



VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

August 2024

Prepare for VA's Secure Sign-in Changes

VA is committed to making it as easy as possible for Veterans to manage their benefits and health care online while protecting their identities and data. As part of this commitment, and in an effort to streamline Veterans' sign-in options, VA will transition to two modern, secure, sign-in option in 2025: a Login.gov or ID.me account.

After this transition, Veterans, beneficiaries and caregivers looking to access VA's online services (VA.gov, the VA: Health and Benefits mobile app, and other VA online services) will need to sign in with either a Login.gov or ID.me account. Veterans and other beneficiaries will no longer be able to use usernames and passwords for My HealtheVet after Jan. 31, 2025, or DS Logon after Sept. 30, 2025.

VA will provide information and support throughout this transition. Veterans can begin this transition now by visiting www.va.gov/sign-in-changes to learn how to create a verified Login.gov or ID.me account. The process takes about 10 minutes. Importantly, Veterans who do not transition before these deadlines will be able to resume accessing their data, benefits and services online as soon as they create a Login.gov or ID.me account.

Continued on Page 2

“We do not stop exercising because we grow old, we grow old because we stop exercising.”

- Dr. Kenneth Cooper

In This Issue

- Prepare for VA's Secure Sign-in Changes
- National Wellness Month
- VA Redesigns and Expands Burn Pit Registry
- Upcoming Event



Continued...

This transition only impacts account-based online services. Many VA webpages are accessible without signing in - such as finding information about VA locations, downloading VA forms, learning more about the PACT Act, how to file claims, and more.

Why is VA transitioning to Login.gov or ID.me accounts?

- This transition is the VA's response to Veterans' feedback to offer fewer sign-in account options and help reduce confusion and sign-in complexity.
- This change helps the VA continue to protect the security of Veterans' identities and data by making sure that all Veterans are using modern, secure accounts and have the added protection of multifactor authentication.
- Identity theft and related medical identity theft are serious issues that can cause severe financial hardship and disruption in medical care for Veterans and their families.
- In 2023, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received more than 1 million reports of identity theft. That same year, Veterans and military retirees also reported to the FTC \$350 million in losses to fraud.
- Federal policy requires VA to help all Veterans begin using a sign-in account that meets modern security standards, and that Veterans' sign-in experience is as simple as possible.

Actions to take and who's affected - If you:

- Already use a Login.gov or ID.me account to access VA's online services or mobile app, you are all set and don't need to do anything else.
- Currently use a DS Logon or My HealthVet username and password to access VA's online services or mobile app, we encourage you to create a Login.gov or ID.me account sooner than later so you have time to get used to it before this change.
- Are planning to create a sign-in account for the first time this year to access VA's online services or mobile app, please create and use a Login.gov or ID.me account.
- Want to manage your VA benefits and services offline, that's not a problem. VA will continue to provide easy access to manage your VA benefits and health care in other ways, including by [phone or in person](#).

Learn more and get support

[Learn how to create a Login.gov or ID.me account to manage VA benefits](#)
[Keep up to date with the latest information on the upcoming sign-in change](#)



National Wellness Month

Every August, celebrate National Wellness Month! Prioritize your self-care, reduce stress, and create healthier habits to feel like your best self!

We can often put our health and wellness on the back burner due to work deadlines, traffic, family obligations and other stressors. Research has shown self-care can help increase happiness by up to 71%. National Wellness Month was born out of the idea that if we are going to do big things in the world - build our careers, raise a family, further our education, create new ideas, and nurture our bodies - we need to take care of ourselves.

Five Habits For Self-Care:

- 1) Drink lots of water - stay hydrated and your body will feel better.
- 2) Get your sleep - Lack of sleep can lead to a decline in mental and physical health.
- 3) Exercise - Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your health
- 4) Try a relaxing activity - Activities like yoga, hiking, reading books, listening to music or painting can improve your mood, health and wellness.
- 5) Practice gratitude and positivity - You are what you think. Take time to practice gratitude and positivity when reflecting on life.

Take the "I choose wellness" pledge, a promise to yourself that you're prioritizing your self-care. Choose one small daily habit (like drinking 64 oz of water daily or walking 10,000 steps), or explore different offers at your local spa to try something new! Let's prioritize our health!

