	(717) 245-4501	Fort Benning, GA	Nov. 2	(706) 545-1805
JB Ellington Field-Houston, TX	Oct. 6	(210) 221-9004	Fort Gordon, GA	Nov. 3	(706) 791-2654
USAG-Italy	Oct. 12	0039-0444-61-7747	Daegu	Nov. 3	315-723-3735
Fort Knox, KY	Oct. 12	(502) 624-1765	Yongsan	Nov. 17	315-723-3735



Take care of your spouse: Update your SBP election now

By **Bill Hursh**, *Army Survivor Benefit Plan Program Manager*

By updating your SBP election now, you can save your spouse problems and expenses in the future when you are gone.

Make sure your spouse is listed correctly by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) as your spouse SBP beneficiary. If you have suspended spouse SBP coverage due to the death or divorce of your previous spouse, and have been remarried for a year, your new spouse is your legal SBP beneficiary even if you have not notified DFAS of your remarriage. However, you are creating a SBP debt your spouse must pay at your death prior to receiving the SBP annuity and delaying DFAS identifying your spouse as your SPB beneficiary. When you remarry with suspended spouse SBP coverage, notify DFAS within one year of remarriage by submitting a DD Form 2656-6 with the marriage certificate. You will have the option on the DD Form 2656 to decline SBP for your new spouse, continue SBP coverage, or increase SBP coverage if you did not previously cover your full retired pay. SBP premiums and coverage normally start on the first anniversary of remarriage.

For Soldiers who did not have a spouse at retirement and did not previously close the spouse SBP category, the law allows election of spouse SBP within one year of the first marriage after retirement. You can elect spouse coverage by submitting a DD Form 2656-6 with the marriage certificate to DFAS. SBP premiums and coverage normally start on the first anniversary of marriage. If you fail to elect spouse SBP coverage within one year of marriage, you close spouse SBP coverage for that spouse and any future spouse.

The law also allows for election of spouse SBP following the death of the former spouse SBP beneficiary. If at the death of your former spouse, who was your SBP beneficiary, you are married, you have one year to notify DFAS you elect SBP for your current spouse. SBP coverage and cost would start effective on the death of your former spouse or the first anniversary of your marriage, whichever is later. If not married at the death of the former spouse SBP beneficiary, you have one year from your first marriage after the former spouse's death to notify DFAS you elect spouse SBP coverage. The coverage and cost would start on the first anniversary of your marriage.

Finally, make sure you always update your SBP election within one year following life changing events such as marriage, death, or divorce.

If you have additional questions, please contact your nearest Retirement Services Officer (RSO) for assistance. The RSO contact information is available on page 23.

How to report the death of a Retired Soldier

Contact the Department of the Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Center anytime by calling (800) 626-3317. You will be immediately referred to a local Casualty Assistance Center, who will report the death to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to stop retired pay and initiate the survivor benefits process. If you reside overseas and the toll free number is not available, call your Retirement Services Officer listed on page 15 for assistance. When reporting the death, please provide as much of the information below as you have:

- Full name
- Social security number and/or service number
- Date and place of birth
- Retired rank
- Retirement date
- Disability Rating
- Unit
- Circumstances surrounding the death
- Next of Kin (NOK) information
- Copy of the death certificate
- Copy of the Statement of Service (DD Form 214)



Army Reserve offers pre-retirement briefings

By Maj. Chris Henderson, USAR Retirement Services Program Manager

Did you know the Army Reserve Readiness Divisions conduct pre-retirement briefings each month? Do you know how to apply for your retirement pay, and when to do it? Or what about your Survivor Benefit Plan? The Reserve Retirement Service Officers (RSO) provide all this information and more during the eight hour briefing, focused specifically on the Reserve Component Soldier.

These eight hour briefings, typically held on a Saturday, cover the retired pay application process and timeline, VA benefits, TRICARE benefits, Survivor Benefit Plan, benefits available to you as a gray area Retired Soldier, points corrections process and how many points you are authorized during different periods of time.

While all this information is available online, we bring the subject matter experts from each of the specific areas to better explain the benefits you are eligible to receive. They are also available to discuss your specific situations so you have the information you need to make informed decisions.



What's more, the RSOs will sit with you to discuss retirement points, assist you in filling out the retired pay application, and further discuss the survivor benefit plan options and properly complete the appropriate documents.

