

Becker County Veterans Service Office

915 Lake Avenue, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

Phone: 218-846-7312 • Fax: 218-846-7325

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Veteran News

VA News

VA processes one million disability claims faster than ever before

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced on February 25, 2025 that it has processed more than a million disability claims in Fiscal Year 2025, reaching the milestone nearly two weeks faster than it did in FY24. Despite receiving 15.6% more claims than last year, the department completed its one millionth FY25 claim Feb. 20 – faster than at any point in the department’s history. In fact, the 10 highest claims processing days in VA’s history occurred within the last month, and the department’s highest claims processing day ever was Feb. 12, when VA processed more than 12,000 claims.

Through January, VA has provided \$62 billion in compensation and pension benefit payments to 6.9 million Veterans and survivors. VA’s claims accuracy rate has risen to more than 92%. To date, VA has completed 375,961 PACT Act related claims in FY25.

<https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-processes-one-million-disability-claims-faster-than-ever-before/>

You can find out more reports from the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), including detailed claims data, accuracy, and backlog, at https://www.benefits.va.gov/reports/detailed_claims_data.asp

PACT Act – 2024 Expanded Health Care Eligibility

Beginning March 5, 2024, VA made all Veterans who meet the basic service and discharge requirements and were exposed to toxins while serving our country eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.

This expansion of care means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

<https://news.va.gov/129251/pact-act-2024-health-care-eligibility-toolkit/>

VA News – Health Care

Veteran-Directed Care

Veteran Directed Care gives Veterans of all ages the opportunity to receive the Home and Community Based Services they need. This program is for Veterans who need personal care services and help with activities of daily living. Examples include help with bathing, dressing, or fixing meals. This program is also for Veterans who are isolated, or their caregiver is experiencing burden. Find out more, including if you are eligible at this site: https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/Veteran-Directed_Care.asp

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VA News – Women Veterans

Creating a Safe Space for Women Veterans at VA

Over two million women Veterans live in the U.S., making them the fastest growing Veteran group. For over 100 years VA has given women Veterans access to a wide range of comprehensive health and gender specific care that supports their every stage of life.

VA is committed to providing women Veterans with appropriate treatment and resources for their mental health needs. Wherever women Veterans receive care within VA, they should feel safe, confident and empowered during medical examinations. This fosters a safe environment, ensuring they receive the highest quality care possible. Detailed information at the following link:

<https://news.va.gov/129458/creating-a-safe-space-for-women-veterans-at-va/>

For more information on women veterans, go to the Center for Women Veterans at

<https://www.va.gov/womenvet/>

MDVA News

New Minnesota Veterans Homes Celebrate First Anniversary

After more than a decade of advocacy and planning and two years of construction, three new State Veterans Homes opened their doors one year ago. Located in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston, the three Homes continue to receive strong support from their local communities during this first year.

You can read more, or take a virtual tour of the Minnesota Veterans Homes, at:

<https://mn.gov/mdva/news/pressroom/#/detail/appId/2/id/667889>

Beware: Claim Predators Want to Prey on Your Benefits

Many Veterans seek support and help with filing VA benefits claims for the payments they deserve. Be cautious of "claim predators" - unaccredited companies or individuals targeting Veterans' benefits for profit. *How to identify claim predators:*

Charging High Fees: Predatory companies charge absurd fees or require you to pay a portion of your VA benefits. Never pay anyone a fee to file an initial claim for benefits.

Making Dishonest Promises: Don't trust anyone who claims they can help accelerate the claims process and obtain a 100% disability benefits evaluation. Remember, only VA has the authority to determine disability ratings.

Requiring Binding Contracts: No one should ever charge a fee to file an initial claim for VA benefits. Never sign a contract agreeing to pay an unauthorized individual/company a percentage of your benefit payment in exchange for help with your VA claim.

Get Help from a VA Accredited Representative or VSO, There is detailed information at the following link: <https://www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/> Spoiler: CVSOs are accredited!

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Military Retirement

Army Retirement Service Offices

Contact information for Retirement Service Offices for Active Duty Army, US Army Reserve, and each state's Army National Guard can be found at this link:

<https://soldierforlife.army.mil/Retirement/rso>

This is a great tool to save as a favorite or a bookmark if you are a gray-area retiree to have these valuable points of contact available.

ARNG / USAR Non-Regular Retirement Planning Seminar

There is a 70+ page slideshow available to review for Army National Guard and US Army Reserve Retirees. Ideally, Soldiers will review this prior to retiring, but it has current and valid information for current retirees as well.

<https://soldierforlife.army.mil/documents/static/Pre/ARNG-USAR%20Non-Regular%20Retirement%20Planning%20Seminar.pdf>

The Army also has a long list of resources available through this link:

<https://soldierforlife.army.mil/Resources-and-Links>

DFAS News

New Online Tools by DFAS to Manage Your Pay

With the *askDFAS* self-serve tools available online at <https://www.dfas.mil/dfas/AskDFAS/>, you can conveniently update your mailing address, request a duplicate 1099-R tax statement, or request verification of pay using an online form.

Simply and securely submit forms and documents online using our askDFAS Online Upload tools. Use the askDFAS "Ask a Question" tools to send a question and get a response via askDFAS.

There is detailed information at the following link: <https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/>

Reminder, DFAS also has a Retiree Newsletter, which can be found here:

<https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/newsevents/newsletter/>

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Area Claims Representatives and Service Officers:

Offices at the Fargo VA Regional Office
2101 N. Elm Street
Fargo, ND 58102
(on the southwest corner of the Fargo VA campus)

American Legion	Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs	Disabled American Veterans (DAV)	Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Andrew Allison 952-256-7690 andrew.allison@state.mn.us Suite 207		Matthew Herrud 701-451-4636 dav.vbafar@va.gov Suite 206	James Prentice 701-451-4635 james.prentice@va.gov Suite 205

Fargo VA Contact Numbers: <https://www.va.gov/fargo-health-care/contact-us/>

Senior Linkage Line at 1-800-333-2433 <https://mn.gov/senior-linkage-line/>

DAV NW MN Transportation line: 1-855-277-9787

National Archives – Requesting Veterans Records
<https://vetrecs.archives.gov/VeteranRequest/home.html?>

Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) Benefits Site:
<https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>

milConnect
(Tricare and other Health Benefits, DEERS, Education Benefits, SGLI)
<https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>

Reminder – VA Outreach events can be found here:
<https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/>

988 = Suicide and Crisis Lifeline