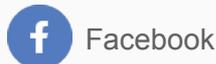




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## **VETERANS DISABILITY BENEFITS IN THE NEWS**



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Spring is officially here! In addition to enjoying the warmer weather, I always look forward to the renewal that the season brings. Everything is in bloom as the “waiting period” of winter comes to an end. We wanted our latest Veteran’s Disability newsletter to reflect the spirit of the season, and I think you will agree that the articles we’ve chosen do just that.

Our first article shares details on some very good news: VA has announced that they are extending the healthcare enrollment application period to over half a million living Veterans who have pending incomplete enrollment applications. And our second article outlines changes that are taking place to support the staff of the Veterans Crisis Line to help them continue to do a wonderful job helping Veterans in crisis.

### **JAN DILS blog**

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[New App Helps Vets With PTSD Sleep](#)

[PTSD – Past, Present, and Future](#)

[VA Benefits for Spouses](#)

**Visit Our Blog**

In keeping with our springtime theme of renewal, I want to renew our invitation to feel free to call us with any questions you may have about Veteran's Disability benefits. We're here to help, and we are always happy to hear from you.

I hope you enjoy our newsletter, and I hope you enjoy the warm weather as well. Happy spring!

Sincerely,



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Want to keep up with all of the latest news or get to know us better? Like us on Facebook!

**VETERANS WITH INCOMPLETE  
HEALTH CARE APPLICATIONS RECEIVE  
YEAR TO ENROLL**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced recently that it will extend the healthcare enrollment application period for one year to approximately 545,000 living Veterans who have pending incomplete enrollment applications.

“Fixing the Veterans enrollment system is a top priority for VA. This is an important step forward to regain Veterans’ trust and improve access to care as we continue the MyVA Transformation,” said VA Deputy Secretary Sloan D. Gibson. “We’ve got a lot of work left to



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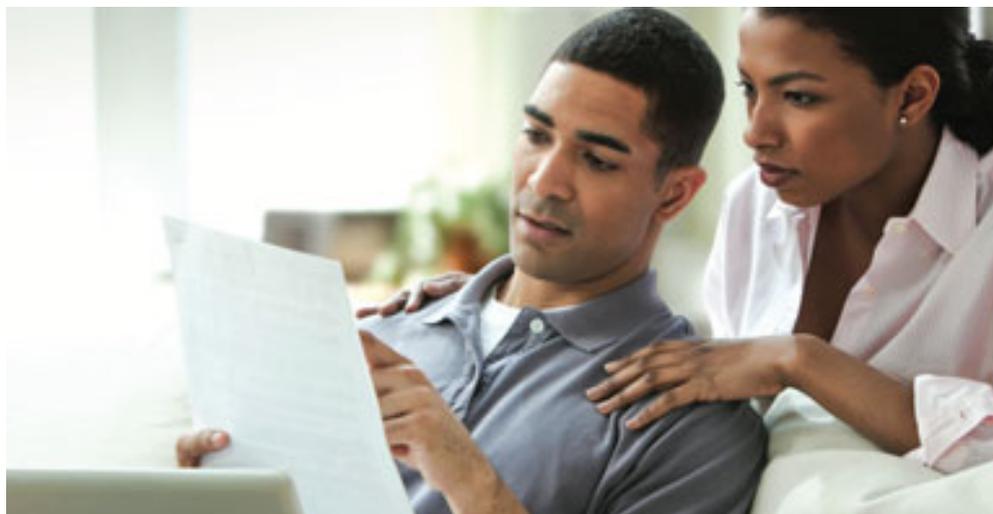
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do, but this is a big step in the right direction to restore the data integrity of our enrollment system,” Gibson said.

The National Enrollment Improvement team conducted a detailed analysis of the pending applications in VA’s enrollment system and identified approximately 545,000 living Veterans whose applications were incomplete and in a pending status. The team also validated that approximately 288,000 pending enrollment system records were for deceased Veterans. VA has segregated deceased records from living Veteran records and, as part of the Veteran Enrollment Rework Project (VERP), will review each incomplete application to determine if any should have been enrolled in VA health care.

VA is required by law to provide notice to Veterans of incomplete applications. The VERP team could not verify that VA’s mailing system used to contact Veterans about their incomplete applications was able to notify the 545,000 Veterans identified above.

