



VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

March 2024

Protect Yourself This Tax Season

Tax season is upon us, and while it's a time for many to diligently manage their finances, it's also a period when scams and fraudsters are on the prowl, targeting unsuspecting individuals, including Veterans and their families. According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), taxpayers lose millions of dollars each year due to tax-related scams and schemes, making it crucial for everyone - especially Veterans - to stay vigilant and informed to avoid falling victim to these fraudulent activities.

Understanding the threat

[Tax frauds and scams](#) come in various forms, from abusive tax providers defrauding clients to schemes involving fraudulent entities and impersonation of IRS officials. Veterans and their families are particularly vulnerable targets, with scammers often exploiting their personal information and circumstances. It's essential to recognize common tactics used by fraudsters, such as [sending fake emails](#) or making threatening phone calls, especially during tax season.

Know your benefits

One crucial aspect for Veterans to remember is that VA benefits are tax-free, and there is no federal income tax on VA insurance proceeds. Additionally, Veterans with a service-connected disability rating may be eligible for local property tax exemptions. Understanding these benefits can help Veterans differentiate between legitimate communication from the IRS and potential scams.

Continued on Page 2



“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.”

- Thomas A. Edison

In This Issue

- Protect Yourself This Tax Season
- National Brain Injury Awareness Month
- VA Mental Health Treatment
- Upcoming Events

Continued...

Utilize identity protection tools

The IRS has introduced Identity Protection (IP) PINs as an extra layer of security to combat tax-related identity theft. By enrolling in the [IP PIN program](#), taxpayers receive a unique six-digit number to verify their identity when filing their federal tax returns. This not only helps prevent identity theft but also provides added protection for those who have been victims of tax-related fraud in the past. Taxpayers can request an IP PIN annually through the [Get an IP PIN tool](#) by verifying their identity.

Before applying for an IP PIN, review the following information:

- This is a voluntary program.
- Taxpayers must pass an identity verification process.
- Spouses and dependents are eligible for an IP PIN if they can verify their identities.
- An IP PIN is valid for one calendar year.
- Taxpayers must obtain a new IP PIN each filing season.
- Correct IP PINs must be entered on electronic and paper tax returns to avoid rejections and delays.

Stay vigilant

While IP PINs offer increased security, it's essential for participants to remain vigilant against scams.

- The IRS will never email, text or call taxpayers for their IP PIN.
- Taxpayers should only share their IP PIN with their trusted tax provider for tax return purposes.
- Taxpayers can report tax-related illegal activities, including IRS-related phishing attempts and fraud, to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 800-366-4484.

Additional resources

For Veterans and their families seeking further guidance on protecting themselves during tax season, there are several resources available:

- [Internal Revenue Service's Information for Veterans](#) page
- [Internal Revenue Service's Military Information](#) page
- [IRS Free File tool](#)
- [MilTax](#) (free tax software and support)
- [IRS Reminds Taxpayers: Choose a Tax Professional Carefully](#)
- [Tax Scams: How to Report Them](#)



National Brain Injury Awareness Month

When it comes to brain injuries, not a single injury or person is the same. This month is dedicated to improving awareness of brain injuries. Providing quality support for people with brain injuries and understanding their needs will improve their outcomes for the future. Each injury affects a person differently. How we support the person and treat the injury will require understanding and patience..

Two types of brain injuries are traumatic and non-traumatic. Traumatic brain injuries occur due to motor vehicle accidents, sports or recreational injuries, domestic violence, falls, and other external forces. Causes of Non-traumatic brain injuries begin internally due to disease, poisoning, a hereditary condition, lack of oxygen, stroke, or other internal medical condition.

One of the keys to recognizing a concussion and getting immediate treatment is identifying these symptoms:

- H - headaches or vomiting
- E - ears ringing
- A - amnesia, altered consciousness, or loss of consciousness
- D - double vision and/or dizziness
- S - something is wrong, or not quite right

Learning the signs of a concussion and when to seek medical attention can mean the difference between mild and severe injuries. Repeat injuries require additional attention.

VA Mental Health Treatment

No matter how you served or what you've experienced in military or civilian life, you may be facing challenges that affect your health, relationships and life - but you don't have to face them alone. VA is here to provide and connect you with clinical resources and peer support to confront and manage any mental health challenge. Your VA provider will work with you to determine the right evidence-based treatments, medications and therapies for your needs.

