

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Eastern Colorado Health Care System**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Jan. 23, 2023****Media Advisory****FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**Dustin Senger, Deputy Public Affairs Officer
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VA ECHCS to host rural resource fairs, offer toxic-exposure screenings

AURORA, Colo. – VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) will host resource fairs and town halls Feb.13-17 in five rural communities.

VA ECHCS rural resource fairs and town halls take place Feb. 13 in Burlington, continue Feb. 14 in Lamar, then Feb. 15 in La Junta, then Feb. 16 in Alamosa and finally Feb. 17 in Buena Vista. The events are open to Veterans and their spouses, caregivers and community leaders.

VA ECHCS currently provides care for more than 100,000 Veterans in Eastern Colorado and surrounding states. The resource fairs are an opportunity for thousands of rural Veterans to get one-on-one support with understanding, accessing and using their benefits and services.

VA health care and benefits expanded in August for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. The president signed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act, into law Aug. 10, expanding care for hundreds of thousands of Vietnam-era, Gulf War-era and post-9/11 Veterans.

During the fairs, Veterans and survivors can speak with a VA benefits specialist about PACT Act-related eligibility. When confirmed eligible, Veterans will get assistance with enrolling and scheduling an initial appointment. Enrolled Veterans will be offered an on-site toxic-exposure screening by a VA nurse, then given information about follow-up screenings.

Enrolled Veterans can also get help with community care consults, beneficiary travel claims, caregiver support and home and community-based services for extended care needs.

Community leaders can learn how local providers partner with VA and keep Veteran care timely and convenient and meeting individual needs or circumstances, as well as explore community-based initiatives to end homelessness and prevent suicide.

During the culminating town halls, VA ECHCS Director Michael Kilmer will encourage an exchange of information and feedback that will help VA meet Veteran needs. He says community-level collaboration is vital to identifying, testing and evaluating innovative solutions.

Discussions last year, when more than 110,000 community care consults were completed, underlined a need to create liaison positions at every VA outpatient clinic.

“These liaisons will work side-by-side with community providers to put in a consult and immediately process it,” said Kilmer, explaining the on-site resource for both Veterans and providers. “There will be someone in the clinics that they can speak with in-person.”

Kilmer says enrolling helps inform VA health care infrastructure investment strategies.

“Registering is one way to keep resources available to vulnerable Veterans,” he said. “We’ve heard that a lot of Veterans feel enrolling for VA care could take it away from someone who needs it more, but every enrolled Veteran brings VA resources to our communities.”

“If you don’t need it now, you may one day. Even if you already get care elsewhere, it’s a fallback.”

For more information on how to apply, including the documents needed to determine eligibility, visit [VA.gov/health-care/how-to-apply](https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply).

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Burlington VA Resource Fair, Town Hall

When: Monday, Feb. 13. Resource fair from 1 to 4 p.m.; town hall, 4-5 p.m.

Where: Ambulance Shed
1576 Lowell Avenue
Burlington, Colorado 80807

Lamar VA Resource Fair, Town Hall

When: Tuesday, Feb. 14. Resource fair from 1 to 3 p.m.; town hall, 3-4 p.m.

Where: Lamar Senior Center
407 East Olive Street
Lamar, Colorado 81052

La Junta VA Resource Fair, Town Hall

When: Wednesday, Feb. 15. Resource fair from 1 to 4 p.m.; town hall, 4-5 p.m.

Where: La Junta Senior Center
114 East 2nd Street
La Junta, Colorado 81050

Alamosa VA Resource Fair, Town Hall

When: Thursday, Feb. 16. Resource fair from 1 to 4 p.m.; town hall, 4-5 p.m.

Where: Colorado National Guard
Readiness Center
1877 Old Sanford Road
Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Buena Vista VA Resource Fair, Town Hall

When: Friday, Feb. 17. Resource fair from noon to 2 p.m.; town hall, 2-3 p.m.

Where: Buena Vista Community Center
Pinon Room
715 East Main Street
Buena Vista, Colorado 81211

Attached Photo



220809-0440 – Director Michael Kilmer, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, celebrates local VA providers Aug. 9 during a town hall at Lamar Senior Center in Lamar. Kilmer was hosting his first series of resource fairs and town halls since the COVID-19 pandemic paused in-person gatherings. With stops in Kit Carson County, Prowers County, Otero County, Alamosa County and Chaffee County, he traveled hundreds of miles with an outreach team to offer one-on-one support with understanding, accessing and using VA benefits and services. (Courtesy Photo/VA ECHCS)



220812-0493 – Director Michael Kilmer, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, speaks with Chaffee County Veterans about access to care Aug. 12 during a town hall at American Legion Post 64 in Salida. Kilmer was hosting his first series of resource fairs and town halls since the COVID-19 pandemic paused in-person gatherings. With stops in Kit Carson County, Prowers County, Otero County, Alamosa County and

Chaffee County, he traveled hundreds of miles with an outreach team to offer one-on-one support with understanding, accessing and using VA benefits and services. (Courtesy Photo/VA ECHCS)