The Army Reserve, through its RSOs, wants to ensure Soldiers beginning the process of transitioning to the gray area, or those already in the gray area, are provided the information needed to make informed decisions in order to enjoy their well-deserved retirement.

The 99th Readiness Division hosted a pre-retirement briefing on March 17, 2018 at Fort Belvoir.
Photo by Maj. Patricia Cruz

Upcoming Army Reserve Pre-Retirement Briefings:

Location	Date	Contact	Location	Date	Contact
Indianapolis, IN	23 Jun 18	(608)388-7448/9321	Raleigh, NC	11 Aug 18	(803) 751-9864/9698
Carlisle, PA	23 Jun 18	(609) 562-1696/7055	JBER, AK	11 Aug 18	808-438-1600 ext. 3553
Honolulu, HI	23 Jun 18	808-438-1600 ext. 3553	Devens, MA	18 Aug 18	(609) 562-1696/7055
Jacksonville, FL	14 Jul 18	(803) 751-9864/9698	Columbia, SC	25 Aug 18	(803) 751-9864/9698
Salt Lake City, UT	14 Jul 18	(608) 388-7448/9321	Buckley AFB, CO	25 Aug 18	(608) 388-7448/9321
Santa Fe, NM	21 Jul 18	(650) 526-9513/9512	Riverside, CA	8 Sep 18	(650) 526-9513/9512
Niagara Falls, NY	21 Jul 18	(609) 562-1696/7055	ST Croix, VI	8 Sep 18	(803) 751-9864/9698
Barrigada, GU	28 Jul 18	(808) 438-1600 ext. 3553	Belton, MO	15 Sep 18	(608) 388-7448/9321
Fraser, MI	4 Aug 18	(608) 388-7448/9321	Bangor, ME	22 Sep 18	(609) 562-1696/7055



Taking care of their own: Commissary surcharge pays for new stores, renovations

WASHINGTON — Commissary shoppers don't have far to look in their store to see the impact the surcharge has on their shopping experience.

That's because the surcharge – the 5 percent added to every commissary customer's receipt – goes directly back into the benefit, paying for the modernization and replacement of stores. It's the funding source for maintenance and repairs, store equipment and store-level information technology systems, such as checkouts.

Just last year, the agency replaced well-worn stores with new, modern commissaries at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, and at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, that cost more than \$74 million to build and equip, all paid by surcharge funds.

And, in just a few weeks, commissary shoppers at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, will enjoy the culmination of a two-year major renovation, called an "architectural and refrigeration upgrade," that was also paid for by the surcharge. While not a new store, the project makes the store more environmentally friendly with the installation of new, more energy-efficient equipment and greatly improves the shopping experience.

"Our store has a whole new look and feel to it, a new layout that better accommodates the shopping pattern for our customers," said Diolita Abel, the Tyndall store director. "For the first time we are now serving hot food such as rotisserie chicken, wings and other items, and our sushi, deli and bakery are all conveniently located together at the front of the store. These are all changes that better serve our customers who enjoy the selection and convenience, especially for the lunch rush."



Inside the new deli, bakery, and sushi bar at Tyndall Air Force Base Commissary in Florida.

Photo by Diolita Abel, Store Director, Tyndall Commissary

Here are a couple surcharge facts:

- It is not a tax. Surcharge dollars go back into stores, paying for the construction and modernization. In fiscal 2018, the surcharge budget is nearly \$271 million.
- The surcharge has been set at 5 percent since 1983, and cannot be changed without congressional approval.

The surcharge's history traces back to 1879 and features various applications and rates through the years leading up to 1983. Through the years, thanks to the surcharge, patrons have a direct role in sustaining and enhancing their commissary benefit.

With Exchange Online shopping benefit, veterans reap savings

DALLAS, Texas – In the six months since the Army & Air Force Exchange Service officially expanded online shopping privileges to all honorably discharged veterans, more than 50,000 former service members have used the new benefit, saving an average of 20 percent off Manufacturer’s Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) and avoiding a total of \$3 million in sales tax so far.

“With the national average sales tax being 8.5 percent, the veterans online shopping benefit offers significant savings to all who raised their right hand and took an oath to defend our nation—no matter how long they served,” said Exchange Director/CEO Tom Shull, a Vietnam-era Army veteran who worked tirelessly to secure the change in Department of Defense policy after joining the Exchange in 2012. “This benefit is a modest way to thank all who have served and welcome them home.”

