Overview of Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Benefits and Services and the PACT Act

Briefed by: Donald Ortega
Assistant Director
Office of Policy & Oversight
Guiding Principles

Veterans at the Center

- Focused on delivering more benefits to more Veterans and Survivors in a timely manner to improve outcomes
- Communications/Outreach

Collaboration

- Provide timely information to build trust
- Aligned to VA Strategy
- Evidence Based outcomes

Transparency

- Working across the enterprise to improve outcomes
- Aligning workgroups
- Utilizing collaboration tools and reporting to manage processes
The Office of Field Operations (OFO) provides oversight and support to VBA’s 56 regional offices and 4 district offices.

The Office of Policy & Oversight (OPO) provides oversight to VBA’s 10 business lines and program offices to ensure coordination of initiatives, projects, and procedural changes, as well as alignment with VBA strategic priorities.

The Office of Automated Benefits Delivery (ABD) is a key component of VBA’s digital transformation strategy which leverages automation to maximize efficiencies and provides digital services to deliver business capabilities and process improvements.
VBA Beneficiaries Served and Dollars Paid in FY22

Compensation: Paid $124 billion to nearly 6 million Veterans and survivors.
P&F: Paid $4 billion to 314,000 beneficiaries.
EDU: Provided $10 billion to 821,000 beneficiaries for all EDU programs.
VR&E: Paid over $1 billion to 92,000 beneficiaries.
LGY: Guaranteed 687,000 loans totaling $238 billion.
Insurance: Provided $1.2 trillion in coverage to 5.6 million Service members, Veterans, and family members.
MDEO: completed 1.66 million compensation and pension (C&P) examinations under the VBA contracts.
OTED: 175,000+ Veterans reached through Solid Start.

“To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.”
Abraham Lincoln

VBA Footprint FY22

ChooseVA
What is the PACT Act?

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 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:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.
- Expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances.
Bottom Line Up Front

What is Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022?

The PACT Act requires VA to improve health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances by expanding eligibility and available health care services.

What are the immediate impacts to our Nation’s Veterans?

The PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for toxic-exposed Veterans and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era and Post-9/11 era.

How is VA managing the sections of the PACT Act?

The PACT Act has 53 substantive sections spread across VA and other agencies. Department level integration is being led by VA Office of Enterprise Integration. VBA and VHA are working collaboratively to address all sections and identify areas with cross administration impacts.

Key Messages

- The PACT Act is one of the largest expansions of Veteran benefits and health care in VA’s history and could impact generations of Veterans and their survivors.
- VA recognizes the complexity and broad demographic cross-section of Veterans the PACT Act will affect and will ensure that a “Veteran-centric” approach to the timely and efficient delivery of health care and benefits is available.
- VA is developing a multifaceted outreach plan to provide affected Veterans and their family members with information about the new law, and potential entitlement to care and benefits.
- Every attempt will be made to reach Veterans who may have been exposed to toxins while serving and to outline their claim options.

Top Line Messages

- The PACT Act will ensure generations of Veterans—and their survivors—can receive the benefits and care they’ve earned and deserve.
- VA will seek to implement PACT Act provisions as soon as possible, and work to ensure the expansion of eligibility does not result in the delay or disruption of care for those Veterans already receiving VA health care. VA will conduct outreach to affected Veterans and their family members with information about the new law and potential entitlements.
- We urge all Veterans to continue to file claims so we can provide the benefits and care they have earned and deserve. To learn more visit: http://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file.
- Veterans not yet enrolled in VA health care, and who believe they may now be eligible, should apply at https://choose.va.gov/health.
**Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022**

**Public Law 117-168**

### TITLE I: EXPANSION OF HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY
(Sections 101-111)
Short Title: Covenant Act of 2022
- Expands eligibility to specific categories of Toxic-Exposed Veterans
- Expands eligibility to Veterans supporting certain overseas contingency operations
- Expands eligibility period for certain eras
- Creates a one-year open enrollment period for certain Post 9/11 combat Veterans who did not enroll in VA health care previously to enroll or receive care

### TITLE II: TOXIC EXPOSURE PRESUMPTION PROCESS
(Sections 201-204)
Short Title: TEAM Act of 2022
- Improves the decision-making process for presumptions of service connection based on toxic exposure

