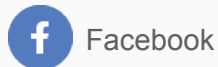




**SOCIAL SECURITY  
& VETERANS DISABILITY**  
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## VETERANS DISABILITY BENEFITS IN THE NEWS



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Welcome to our first Veteran's Disability newsletter of the New Year! The entire Jan Dils team is looking forward to sharing interesting and helpful "news you can use" in the coming months. We are excited to start with the two articles we have included in this edition.

Both stories contain good news about VA revising and expanding programs to help provide better, faster service to our nation's Veterans. The eligibility criteria for the Veterans Choice Program has been updated and expanded, ensuring that even more Veterans will be able to receive the level of medical care they need with fewer delays and worries. Our second article outlines the new partnership between VA and PenFed Foundation (the Pentagon Federal Credit Union Foundation), as an initiative to help prevent

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homelessness among Veterans.

It's great to kick off 2016 with some good news for our Veterans! And let me remind you again that we welcome your questions regarding VA Disability benefits. Put our experience and expertise to use, and get answers to your questions by giving us a call or sending an email. We are always happy to hear from you, and proud to serve those who so bravely served our country!

Sincerely,



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

## VA MAKES CHANGES TO VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced a number of changes to make participation in the [Veterans Choice Program](#) easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf.

“As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what



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needs to be refined,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve.” To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014.



**Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:**

- Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program;
- Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran’s ability to travel;
- Determined eligible based on the Veteran’s current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.

**Under the updated eligibility requirements, a Veteran is eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she is enrolled in the VA health care system and meets at least one of the following criteria:**

- Told by his or her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care within 30 days of the date the Veteran’s physician determines he/she needs to be seen or within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his or her physician;

- Lives more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician;
- Needs to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home;
- Faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or simplicity or frequency of the care needed and whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him or her to determine if the Veteran is eligible for any of these reasons; or
- Lives in a State or Territory without a full-service VA medical facility which includes: Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire (Note: this excludes New Hampshire Veterans who live within 20 miles of the White River Junction VAMC) and the United States Territories (excluding Puerto Rico, which has a full service VA medical facility).

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it can call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress, visit:

[www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact).

Source: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2742>



**VA AND PENFED FOUNDATION  
WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT  
VETERAN HOMELESSNESS**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it is teaming up with the Pentagon Federal Credit Union Foundation (PenFed Foundation) to strengthen

efforts to prevent Veteran homelessness. This new partnership will expand the PenFed Foundation's existing Military Heroes Fund Emergency Assistance Program to include all Veterans. Previously, the program was available only to Veterans of the Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) conflicts.

Through this partnership, the PenFed Foundation and VA will work together to provide emergency financial assistance for Veterans who are experiencing unexpected financial setbacks and are at risk of becoming homeless. The foundation will be able to provide emergency financial assistance for Veterans in need of one-time payments for back utilities, creditors, security deposits, and rental deposits. To date, the PenFed Foundation's Military Heroes Fund has already provided more than \$4 million in assistance to Veterans.



As a part of the partnership, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Homeless Program staff will connect Veterans who are facing overdue or arrearage payments to the PenFed Foundation for emergency financial assistance. This partnership and pledge embodies the mission of MyVA, launched last year to reorient VA around the needs of Veterans by collaborating with Veterans, employees, private industry, nonprofits, and other stakeholders.

“VA’s new partnership with the PenFed Foundation will

greatly benefit Veterans who are facing overdue bills and are at risk for homelessness,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “As we work with local communities throughout the Nation to help them end Veteran homelessness, partnerships like these are critical to ensuring we are doing everything possible to support Veterans who may be facing financial hardship and are at risk of losing their homes. Whether through their Military Heroes Fund or their support of the Defenders Lodge, the PenFed Foundation has shown they are dedicated to improving the lives of Veterans and we are proud to call them a partner.”

We are absolutely right to hold up our military service members as American heroes,” said PenFed Foundation President and CEO James Schenck. “Anyone, who at one time or another, wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America – for an amount of up to and including their own life has paid their citizenship dues in full, as far as I’m concerned. It’s up to the rest of us to ensure that when these heroes need heroes, someone is there to answer the call.”

For more information about VA’s homeless initiatives, visit [www.va.gov/homeless/](http://www.va.gov/homeless/). For more information about the PenFed Foundation’s programs supporting Veterans, visit [www.penfedfoundation.org](http://www.penfedfoundation.org).

Source: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2739>

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*Jan Dils keeps you updated on Social Security disability benefits news and important issues that matter the most. We not only focus on Social Security Disability, we also provide legal assistance for Veterans Disability Benefits. We understand the claims process and specialize in making sure Veterans receive the proper representation needed for receiving benefits. For more information on our Veterans Disability services, please visit [www.fight4vets.com](http://www.fight4vets.com)*

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Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, handles Social Security disability and Veterans' disability 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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