The veterans online shopping benefit, which launched on Veterans Day 2017, marked the first expansion of military exchange privileges since 1990. Veterans have used their new benefit to order nearly 500,000 items at ShopMyExchange.com—tax-free.

On ShopMyExchange.com, veterans find a wide assortment of national brands at an average savings of 20 percent off MSRP. Shopping the Exchange online reconnects veterans with their military community, allowing them to remain Soldiers and Airmen for life.

Dan Sacco, a Vietnam Veteran who lives in Trumbull, Conn., had been without an Exchange benefit for nearly 50 years, after leaving the Army in 1970. When he shops with ShopMyExchange.com, he knows he is making a difference to service members and their families.

“This is an incredible benefit to offer,” said Sacco, who has shopped ShopMyExchange.com for electronics, clothing, gifts and more. “There’s no taxes, no shipping charges with a MILITARY STAR card, and it supports the military. It’s better than Amazon. There’s no negative.”

Every purchase veterans make online improves life for service members and their families as 100 percent of Exchange earnings support programs including military uniforms at cost; school lunches below cost for warfighters’ children overseas; child development centers; youth programs; fitness centers; and career opportunities for spouses, veterans and wounded warriors. In the last decade years, the Exchange has distributed more than \$2.4 billion to critical military quality-of-life programs.

To verify eligibility and begin shopping, veterans can visit ShopMyExchange.com/veterans or VetVerify.org.



"The day Soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help them or concluded that you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership." - General (Retired) Colin L. Powell



Ask your doctor about the shingles vaccination

By **Ronald Wolf**, *Writer/Editor, Office of the Surgeon General/Medical Command*

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Every year starting in early fall, you get reminders to get the vaccination for that year's flu season. Regardless of what is predicted for the severity of the flu, the vaccine is always a good idea.

Older military retirees and beneficiaries—let's define this as north of age 50—need to consider an additional vaccine as well: the shingles vaccine. The vaccine is recommended for everyone over 60 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), but approved by the Food and Drug Administration for those over 50.

Shingles is a painful rash that usually develops on one side of the body, often the face or torso. It is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus becomes dormant in the body and can stay dormant for decades.

The rash consists of blisters that usually scab over in 7 to 10 days and fade away in 2 to 4 weeks. Unfortunately—and this is the most serious issue with shingles—the nerve pain that often comes with a shingles outbreak can last for months after the rash goes away.

The pain can be deep and intense, and most over-the-counter pain killers have little effect. Your physician may call this persistent pain post-herpetic neuralgia; it is the most common complication of shingles. Over time the nerve pain will diminish, but that process can be slow and especially frustrating.

Your risk of shingles and the complications that may come with it increase as you get older. According to the CDC, almost 1 of every 3 people in the United States will develop shingles in their lifetime. An estimated 1 million cases of shingles occur each year in the U.S. Anyone at any age who had chickenpox may develop shingles; even children can get shingles. However, the risk of shingles increases as you get older. About half of all cases occur in people aged 60 or older.

Some folks are at greater risk for shingles. This includes people with medical conditions that keep their immune systems from working properly. For example, individuals with cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma, those with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and anyone who receives immunosuppressive drugs such as those given after organ transplantation.

Most people who develop shingles have only one outbreak during their lifetime. However, a person can have shingles more than once.

Is shingles contagious? Yes, but not in the way you might expect. Shingles cannot be transmitted to another person with the result that he or she develops shingles. However, the virus that causes shingles can be transmitted and cause chicken pox.

If you think you have shingles, see your physician right away, but steer clear of those who might be susceptible to chicken pox, especially children or anyone of any age who has not had the chicken pox or a chicken pox vaccination.

Vaccinations are an important tool in maintaining health and readiness for all ages. Young children should be vaccinated against measles, polio, chicken pox, and hepatitis. Older children need shots to help protect against tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, meningitis, and human papillomavirus.

The vaccine for shingles, however, is for grandfathers and grandmothers. Don't overlook this important vaccine. If you've hit the big Five-Oh, ask your physician what he or she recommends.



Reporting a SBP Annuitant's Death

INDIANAPOLIS, In. — Eligibility for Survivor Benefit Plan annuity pay ends with the death of the annuitant. Prompt reporting of the annuitant's death can help avoid delay in the final settlement of the annuity. All outstanding checks or direct deposits must be returned to Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) before a settlement of arrears of annuity may be made.

