



Expansion of Health Care Eligibility for Toxic-exposed Veterans

Frequently Asked Questions

Background

On August 10, 2022, the Honoring our PACT Act of 2022 ("the PACT Act"; Public Law 117-168) was signed into law. Amendments made by section 103 of this law expanded health care eligibility for three new cohorts of toxic-exposed Veterans. VA is making these changes effective March 5, 2024.

What changed with this expansion of care?

Under the PACT Act, all toxic-exposed Veterans were supposed to become eligible for VA care on a phased-in schedule between now and 2032, but it allowed VA to accelerate this schedule. VA chose to do so, and beginning in March 2024, Veterans who were exposed to toxins or other hazards while serving our country are now eligible for VA care.

This expansion included:

- **Cohort 1:** Veterans who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA), as defined by law, while serving on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training. Veterans can locate military exposure categories on VA's Public Health website at: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/.
- **Cohort 2:** Veterans who were assigned to a duty station in (including airspace above) certain locations during specific periods of time:
 - On or after August 2, 1990, in the following countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, or the United Arab Emirates.
 - On or after September 11, 2001, in the following countries: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, or any other country determined relevant by VA. (Note: VA has not determined any other country relevant at this time.)
- **Cohort 3:** Veterans who were deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission.

How could this impact me?

Under these authorities, eligible Veterans can receive hospital care (including mental health services and counseling), medical services, and nursing home care through VA and will be assigned to Priority Group 6 unless eligible for assignment to a higher Priority Group.

If you are an existing VA health care enrollee in Priority Group 7 or 8, you may be eligible for a higher Priority Group if you qualify under one or more of these authorities.

Eligible Veterans are exempt from copayments for VA medical care and medications that could be related to their qualifying service. Care that is determined to be unrelated to qualifying service will be subject to any applicable copayments.

How can I apply?

VA is reviewing its enrollment records to determine if Veterans qualify under Cohort 2 or Cohort 3 (Veterans who served in certain locations during certain time periods since August 1990, or who deployed in support of certain contingency operations). Many of these Veterans do not need to take action; VA will be able to upgrade their Priority Group without further action on the Veteran's part and will notify such Veterans of this change.

If you believe you meet the eligibility criteria for one or more of the cohorts above and you have not been notified by VA that your Priority Group has been upgraded, please complete and submit VA Form 10-10EZR, Health Benefits Update Form, and copies (*not originals*) of supporting documentation. You can send us your completed VA Form 10-10EZR and supporting documentation in one of the following ways:

- Fax to 404-828-5060, or
- In person at your local VA medical facility, or
- Mail to:
Health Eligibility Center
PO Box 5207
Janesville, WI 53547-5207

Important: When mailing supporting documentation, only submit COPIES, and retain your originals.

If you would like to submit copies of additional supporting documentation, there is no time limit. However, we strongly encourage you to send any additional information as soon as possible.

Supporting documentation for Cohort 1 (TERA) could include:

- What you were potentially exposed to
- When (month and year) and where you were exposed
- Type of activity you were engaged in at the time of each potential exposure, such as basic training, involvement in a test or experiment, or type of work done during service
- Personal statements
- Buddy statements
- Unit histories
- News articles
- Additional evidence (including, but not limited to, a personal journal, diary, and/or photos)

Supporting documentation for Cohort 2 and/or 3 could include:

- DD-214 (Discharge)
- DD-215 (Discharge Update)
- Service records
- Military orders

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411) press Option 2. Representatives are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We will be happy to assist you further