



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Eastern Colorado Health Care System

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Media Advisory

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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VA partners with counties for regional PACT Act events

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – Veterans, and their survivors, are invited to participate in two PACT Act-related regional events put on by VA and local county Veteran service offices. They take place from Aug. 7-9 in Colorado Springs and Aug. 8 in La Junta, ahead of the deadline for backdated claims.

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act, expands VA health care eligibility and benefits for Veterans with toxic exposures during the Vietnam, Gulf War and post-9/11 eras. To get the latest information on this historic expansion of benefits, visit VA.gov/PACT.

“This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve,” said Michael Kilmer, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) director. “VA will not rest until every Veteran gets the toxic exposure-related care and benefits they deserve.”

Veterans who attend these events and apply for PACT Act-related benefits before Aug. 10 may have benefits backdated to Aug. 10, 2022—the day the bill was signed. However, Veterans can still apply for the benefits after this date, but they will not be backdated.

The multicounty events, which are specifically geared toward Veterans as far north as Castle Rock, as far south as Pueblo and as far east as Lamar, will include accredited VSOs from several counties, as well as VA benefits specialists. Veterans will also find on-site support for health care enrollments and scheduling and community-care consults, as well as toxic exposure screenings.

The VA’s mission to screen every Veteran is an important step in prioritizing exposure-informed care and increasing the likelihood of early diagnoses and treatments, and part of implementing the PACT Act. Those with exposure concerns may also be connected to information about benefits, registry exams and clinical resources.

VA ECHCS has screened more than 51,000 Veterans since the effort became a standard clinical practice in November 2022. At least one exposure concern was documented in nearly 24,000 of the Veterans, or nearly half. The screenings have occurred during primary care and specialty care appointments, and during numerous community-based outreach events.

“Collaboration between county VSOs and the VA is of utmost importance,” said Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veteran service officer, who coordinated monthly PACT Act briefs with VA support from March to July, assisting hundreds of Veterans in the El Paso County Veterans Services classroom in Colorado Springs. “We are a prime example of how partnerships between local and federal agencies can maximize resources and better serve the needs of the Veteran community.”

From Aug. 7-9, noon to 8 p.m., Veterans who live along the I-25 corridor in southern Colorado, from Pueblo to Castle Rock, can drive to Colorado Springs, then exit on Briargate Parkway (exit 151) and look on their left for the Colorado Army National Guard Readiness Center, which is where the El Paso County PACT Act claims clinics will be. VA will offer on-site exams, so many claims will get close to the finish line.

On Aug. 8, noon to 4 p.m., Veterans who live along Highway 50, from Pueblo to Lamar, will get support at the La Junta Senior Center. Kilmer will kick off the southeast Colorado PACT Act event at noon with a town hall. From 1 to 4 p.m., county Veteran service officers and VA benefits specialists will assist Veterans with PACT Act-related claims.

All Veterans with military environmental exposure concerns will be encouraged to speak with their provider at their next appointment. Veterans enrolled in VA ECHCS can request a phone screening by a nurse trained in identifying and documenting potential exposures to toxins during military service. Leave a message in MyHealthVet or a voicemail at 720-857-2511.

“The most important thing is Veterans get the care they need,” said Germaine Franciosi, who trains VA ECHCS nurses to complete the screenings, empowering them to identify and document toxic exposures with a focus on early diagnoses and treatments. She says it’s about fulfilling the VA mission. “They protected us, now we must protect them.”

For more information, contact the VA ECHCS public affairs office at vhaechcommunications@va.gov.

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El Paso County Claims Clinics

Who: Veterans and survivors
When: Monday-Wednesday, Aug. 7-9, noon to 8 p.m.
Where: Colorado Army National Guard Readiness Center
9510 Voyager Parkway
Colorado Springs, CO 80920

Southeast Colorado PACT Act Event

Who: Veterans and survivors
When: Tuesday, Aug. 8, noon to 4 p.m.
Where: La Junta Senior Center
114 E. 2nd Street
La Junta, CO 81050