Please follow the steps below to report the death of an annuitant:

Step 1 - Call (800)321-1080 to report the death of the annuitant.

Step 2 – Send a copy of the annuitant's death certificate showing cause of death to:

DFAS U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis IN 46249-1300



Step 3 - Inform the financial institution receiving payments about the death of the annuitant.

Contact List: In addition to notifying DFAS, you should also notify the following agencies/departments as soon as possible:

- Social Security Administration at (800)772-1213.
- Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System at (800) 538-9552.
- Department of Veterans Affairs at (800) 827-1000 for annuitants receiving Dependency Indemnity Compensation.

Your Medicare card

When you're enrolled in Medicare, you'll get your red, white, and blue Medicare card in the mail. If you're automatically enrolled, you'll get your red, white, and blue Medicare card in the mail 3 months before your 65th birthday or your 25th month of getting disability benefits. Your Medicare card shows that you have Medicare health insurance. It shows whether you have Part A (Hospital Insurance), Part B (Medical Insurance) or both, and it shows the date your coverage starts. Be sure to carry your card with you when you're away from home. Let your doctor, hospital, or other health care provider see your card when you need hospital, medical or other health services.

New Medicare cards are coming

Medicare is mailing new Medicare cards to all people with Medicare now. For more information about the new card visit <https://www.medicare.gov/newcard>.

10 things to know about your new Medicare card

1. Your new card will automatically come to you. You don't need to do anything as long as your address is up to date. If you need to update your address, visit your mySocial Security account at <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>.

- 2.** Your new card will have a new Medicare Number that's unique to you, instead of your Social Security Number. This will help to protect your identity.
- 3.** Your Medicare coverage and benefits will stay the same.
- 4.** Mailing takes time. Your card may arrive at a different time than your friend's or neighbor's.
- 5.** Your new card is paper, which is easier for many providers to use and copy.
- 6.** Once you get your new Medicare card, destroy your old Medicare card and start using your new card right away.
- 7.** If you're in a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO), your Medicare Advantage Plan ID card is your main card for Medicare—you should still keep and use it whenever you need care. And, if you have a Medicare drug plan, be sure to keep that card as well. Even if you use one of these other cards, you also may be asked to show your new Medicare card, so keep it with you.
- 8.** Doctors, other health care providers and facilities know it's coming and will ask for your new Medicare card when you need care, so carry it with you.
- 9.** Only give your new Medicare Number to doctors, pharmacists, other health care providers, your insurers, or people you trust to work with Medicare on your behalf.
- 10.** If you forget your new card, you, your doctor or other health care provider may be able to look up your Medicare Number online.



Military providers seek tailored approach to treating PTSD

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — A new reporting tool developed by the Defense Health Agency's Pharmacy Operations Division is helping ensure Military Health System (MHS) providers follow best practices in prescribing medications for patients diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Post-Traumatic Stress Provider Prescribing Profile lists all providers at military treatment facilities who are treating patients with PTSD or acute stress disorder, said Sushma Roberts, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and senior program manager for DoD/VA Integrated Behavioral Health, Clinical Communities Support Section, Clinical Support Division. The tool also documents the medications providers are prescribing.

According to the Psychological Health Center of Excellence, PTSD is a medically diagnosed mental health condition that may develop after experiencing, witnessing, or learning the details of a traumatic event such as combat, a natural disaster, sexual assault, or a terrorist attack.

From February 2000 to February 2018, about 223,000 active-duty service members were diagnosed with PTSD, Roberts said, adding that 75 percent were diagnosed following a deployment of 30 days or longer.

Currently, the focus is on benzodiazepines, or benzos. The clinical practice guideline released in 2017 recommended against prescribing benzos for PTSD patients, she noted.

Benzos, also known as tranquilizers, act on the brain and central nervous system to produce a calming effect. People can easily develop a tolerance to benzos, health care experts say, needing higher doses and increased frequency to achieve the same effects. People also may suffer withdrawal symptoms, including insomnia, irritability, anxiety, panic attacks, and seizures.

It's dangerous to combine benzos with alcohol or other medications such as opioids. In 2015, 23 percent of people who died of an opioid overdose also tested positive for benzo use, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Benzos aren't necessarily bad," said Army Lt. Col. Dennis Sarmiento, a psychiatrist and chair of the DHA's Behavioral Health Clinical Community. "There are indications for their use. Short-term, they can help with anxiety, panic, and sleep. Treating such symptoms can help providers engage patients in care and better establish or reinforce rapport."