### TITLE III: IMPROVING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SERVICE CONNECTION PROCESS FOR TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS
(Sections 301-303)
Short Title: Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act of 2022
- Any entry in an exposure tracking record system is a qualifying toxic exposure risk activity
- Any entry in an exposure tracking record system is a presumption of exposure for a claim for service connection

### TITLE IV: PRESUMPTIONS OF SERVICE CONNECTION
(Sections 401-407)
- Expands Agent Orange exposure and adds hypertension & monoclonal gammopathy to the list of presumptions
- Establishes a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers related to burn pits and airborne hazards exposure
- Improves compensation for Persian Gulf War Veterans with disabilities

### TITLE V: RESEARCH MATTERS
(Sections 501-510)
- Improves compensation for Persian Gulf War Veterans with disabilities
- Includes studies on mortality of Veterans who served in certain locations during certain periods, post-9/11 Veterans' health trends, Veterans' cancer rates, and the effects of toxic exposures and mental health outcomes
- Includes studies on the effects of waste related to the Manhattan Project, Veterans in Territories of the United States, and the health effects of jet fuels
- Establishes interagency working groups on toxic exposure research

### TITLE VI: IMPROVEMENT OF RESOURCES AND TRAINING REGARDING TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS
(Sections 601-604)
Short Title: Fairly Assessing Service-Related Toxic Exposure Residuals Presumptions Act of 2022
- Requires VA to create a list of resources and outreach program for toxic-exposed Veterans
- Incorporates a clinical toxic exposure screening for VHA enrollees
- Requires additional training for health care personnel and claims processors

### TITLE VII: RESOURCING
(Sections 701-707)
- Appropriations to enhance claims processing capacity and automation
- Authorizes 31 major medical facility leases across 19 states

### TITLE VIII: RECORDS AND OTHER MATTERS
(Sections 801-808)
Short Title Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 (s.804)
- Creates a fund to cover health care and benefits expenses associated with exposure to environmental hazards in service

### TITLE IX: IMPROVEMENT OF WORKFORCE OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
(Sections 901-909)
- Improves national rural recruitment and hiring planning for VHA
- Improves the ability of VA to hire and retain staff, including health care providers

### TITLE X: RECORDS AND OTHER MATTERS
(Sections 1001-1010)
- Authorizes the Secretary of the VA to carry out certain investigations and studies
- Authorizes the Secretary to enter into agreements with other federal agencies for the exchange of information related to toxic exposure research
PACT Act Key Components

The Act **expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures** and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.

**VA will improve the decision-making process** for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status.

Every enrolled Veteran **will receive an initial toxic exposure screening** and a follow-up screening every five years. Veterans who are not enrolled, but who are eligible to enroll, will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.

VA health care staff and claims processors will receive **toxic exposure-related education and training**.

The Act **requires research studies** on the mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War; Post-9/11 Veteran health trends; and Veteran cancer rates.

The Act will help VA **build a stronger, more skilled workforce** to meet the growing demand for benefits and services.

The Act **authorizes 31 new facilities** across the country, providing greater access to VA health care.
New Radiation Presumptive Locations

If you were called to respond to one of the listed cleanup and response missions below, you may be eligible for radiation exposure presumptives under the PACT Act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Effort</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll</td>
<td>January 1, 1977-December 31, 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanup of the Air Force B-52 bomber Carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of</td>
<td>January 17, 1966-March 31, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palomares, Spain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to the fire onboard an Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons</td>
<td>January 21, 1968-September 25, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>near Thule Air Force Base in Greenland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As of August 10, 2022, a long list of new conditions are presumed to be service-connected due to various in-service toxic exposures. APPLY NOW at VA.gov/PACT to expedite your claim and benefits.

- Asthma (diagnosed after service)
- Brain cancer
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Granulomatous disease
- Head cancer of any type
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphomatomatous cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Sarcoidosis
Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans

**WHO:** All Veterans enrolled in VA health care

**WHAT:** A quick (5-10 minute) series of questions to identify and document any potential exposures to toxins during military service

**WHEN:** At least one every 5 years

**WHERE:** VA medical centers and clinics

**WHY:** Supports Veteran long-term health plans and informed, whole-health care

**HOW:** Veterans can ask about the screening at their next VA appointment
Strengthening VA’s Military Environmental Research

A multi-agency workgroup will identify collaborative research activities and develop a five-year strategic plan.