VA Redesigns and Expands Burn Pit Registry

VA announced the launch of the redesigned [Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry](#) (“the Burn Pit Registry” or “the registry”). The Burn Pit Registry is a database that combines Veteran and service member data to help VA better understand, research, and ultimately improve treatment for the health challenges faced by Veterans exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits during their military service.

It’s important to note that participating in the registry does not have an impact on your VA health care or benefits, but it does help VA better understand the challenges that the Veteran population faces as a whole. The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) will help you better understand these changes, how they impact you and your ultimate role in the registry.

What is the purpose of the registry?

The Burn Pit Registry is a tool that helps VA identify and research health challenges of Veterans and service members who were exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits during their military service. Over time, the knowledge gained through this research will be used to fuel advancements in treatments, inform policies related to establishing presumptive conditions, ensure more precise predictive medicine, and deliver targeted proactive and preventative care.

Why did VA redesign the registry?

In response to extensive feedback from Veterans and service members, VA’s changes to the registry help greatly reduce the burden of participation. Expansion of eligibility criteria and automatic enrollment based on DOD records means approximately 4.7 million Veterans and service members will now be included, with simple opt-out procedures for those who wish to not participate.

How do I know if I’m included in the registry?

If you enrolled in the registry any time before the launch of the redesign, you will be automatically rolled into the new registry. If you deployed to an eligible theater of operation or location for specific time periods, you will be automatically included into the registry. This includes deceased Veterans or service members who meet the eligibility criteria. You can review the eligibility criteria on the [Burn Pit Registry webpage](#). If you want to confirm whether or not you’ve been included in the registry, you can contact your [local Environmental Health Coordinator](#).

Why should I participate in the registry?

While participation in the registry does not impact your individual care or benefits, it does contribute to a critical research tool that enables VA to identify and study health challenges spanning the whole Veteran and service member population. It is a way for Veterans and service members of this generation to help improve the care and benefits of those in generations to come.

Will my decision to be a participant in or opt-out of the registry have any impact on my VA health care or benefits?

No. Whether you choose to be a participant in or opt out of the registry will have no impact on your individual health care or benefits. Inclusion in the registry does not equate to enrollment in health care nor to applying for benefits.

If I would rather not participate, how do I opt out?

While we encourage eligible Veterans to participate, if you would prefer not to, opting out is simple. Visit the [Burn Pit Registry webpage](#) to submit an opt out form. There are no consequences of opting out and you can opt out at any time.

What specific DOD and VA data will the registry include?

The registry will include deployment locations, military personnel information and demographics, to include gender, race and ethnicity. No medical information will be stored in the registry.

Who will be able to access data from the registry and how will it be used?

Veteran and service member data will be accessible to select VA epidemiologists, researchers and institutional review board-approved researchers. Registry data will be used to conduct medical and public health research over time. Findings from these studies will inform health care and policy, including that related to presumptive conditions.

Upcoming Event



A horse experience for heroes & their families!

RED, WHITE & BLUE FAMILY DAY!

Saturday, Sept. 14th, 10am-12pm

RAIN OR SHINE

Open to all veterans, firefighters,
police officers, EMTs, EMS dispatchers,
other emergency responders & their families

FREE

- Groom, pet & walk mini horses
- Kids games
- Tackle our obstacle course
- Scavenger hunt
- Make & feed horse treats
- Try our Equicizer
- Walk the Sensory Path
- Snacks & more!

HELD AT THE BEAMING BARN, 2692 COUNTY ROAD GG, NEENAH



CONTACT US

Winnebago County
Veterans Service Office

Oshkosh Location
220 Washington Ave.
Oshkosh, WI 54901
(920) 232-3400

Neenah Location
211 N. Commercial
Neenah, WI 54956
(920) 729-4820

Stay informed about benefits; join our e-mail list.
Send a request to:

CVSO@winnebagocountywi.gov

Visit us on the web at:

www.winnebagocountywi.gov/veterans



www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO

For a list of more events,
check out our [calendar](#) !