Studies have shown a large percentage of service members and veterans who may benefit from treatment for PTSD

may not seek care or complete treatment, Sarmiento said.

But medications other than benzos are recommended for treating PTSD because they're more effective. For example, antidepressants such as Zoloft, Paxil, Prozac, and Effexor raise the brain's level of serotonin, a chemical that reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety.

"In contrast to benzodiazepines, these medications [antidepressants] can be used with trauma-focused psychotherapy," Sarmiento said. Those therapies include talking or writing about traumatic events, or learning and practicing meditation or deep-breathing exercises to manage anxiety.

"Treatment should be tailored to the individual patient," Sarmiento said.

Sarmiento notes that throughout the MHS, benzo prescriptions have been on a downward trend since peaking in 2012. "And from available pharmacy data, we know that the medications recommended for PTSD are appropriately trending upward," he said.

Roberts said a prototype of the reviewing and monitoring tool was developed in February 2017. It was updated in September to reflect the revised VA/DoD clinical practice guideline for the management of PTSD and acute stress disorder. The tool generates quarterly reports that the DHA Pharmacy Operations Division sends to the three service surgeon general staffs to distribute to military treatment facility leaders.

"MTF commanders have the information to know what the prescribing practices are for PTSD patients at their particular facility," Roberts said.

According to the tool, the number of benzos prescriptions for MHS beneficiaries diagnosed with PTSD dropped from 1,922 in the first quarter of fiscal year 2017 to 1,749 in the fourth quarter, a decline of about 9 percent. Data for the first quarter of FY 2018 was released this month. It shows the number dropped again — to 1,651.

"In June, we'll assess trends based on second-quarter data," Sarmiento said. "If the prescribing rate doesn't continue declining, we'll implement one-on-one education between clinical leadership and their high-prescribing providers."

Meanwhile, Sarmiento encourages patients who've been diagnosed with PTSD to talk with their providers. "We want them to feel empowered to ask questions and understand their individual treatment plan," he said.

Eligibility survey launched on future of cemetery

ARLINGTON, Va. — Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) launched a second survey and encourages the public and its various stakeholders to continue to share their thoughts on an important issue - the future of Arlington National Cemetery. The survey can be accessed on the cemetery's website at: www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/eligibility-survey.

"Your opinion matters - not only to us, but to our military and civilian leaders as they face a difficult future for our hallowed national shrine," said Executive Director of Army National Military Cemeteries Karen Durham-Aguilera.

The cemetery is at a critical crossroads in its history. In approximately 23 years, Arlington National Cemetery will run out of space and no longer be an active cemetery. The Army has been asked by Congress to consider what might be done to preserve ANC as an active military cemetery well into the future, or for generations to come.

There are only two basic factors that affect the life of ANC - available land and the rate at which burials are requested. ANC's location more than four miles inside of the Capital Beltway limits the amount of expansion available to only a few small parcels of land, and at ANC's current rate of services, each acre will only extend the life of the cemetery by three months.

"We continue our promise to publicly discuss this challenge in order to make the correct decision, but we cannot expand our way out of this problem," said Arlington National Cemetery Superintendent Katharine Kelley.

In July 2017, the cemetery conducted a survey in partnership with several military and veteran organizations. The more than 28,000 respondents shared that keeping ANC open well into the future is paramount. They also communicated that - if eligibility at ANC is limited - those killed in action, Medal of Honor and other high award recipients, former POWs, and those active duty service members who die on operational missions should have a place at ANC. To view the results of the first survey visit <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Portals/0/Docs/NewsReleases/ANC-National-Dialogue-Survey-Results-08-Mar-2018.pdf>.

After analyzing the results of the first survey, cemetery leadership determined there was a need for further refinement. With the assistance of the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery and military and Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), they developed a second survey, which is now available on the cemetery's website.

Arlington National Cemetery invites everyone to take the survey and continue the robust and candid national dialogue.



The U.S. Army Honor Guard, the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) Caisson Platoon, and the U.S. Army Band, "Pershing's Own", conduct the funeral of former Secretary of the Army Togo D. West Jr. in Section 34 of Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, April 26, 2018.