**The PACT Act requires studies on:**
- Mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War
- Post 9/11 Veterans’ health trends
- Veterans’ cancer rates
- Effects of toxic exposures and mental health outcomes
- Effects of waste related to the Manhattan Project
- The state of access and barriers to benefits for Veterans in U.S. Territories
- Effects of jet fuels
Veterans who served in the following locations and time periods can enroll in VA health care NOW:

- Republic of Vietnam (between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975)
- Thailand at any US or Royal Thai base (between January 9, 1962 and June 30, 1976)
- Laos (between December 1, 1965 and September 30, 1969)
- Certain Provinces in Cambodia (between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969)
- Guam or American Samoa or their territorial waters (between January 9, 1962 and July 31, 1980)
- Johnston Atoll, or a ship that called there (between January 1, 1972 and September 30, 1977)

Vietnam-era Veterans are now able to apply for two new Agent Orange presumptive conditions:

- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Special Enrollment Period – October 1, 2022 - October 1, 2023 for Post-9/11 combat Veterans who separated or discharged between September 11, 2001 and October 1, 2013. Enrollment is free, there are no annual costs, and care may be free as well!
Gulf War Era and Post-9/11 Eligibility

If a Veteran served in any of these locations and time periods, they are eligible for the new Gulf War-related presumptions. This includes the airspace above any of these locations.

On or After August 2, 1990:
- Bahrain
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Somalia
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE)

On or After September 11, 2001:
- Afghanistan
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Uzbekistan
- Yemen
Veterans can file a claim for the new presumptive conditions:

- **New Claim**—Veteran has never filed for the presumptive condition
- **Supplemental Claim**—the presumptive condition was previously denied but is now considered to be presumptive

- If VA denied one of the new presumptive conditions in the past but the Veteran may now be eligible for benefits, VA will try to contact them. There is no need to wait to file a Supplemental Claim.

- VA is prioritizing the claims of Veterans with cancer to make sure they get timely access to the care and benefits they need.

- **Pending Claims:** If a Veteran’s condition was added to the list of presumptive conditions* after the claim was filed, VA will consider it on a presumptive basis.

*Presumptive conditions do not require proof that the military service caused the condition. Veterans only need to meet the service requirements and have a current diagnosis of the presumptive condition. Veterans should submit any supporting documentation to assist with their claim.
Fraud Prevention

VBA and partners work together to ensure Veterans get information quickly and know how to **identify and report suspected scams**.

- Veterans and their families need to verify any entity they’re considering engaging for PACT Act or other claims assistance by checking the **Office of General Counsel accreditation tool** available on the VA website.
- The fraud division in the Office of Financial Management coordinates with OIG to actively **investigate suspicious activity**.

To report a suspected fraudulent operator, call the Office of Inspector General’s hotline, **1-800-488-8244**.
- VBA has kept the C&P fraud rate under **1%**.
What about additional benefits and care for other Veterans and their survivors?

Under the PACT Act, survivors may be eligible for VA benefits, including Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and Burial benefits.

- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
- Burial Benefits

Get the care and benefits you EARNED and DESERVE! Apply at [VA.gov/PACT](https://VA.gov/PACT) today.
When or How Should I File a Claim?

What if I have previously been denied?

Veterans previously denied a toxic-exposure related claim are encouraged to file a supplemental claim. Once a supplemental claim is received, VA will review the claim under the new law.

For more info, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://VA.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MyVA411.
Apply for VA Healthcare in 4 Easy Ways


2. By calling the toll-free hotline: 877-222-8387.

3. By mailing VA Form 10-10EZ to:
   Health Eligibility Center
   2957 Clairmont Rd., Suite 200
   Atlanta, GA 30329

4. In person at the nearest VA medical center or clinic
Questions?

VBA is hiring, nationwide!
Are you looking for a customer-centric career? The Veterans Benefits Administration has three career-path positions now open to the public. No experience required!