



# PIERCE

## County Veteran Service Office

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WISCONSIN

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### Up-Coming Events For 2017

- Jan 01 – New Years Day
- Jan 16 – Martin Luther King Jr Day
- Feb 20 – Presidents Day
- Mar 17 – St. Patrick’s Day
- Mar 29 – Vietnam Veterans Day
- Apr 22 – Earth Day
- May 20 – Armed Forces Day
- May 29 – Memorial Day
- Jun 14 – Flag Day/Army Birthday
- Jun 14 – Veterans Golf Tournament
- Jul 04 – Independence Day
- Aug 04 – US Coast Guard Birthday
- Sep 04 – Labor Day
- Sep 11 – Patriot Day “Beamer”
- Sep 18 – Air Force Birthday
- Oct 13 – Navy Birthday
- Oct 10 – Columbus Day
- Oct 31 – Halloween Day
- Nov 10 – USMC Birthday
- Nov 11 – Veterans Day
- Nov 23 – Thanksgiving Day
- Dec 07 – Pearl Harbor Day
- Dec 13 – National Guard Birthday
- Dec 25 – Christmas Day

### Important Phone #:

- VAMC MPLS 866-414-5058
- VA Regional 800-827-1000
- WDVA 800-WIS VETS
- VA Education 888-GI BILL1

### Tami’s News

2017 has been a busy time for many beneficial changes here. We are excited to welcome three VA Work Study students from UW River Falls this semester, to assist the office with various projects. These positions are funded through the VA Work Study Program. We also have a Social Work

Intern here in the office helping to case manage some veterans.

### CVSO INFO

There is a big push for Jobs in the Veterans world. Both nationally and in the state. Our office will help Veterans to get the preference points that they deserve in the state and federal job market. We also have a jobs binder that has all sorts of jobs locally and in the state. Let us help you to get a job!!!

### VA Eliminates Net Worth as Health Care Eligibility Factor

Washington – The Department of Veterans Affairs is updating the way it determines eligibility for VA health care, a change that will result in more Veterans having access to the health care benefits they’ve earned and deserve.

Effective 2015, VA eliminated the use of net worth as a determining factor for both health care programs and copayment responsibilities. This change makes VA health care benefits more accessible to lower-income Veterans and brings VA policies in line with Secretary Robert A. McDonald’s MyVA initiative which reorients VA around Veterans’ needs.

“Everything that we do and every decision we make has to be focused on the Veterans we serve,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “We are working every day to earn their trust. Changing the way we determine eligibility to make the process

easier for Veterans is part of our promise to our Veterans.”

Instead of combining the sum of Veterans’ income with their assets to determine eligibility for medical care and copayment obligations, VA will now only consider a Veteran’s gross household income and deductible expenses from the previous year. Elimination of the consideration of net worth for VA health care enrollment means that certain lower-income, non-service-connected Veterans will have less out-of-pocket costs. Over a 5-year period, it is estimated that 190,000 Veterans will become eligible for reduced costs of their health care services.

In March 2014, VA eliminated the annual requirement for updated financial information. VA now uses information from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration to automatically match individual Veterans’ income information which reduces the burden on Veterans to keep their healthcare eligibility up to date. That change better aligned VA’s health care financial assessment program with other federal health care organizations. Veterans may submit updated income information at [www.1010ez.med.va.gov/](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/), or by visiting their nearby VA health care facility. For more information, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits) or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2684>

**Online Prescription Tracker Gives Veterans 24/7 Online Access to Status**

Veterans can now track the status of most of their prescriptions online, thanks to an innovative idea by a Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) employee. The new 24/7 service allows online tracking for most prescriptions mailed from the VA Mail Order Pharmacy. The Prescription Tracker was recommended by VA employee Kenneth Siehr, a winner of the President's 2013 Securing Americans Value and Efficiency (SAVE) Award. Siehr's idea focused on the use of technology as a way to save money and improve the services VA provides to its patients.

"Our nation's Veterans deserve a first-class pharmacy and quality customer service as a part of the exceptional health care available from VA," said Siehr, the National Director for Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacies. "It is an honor to be part of serving Veterans and to have been recognized for an idea that enhances our services to them."

More than 57,000 Veterans are currently using the service through My HealtheVet, an online feature that allows Veterans to partner with their health care team. The number is expected to grow as VA starts to educate Veterans about the new feature. Later this month, the tracking feature will include images of the medication that dispensed. Over the next year, a secure messaging alert will be added so that Veterans know when a medication was placed in the mail.

"VA prescription refill online is an excellent example of how one employee looked at the process of VA prescription tracking through the eyes of our Veterans and came up with an idea that better serves Veterans," said Interim Under Secretary for Health, Carolyn M. Clancy. "This idea is both innovative and transformative, and it is certainly one, when put into action, improves customer service for America's Veterans."