Photo by Elizabeth Fraser/Arlington National Cemetery



New resident fees announced at Armed Forces Retirement Home

By Christopher Kelly, Armed Forces Retirement Home Public Affairs Officer

The Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) and Department of Defense recently announced a new plan for resident fees at the Home's facilities in Washington, D.C. and Gulfport, Miss. This action is one of a number of steps both agencies are taking to address recent funding shortfalls which have threatened the Home's continued operation.

AFRH's mission is to serve eligible enlisted veterans regardless of their ability to pay for the services they receive. Residents have access to increasing levels of care as their age and health needs require, including assisted living, long term care, and memory support units. Over 75 percent of the Home's residents occupy independent living rooms where fees today are capped at less than \$1,500 per month, although AFRH's cost exceeds \$3,000 per month. Residents pay the maximum rate or a percentage of their gross income, whichever is less. On October 1, 2018, maximum fees will increase to cost for each level of care. Fees as a percentage of gross income will increase from 40 percent to 60 percent in independent living, and decline from 80 percent to 70 percent in upper levels of care.

"We looked at how what we're doing compared with private sector retirement and nursing homes. Even after the increase, AFRH is a good value," said Major General (Ret.) Stephen T. Rippe, U.S. Army, chief executive officer of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. "For a set monthly fee our residents have a private room and bath, meals, activities including wellness amenities, transportation, and on-site primary medical and dental care. We also arrange for on-site specialist care from military medical centers. There are no entrance fees or length of stay contracts, which are common in the private sector."

Residents will not pay more than cost for their given care level and most will pay less. The difference is funded primarily by active duty military service members, including a monthly withholding from each member's pay and fines imposed for disciplinary violations. Due to the revenue shortfall in recent years, Congress has filled the void with taxpayer funds. Together these sources subsidize resident care over \$47 million.

General Rippe continued, "This is a difficult thing to do and not an action we take lightly. Each resident served our nation in uniform, and their experience in the military and the circumstances they live with today as a result of that service are deeply personal. There is no financial test for AFRH residents and, as always, we are committed to working with each resident in the months ahead so they pay only what is fair and equitable based on their financial means."



Washington DC Campus



Gulfport Campus

Interested in returning to active duty?

WASHINGTON — U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is asking highly qualified Retired Soldiers to apply for recall to active duty opportunities working directly in the development and training of our future Army. Assignment is for 2 years. Below is a list of skills and ranks TRADOC is seeking.

Officer

- CPT/MAJ - Small Group Instructors
- MAJ/LTC- Branch Immaterial Officers to serve as Assistant Professors of Military Science
- Instructor Pilots (officers and warrant officers)

Enlisted

- Former Recruiters
- E6/E7 Instructors in the following shortage MOSs: 09L, 11B, 11C, 12B, 12H, 12M, 12T, 13F, 13M, 14E, 15B, 15H, 15K, 15N, 15Q, 15T, 15U, 15W, 17C, 19D, 19K, 25B, 25S, 25U, 25W, 35F, 35G, 35L, 35M, 35T, 36B, 74D, 91H, 91L, 91P, 91S, 92G, 92W, 94A, 94E, 94F, 94P, 94R, 94S, 94T, 94Y

Interested applicants should contact TRADOC at usarmy.jble.tradoc.mbx.g1g4-rdad@mail.mil or (757) 501- 6855/6863/6861.

Requesting your military medical records

Veterans and next-of-kin may request clinical and medical treatment records online via the National Archives at <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>. All others (including veterans and next-of-kin who choose not to submit an electronic request) may mail a letter or Standard Form (SF) 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records to:

National Personnel Records Center
 1 Archives Drive
 St. Louis, MO 63138
 or
 fax a letter or Standard Form 180 to: (314) 801-9195

When sending a request via postal mail or fax, use the Standard Form (SF) 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records. Although not mandatory, using the SF-180 is the recommended method to send a request for military service information. This form captures all the necessary information to locate a record. Provide as much information on the form as possible and send copies of any service documents that you may have.

Follow the instructions for preparing the SF-180. Check the Records Location Table at <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/locations> and submit your request to the appropriate address.

Costs: Generally there is no charge for basic military personnel and health record information provided to veterans, next-of-kin and authorized representatives. If your request involves a service fee, you will be notified as soon as that determination is made.

