



# VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

September 2022

## The PACT Act and your VA Benefits

The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans - and their [survivors](#) - with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve. The PACT Act will bring these changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras
- Adds more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures
- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation
- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care
- Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures

If you're a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits. Please contact our office to schedule an appointment with a Benefit Specialist.

### What does it mean to have a presumptive condition for toxic exposure?

To get a VA disability rating, your disability must connect to your military service. For many health conditions, you need to prove that your service caused your condition. But for some conditions, we automatically assume (or "presume") that your service

Continued on Page 2

**“Not in doing what you like, but in liking what you do is the secret of happiness.”**

**- J.M. Barrie**

## In This Issue

- The PACT Act and your VA Benefits
- National Pain Awareness Month
- Upcoming Event



**Continued...**

caused your condition. We call these “presumptive conditions.” We consider a condition presumptive when it’s established by law or regulation. If you have a presumptive condition, you don’t need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumption.

**Gulf War era and post-9/11 Veteran**

More than 20 burn pit and other toxic exposure presumptive conditions have been added based on the PACT Act.

**These cancers are now presumptive:**

- Brain cancer
- Glioblastoma
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphoma of any type
- Neck cancer of any type
- Pancreatic cancer
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Head cancer of any type
- Lymphatic cancer of any type
- Melanoma
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type

**These illnesses are now presumptive:**

- Asthma that was diagnosed after service
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Granulomatous disease
- Pleuritis
- Sarcoidosis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Emphysema
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis

If you served in any of the following locations and time periods, we’ve determined that you had exposure to burn pit or other toxins.

**On or after September 11, 2001, in any of these locations:** Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, Yemen or the airspace above any of these locations.

**On or after August 2, 1990, in any of these locations:** Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, The United Arab Emirates (UAE) or the airspace above any of these locations.

**Free VA health care as a post-9/11 combat Veteran**

The VA is extending and expanding VA health care eligibility based on the PACT Act. You are encouraged to apply, no matter your separation date. Your eligibility depends on your service history and other factors.

If you meet the requirements listed here, you can get free VA health care for any condition related to your service for up to 10 years from the date of your

Continued on Page 3



**Pain Awareness Month**

National Pain Awareness Month is observed in September every year. Pain professionals and activists from all around the country get together to raise awareness about problems connected to chronic pain during this month. Chronic pain directly impacts millions of people in the United States.

Pain Awareness Month aims to make the public aware of how prevalent general pain is, educate them on how to deal with pain, and collect funding for research into the causes and treatment of various forms of pain. Pain sufferers are joining together to enhance therapy and alleviate the agony they are experiencing.

Chronic pain is often the result of an injury, such as muscular strain. It arises due to nerve injury, which intensifies and prolongs the agony. Chronic pain is defined as pain that lasts for three months or more, and in certain circumstances, the neural system remains hyperactive after the original injury or sickness has healed.

Chronic pain can cause isolation or insomnia and more women suffer from it than men. Diet can alleviate or worsen chronic pain. Although there are many possible causes of chronic pain, it’s also crucial to highlight that chronic pain sometimes does not have a clear cause.

Pain Awareness Month helps to raise funds, raise awareness and encourages those affected by it.

## PACT Act (continued)

most recent discharge or separation. You can also enroll at any time during this period and get any care you need, but you may owe a copay for some care.

### **At least one of these must be true of your active-duty service:**

- You served in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, **or**
- You served in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998

### **And this must be true of you:**

- You were discharged or released on or after October 1, 2013

If you were discharged or released before October 1, 2013 and you meet the requirements listed here, you can receive care and enroll during a special enrollment period between October 1, 2022 and October 1, 2023.

### **At least one of these must be true of you active-duty service:**

- You served in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, **or**
- You served in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998

### **And both of these must be true for you:**

- You were discharged or released between September 11, 2001 and October 1, 2013, **and**
- You haven't enrolled in VA health care before

## **Vietnam era Veteran eligibility**

Based on the PACT Act, the VA has added 2 new Agent Orange presumptive conditions;

- High blood pressure (also called hypertension)
- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)

Five new locations have been added to the list of presumptive locations:

- Any U.S. or Royal Thai military base in Thailand from January 9, 1962 through June 30, 1976
- Laos from December 1, 1965 through September 30, 1969
- Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16, 1969 through April 30, 1969
- Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off of Guam or American Samoa from January 9, 1962 through July 30, 1980
- Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972 through September 30, 1977

If you served on active duty in any of these locations, we'll automatically presume that you had exposure to Agent Orange.

Three new response efforts have been added to the list of presumptive locations for radiation exposure:

- Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll, from January 1, 1977 through December 31, 1980
- Cleanup of the Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of Palomares, Spain, from January 17, 1966 through March 31, 1967
- Response to the fire onboard an Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons near Thule Air Force Base in Greenland from January 21, 1968 through September 25, 1968

If you took part in any of these efforts, we'll automatically presume that you had exposure to radiation.

We encourage all Veterans and survivors to file for benefits now. If you have a claim pending for a new presumptive condition, you don't need to do anything. If you have been previously denied for a new presumptive condition then we encourage you to file a Supplement Claim. The VA will start to process PACT Act related benefits in January 2023. They must wait for funding approval from Congress and put the needed systems in place before they can process these claims.

# Upcoming Event

2022 MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT



*Have you served  
in the Armed  
Forces?*

IT IS OUR TURN TO SERVE YOU  
AND YOUR FAMILY



Veteran job and resource fair with  
breakout sessions. Benefits &  
healthcare provider panel discussions,  
as well as suicide prevention training.

TRAININGS OFFERED: VA S.A.V.E, Q.P.R



TUESDAY

SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2022

0900-1500

LUNCH FOR PURCHASE  
PROVIDED BY AMERICAN  
LEGION

Fond du Lac County Expo Center



No registration needed.

For More Information contact: rick.patton@fdlco.wi.gov



## CONTACT US

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[www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO](https://www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO)

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