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2676>

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## **VA Works to Expand Choice Program Eligibility**

Washington -- In order to expand eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it will change the calculation used to determine the distance between a Veteran's residence and the nearest VA

medical facility from a straight line distance to driving distance. The policy change will be made through regulatory action in the coming weeks. The Veterans Choice Program was authorized by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA).

"VA has worked very quickly to implement the Veterans Choice Program and we appreciate the constructive feedback shared by Veterans and our partners to help us improve service to Veterans," said Secretary Robert McDonald. "We've determined that changing the distance calculation will help ensure more Veterans have access to care when and where they want it. VA looks forward to the ongoing support of our partners as we continue to make improvements to this new program."

The method of determining driving distance will be through distance as calculated by using a commercial product. The change is expected to roughly double the number of eligible Veterans.

The Veterans Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows eligible Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program should call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. Since the Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014, more than 45,000 medical appointments have been scheduled.

Using expanded authorities from VACAA, VA continues to expand access to care through increased staffing and enhanced collaboration with both the Indian Health Service and Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems. See the VACAA progress fact sheet here:

VA is enhancing its health care system and improving service delivery to better serve Veterans and set the course for long-term excellence and reform. VA has made significant progress in various areas of the legislation, such as extending the Assisted Living/Traumatic Brain Injury Pilot program and Project Arch, to expand timely access to high-quality health care for Veterans.

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2687>

General Information on Veterans Choice Act: <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>

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## **VA's rule establishes presumption of service connection for diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in water supply at Camp Lejeune**

VA to provide disability benefits for related diseases

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) regulations to establish presumptions for the service connection of eight diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, are effective as of today.

"Establishing these presumptions is a demonstration of our commitment to care for those who have served our nation and have been exposed to harm as a result of that service," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David J. Shulkin. "The Camp Lejeune presumptions will make it easier for those Veterans to receive the care and benefits they earned."

The presumption of service connection applies to active-duty, reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for a minimum of 30 days (cumulative) between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with any of the following conditions:

- Adult leukemia
- Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- Bladder cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

The area included in this presumption is all of Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River, including satellite camps and housing areas.

This presumption complements the health care already provided for 15 illnesses or conditions as part of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012. The Camp Lejeune Act requires VA to provide health care to Veterans who served at Camp Lejeune, and to reimburse family members or pay providers for medical expenses for those who resided there for not fewer than 30 days between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987.

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## **Veterans Service**

### **Commission Donations**

The Pierce County Veterans Service Commission is a state mandated program that is managed by a three person committee and the CVSO as the secretary. The program is designed to give funds to local veterans that are in need. Here in Pierce County we require the veteran to have a DD214 on file with the office and to come in and do a full benefits review to ensure that there are not more benefits out there the veteran could use. We then voucher the money out to the veteran to ensure that the money is used for what it is intended to be used for such as gas or groceries.

People often ask if there is a good organization to donate to in order to assist the veterans. This is a program where 100% of the money donated goes to veterans that are in need of funds from the local area. On top of that, we make sure that the money is spent on proper necessities through the voucher system. Also, the veteran gets a full review of benefits to be sure they are not missing valuable benefits.

If you have a veteran that you feel could use this kind of help, please refer them to the Pierce County Veterans Service Office.

Please feel free to send your tax deductible donatoion to the Pierce County Veterans Service Commission at:

412 West Kinne Street  
PO Box 146  
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Or by dropping them off at the Pierce County Veterans Service Office. Any questions, feel free to contact us at 715-273-6753.

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## **Pierce County Veterans Golf Tournament**

will be held on June 14, 2017 at the Spring Valley Golf Club. Please feel free to contact the Pierce County Veterans Service Office to sign up your 4 some or to donate to the silent auction. Proceeds go to assist the Pierce County Veterans Treatment Court Program, Pierce County Veterans Mentor

Program, and the Pierce County Veterans Service Committee.

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## **Pierce County Veterans Treatment Court**

It is the mission of the Pierce County Veterans Treatment Court to promote public safety by integrating, assisting and supporting veterans through a collaborative and coordinated response to include the Veterans service delivery system, community based services, and court supervised treatment and accountability through a system of sanctions and incentives.

If you are a veteran that is in the court system, please contact us. The Pierce County Veterans Treatment Court is a great program that is good for everyone involved. More details can be found on the Pierce County Veterans Website.

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## **Pierce County Veterans Mentor Program**

The mission of the Pierce County Veterans Mentor Program is to make certain to the best of our abilities that no one is left behind. We will find them, offer them assistance, assess their needs, and help them solve their problems. We will support the veteran through their readjustment to civilian life, current challenges such as the Pierce County Veterans Treatment Court, treatment, and VA systems, and act as a mentor, advocate, or sponsor.

If you are interested in becoming a member or know a service member or veteran that could use the assistance of a mentor, please contact the Pierce County Veterans Service Office. Applications for becoming a mentor are located on the Pierce County Veterans Website.

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If you want to get onto the email list for this newsletter, contact the Pierce County Veterans Service Office with your email address.