Veterans, or their next-of-kin, who have a strong interest in viewing their own files in person, rather than receiving document copies by mail, may request an appointment with the Federal Records Center Research Room, or hire an independent researcher to examine the records on their behalf.

Arlington National Cemetery: (877) 907-8585 <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/#/>

Armed Forces Retirement Home: (800) 422-9988; <https://www.afrh.gov/>

Army & Air Force Exchange Service: www.shopmyexchange.com

Army Echoes: <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/army-echoes>
Editor's e-mail address: ArmyEchoes@mail.mil

Army Echoes Blog: <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/blog>

Army Emergency Relief: (866) 878-6378; <http://www.aerhq.org>

Army Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/USArmy>

Army Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/>

Army Homepage: <http://www.army.mil>

Army Live Blog: <http://armylive.dodlive.mil/>

Army mobile phone apps: <http://www.army.mil/mobile/>

Army Retirement Services: <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/>

Army Stand To!: <http://www.army.mil/standto/>

Army Lodging Program: (877) 711-8326; <http://www.pal.army.mil>
Reservations: <http://www.ihgarmyhotels.com>

Army Twitter: <https://twitter.com/USArmy/>

Army YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/usarmy>

Casualty Assistance Checklist for Retired Soldiers: <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/docs/Post/CasualtyAssistanceChecklist.pdf>

Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council: <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/RetireeCouncil>

Combat-Related Special Compensation: (866) 281-3254 opt.4; <https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/CRSC>

Commissary: <http://www.commissaries.com>

Concurrent Retired & Disability Pay: (800) 321-1080, <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/disability/crdp.html>

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: (855) 411-2372 <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/>

Death — Report a Retired Soldier's Death: Call HQDA Casualty Operations Center, (800) 626-3317; from overseas, call (502) 613-3317 collect. <https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/Reporting%20A%20Death>

DS Logon: <https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement/>

Funeral Honors (Military): Army Coordinator: (502) 613-8218 <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/entitlements.jsp>

ID Card Facilities: (800) 538-9552; Nearest facility: www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl

Legal Assistance Locator (Military): <http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/locator.php>

Long Term Care Insurance: (800) 582-3337 <http://www.ltcfeds.com/>

MyArmyBenefits: <http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/>
Help Desk: (888) 721-2769 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST Monday - Friday);

Survivor Outreach Services: (855) 707-2769, <https://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance/survivor-outreach>

Reserve Component Retirements (888) 276-9472 <https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/Reserve%20Component%20Retirements>

RC Application for Retired Pay: Human Resources Command; ATTN: AHRC-PDR-RCR; 1600 Spearhead Division Ave.; Dept 482; Ft Knox, KY 40122-5402; (888) 276-9472; download the application from: <https://www.hrc.army.mil/Default.aspx?ID=13664>

Soldiers Magazine: <http://soldiers.dodlive.mil/>

Space-Available Travel: <http://www.amc.af.mil/Home/AMC-Travel-Site>

Soldier for Life on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CSASoldierForLife

Soldier for Life on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/csasoldier4life>

Soldier for Life on Twitter: www.twitter.com/csaSoldier4Life


Soldier for Life on RallyPoint: <https://www.rallypoint.com/organizations/soldier-for-life>

Soldier for Life on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/us-army-soldier-for-life/>

Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program: (800) 325-4715; <https://www.sfl-tap.army.mil/>

Survivor Benefit Plan: <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/sbp>

Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act: <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/usfsa>

 **U. S. Army Retired Lapel Button and Badge:** Type "Soldier for Life" into the search box at <https://www.shopmyexchange.com>

Veterans Service Records — Replace DD Form 214, awards:
Retired 4/1/1996 or later: Visit <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/>, Click on "Army White Pages" at the bottom, then log in. Next click on "Click Here to Access Your Army Record."
Retired 3/31/1996 or earlier: Call Human Resources Command at (888) 276-9472 or visit <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>, National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records); 1 Archive Drive. St. Louis, MO 63138-1002

DFAS (800) 321-1080 (M-F, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST) <http://www.dfas.mil/myPay> (888) 332-7411; <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>
Retiree/Annuitant web page <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary.html>

Social Security (800) 772-1213 <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>; If overseas, contact the American Embassy/consulate, or visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/foreign/phones.html>.