Evidence-Based Therapy

Evidence-based therapies have proven to be effective in treating a variety of mental health conditions. These effective therapies are always evolving to meet Veterans where they are in their recovery journey and provide the best possible opportunity for improved mental health and well-being. There are multiple evidence-based therapy options available to you, depending on your specific mental health condition and treatment needs. Find more information on evidence-based therapy or other treatment options that can meet your needs by exploring the links below:

[Anxiety](#)

[Bipolar](#)

[Depression](#)

[Effects of TBI](#)

[Military Sexual Trauma](#)

[PTSD](#)

[Schizophrenia](#)

[Substance Use](#)

Medication

For most mental health conditions, a combination of medications and psychosocial support and therapy offers the best opportunity for reducing symptoms and restoring prior levels of functioning. No treatment affects everyone the same way, so it is important for you and your provider to work together to determine which medication may be the most effective for you.

Supportive Treatment Options

Beyond evidence-based therapies, VA offers supportive therapy options tailored to meet each Veteran's needs. VA facilities offer mental health treatment services including talk therapy, supported work settings, residential programs and other therapies, all designed to align with your preferences and lifestyle. Talk to your VA health care provider about the options available in your area.

Care Settings

In-Person: If you're already using VA medical services, ask your primary care provider to help you make an appointment with a VA mental health provider. If you're not already using VA medical services, contact your nearest [VA medical center](#) or Vet Center to talk about your needs and how to enroll.

Telehealth: VA offers both video and phone telemental health options that do not require you to travel to a facility. Connect with local VA providers to learn about their telehealth options and [schedule or reschedule your appointment online](#).

Online: You can access mental health support wherever you are, whenever you need it. VA's [mental health apps](#) can help you manage PTSD-related symptoms and stress, learn to practice mindfulness, cope with depression, and more.

[Veteran Training](#) is a self-help portal that provides tools for overcoming everyday challenges. The portal has tools to help Veterans work on problem-solving skills, manage anger, develop parenting skills, and more, in an entirely anonymous environment. The free tools are based on mental health practices that have proven successful with Veterans and their families.

Upcoming Events

2023 Income Tax Assistance Family Self Sufficiency

What is VITA?

VITA = Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program provides free, quality tax preparation from IRS-certified preparers to individuals and families earning up to \$60,000 annually. Taxpayers who were previously ineligible for tax credits, and those who do not have a filing requirement, may not realize they need to file a tax return to claim these tax credits. These credits are: Earned Income Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Child Care Credit. Let VITA help you file for free and get all your money.



UW-Oshkosh site: Appointments available from February 5 to March 27, 2024. UW-O offers the VITA program (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) that provides free basic tax return preparation for low-to-moderate income and elderly taxpayers. The program is run by students and other community volunteers. You can call **920.424.1454** to schedule an appointment.

AARP Free Tax assistance with a special focus on taxpayers who are age 50 years old or older. Call (920) 215-1040 for an appointment.

OR

• **File online with help:**

- o [Go to GetYourRefund.org](https://www.getyourrefund.org) for online tax preparation by IRS-certified preparers OR
- o [Go to MyFreeTaxes.com](https://www.myfreetaxes.com) to prepare your own tax return with assistance from IRS-certified preparers

These IRS-certified options are not only free, but also accurate and convenient. How much of your refund is going into *your* pocket this year?



consumerfinance.gov/free-filing-flyer

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@winnebagoountywi.gov

Visit us on the web at:

www.winnebagoountywi.gov/veterans



www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO

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



**Military Veterans Museum and
Education Center's
Fifth Annual Corn Hole (Bean Bag)
Tournament**

Tournament
Play.
Double
Illimitation
Tournament
Trophies with
gift card for
1st, 2nd and
3rd Place!

Registration:
8:00 am
Game play 9 am
\$15.00/person
Sign up with a
partner or
individually.



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Saturday March 16th, 2024
Military Veterans Museum
and Education Center
4300 Poberezny Rd
Oshkosh, WI 54902

QUESTIONS:
Call (920) 891-
5188 or email
Dennisorseske
@gmail.com

Food and
Beverages
Available for
Purchase. Please
No Carry-ins

*All proceeds benefit the
Military Veterans Museum and Education Center*