VA will contact living Veterans to confirm their continued interest in enrolling in VA health care and ask them for the necessary information to complete their application. Veterans will have one year from the notice to provide this information. After a year, VA will close the record. A Veteran may reapply for enrollment at any time.



As Veterans choose to enroll, VA offers an enhancement

to their enrollment experience through “Welcome to VA” (W2VA). Veterans enrolled since July 1, 2015 have received a personal introduction to VA health care services, programs and resources to help them become more familiar with VA’s services. In addition, VA sends each new enrollee an introductory letter and personalized handbook in the mail. W2VA enhances communication by reaching out to newly enrolled Veterans through personal phone calls upon enrollment, providing assistance with health care inquiries and assisting with their initial appointment at their preferred VA healthcare facility.

Source: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2757>



Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson has announced improvements to enhance and accelerate progress at the Veterans Crisis Line, which serves as a life-saving resource for Veterans who find themselves at risk of suicide.

During his third trip to the Crisis Line in a year, Mr.

Gibson announced that the Crisis Line would form a stronger bond with VA's Suicide Prevention Office and Mental Health Services. This partnership includes VA's National Mental Health Director for Suicide Prevention as well as several hubs of expertise, including one Center of Excellence focusing on suicide prevention research and education located at the same medical campus as the Crisis Line responders in Canandaigua, NY.

Mr. Gibson also announced that the Veterans Crisis Line would now be under the direction of VA's Member Services, which has many efforts underway across the nation to restructure portions of VA that have direct contact with Veterans. This brings an expertise in ensuring that staff in these vital roles have more streamlined processes, adequate training and resources at their fingertips, to better serve Veterans.

These structural changes build on key hires made in the last year to lead the Crisis Line, including a director with extensive clinical social work background.

**“I witnessed again today that the employees at the Veterans Crisis Line have a tremendously difficult job and they complete it with care, compassion and professionalism,”** said Mr. Gibson. **“I want to make sure that the trained professionals at the Crisis Line -- folks I consider the best in the business — are able to focus on their core mission of focusing on the Veterans most in need of their help. They are life-savers and we have to create the structure around them to succeed.**

“Over the past year, we have put together a strong team to lead the employees at the Crisis Line. Today's announcement of a structural change within the Veterans Health Administration and additional support from our experts in suicide prevention is another step to make sure the employees and the Veterans they speak with have what they need give Veterans a safe place to call when they need us most.”

As a part of the MyVA initiative, the largest restructuring

in the Department's history, VA has made improvements at the Veterans Crisis Line a key priority. By the end of this year, every Veteran in crisis will have their call promptly answered by an experienced VA responder. That will mean non-core calls will be directed appropriately to other VA entities that can best address their questions or concerns.

Already, VA has committed to increase staff at the Veterans Crisis Line. It now has more than 300 employees, and is in the process of hiring 88 more staff. At the same time, they have expanded the work area for responders and are making necessary technology improvements to phone systems and equipment to better handle the increased demand at the crisis line.

“Last year, counselors at the Crisis Line dispatched emergency responders to intervene and save the lives of Veterans in crisis more than 11,000 times,” said Gibson. “That means, on average, we’re stepping in to save 30 lives per day. Nothing could be more important.”

### **Key Facts:**

- Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered nearly 2 million calls — and nearly a quarter of those calls were answered last fiscal year — 490,000.
- The same is true for referrals to local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators: One quarter of the 320,000 referrals made so far by crisis-line counselors were made in FY 2015.
- Crisis Line counselors dispatched emergency responders to callers in crisis over 11,000 times last year (averaging 30 per day) — and over 53,000 times since 2007.
- Since adding chat and text services, they have engaged nearly 300,000 Veterans or concerned family members through chat or text.

Veterans in crisis may contact the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. They can also text or chat with trained professionals online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net).



Source: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2752>

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Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, handles Social Security disability, Veterans' disability and Personal Injury claims for clients throughout West Virginia with offices located in Parkersburg-Beckley-Charleston-Huntington-Logan as well as one additional office located in Charlotte, North Carolina. But regardless of where you are located we are able to serve you or a family member Nationwide.

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