Medicare (800) 633-4227 <http://www.medicare.gov>

TRICARE <https://tricare.mil/>

Health Beneficiary Counseling Assistance Coordinator: <https://tricare.mil/bcacdcao>, or nearest military treatment facility

TRICARE East: (800) 444-5445; <https://www.humanamilitary.com/east/>; AL, AR, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IL, IA (Rock Island area), IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MS, MO (St. Louis area), NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX (except El Paso area), VT, VA, WI, WV,

TRICARE West: (844) 866-9378; <https://www.tricare-west.com>; AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, IA (except Rock Island, IL area) KS, MO (except the St. Louis area), MN, MT, ND, NE, NM, NV, OR, SD, TX (areas of Western Texas only), UT, WA, WY

TRICARE Overseas: (888) 678-1207; <http://www.tricare-overseas.com>

TRICARE for Life: (866) 773-0404; TDD (866) 773-0405 <https://tricare.mil/Plans/HealthPlans/TFL.aspx>

TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery: (877) 363-1296; <https://tricare.mil/homedelivery>

TRICARE Network Pharmacy: (877) 363-1303; <https://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/index.shtml>

TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan: (888) 838-8737; <https://www.trdp.org/>

US Family Health Plan: <http://www.usfhp.com>

Armed Forces Recreation Centers <https://www.armymwr.com/>

Hale Koa Hotel, Hawaii: (800) 367-6027; <http://halekoa.com>

Edelweiss Resort, Bavaria: 011-49-8821-9440 <https://www.edelweisslodgeandresort.com/>

Shades of Green, Florida: (888) 593-2242 <http://shadesofgreen.org/index.php>

Dragon Hill, Korea: 011-822-790-0016 <https://www.dragonhillodge.com/>

Veterans Affairs (VA) Information <http://www.va.gov>

Burial & Memorial Benefits: <https://www.cem.va.gov/> (877) 907-8199

Benefits and Services: (800) 827-1000 (Retired Soldiers overseas should contact the American Embassy/consulate); TDD (800) 829-4833 <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>

GI Bill: (888) 442-4551; <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>

Health Care Benefits: (877) 222-8387; <https://www.va.gov/health/>

Insurance: SGLI/VGLI: (800) 419-1473; All other insurance: (800) 669-8477

Sister Service Publications for Retired Service Members

Air Force Afterburner: <http://www.retirees.af.mil/Library/Afterburner>

Coast Guard Retiree Newsletter: <http://www.dcms.uscg.mil/ppc/ras/retnews/>

Marine Corps Semper Fidelis: <https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/>

Navy Shift Colors: <http://www.navy.mil/> then click Links/Shift Colors

Is your mail and email addresses up to date?

The fastest and surest way for Retired Soldiers in receipt of retired pay to update address information with DFAS is to use myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> or call (800)321-1080.

Gray Area Retired Soldiers (in the Retired Reserve not receiving retired pay), should use the Human Resources Command (HRC) database at <https://www.hrcapps.army.mil/portal/> using DS logon or call (888)276-9472.

If you are a Gray Area Retired Soldier and would like electronic distribution of *Army Echoes*, register your email on our page at <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/echoes-subscription>.



Army Retirement Services
251 18th Street South, Suite 210
Arlington VA 22202-3531
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

USAREC Partnership Outreach Program

U.S. Army Recruiting Command recently launched a new community outreach program designed to grow partnerships among veterans, community partners, and recruiters by establishing enduring working relationships.

The new Partnership Outreach Program supports the Soldier for Life campaign initiative. It focuses on bridging the gap between the military and communities across the nation, to show the American people the Army is a quality service and not a last resort career choice.

Each year around 130,000 Soldiers exit the Army and re-enter civilian life. The Army needs support from these veterans to educate young Americans. About 50 percent of our nation's youth know little about the military. The goal of this program is to increase awareness by empowering our Soldiers for Life to talk about their experiences and today's Army.

Interested individuals can volunteer online at www.goarmy.com/cp. Partners will receive regular recruiting updates from the USAREC commanding general and information they can share with their personal and professional networks to educate their communities about the Army. They will also receive invitations to participate in local recruiting activities and to connect with local recruiters.

USAREC commanders at all levels will engage with registered participants and installation retiree councils to build relationships and keep them informed about changes to options and benefits. Working as one team, we can overcome perceptions as well as educate and inform the public in order to showcase the Army as a place to grow into a strong leader and develop skills that make young Americans into better members of society.

