

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center

# Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center Veterans Town Hall April 17, 2024



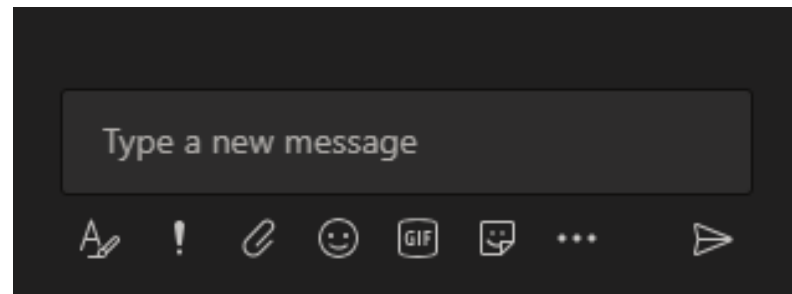
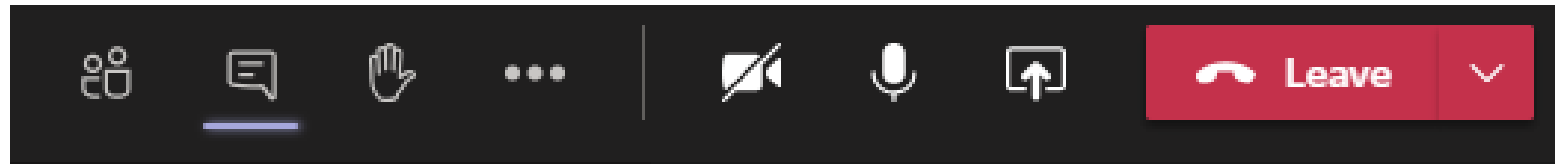


# AGENDA

- Housekeeping
- Medical Center Director: Hot Topics
- PACT Act Update
- Construction Update
- Minority Veteran Program
- Regional Office Updates
- Q&A
- Closing Remarks

# Q&A

**Please submit your questions  
through the Chat window!**





# **Director's Update**

**Mr. Michael Payne**  
**Medical Center Director**



# HOT TOPICS from the Director

- During the October 2023 Town Hall, I shared priorities set forth by VHA Undersecretary Dr. Shereef Elnahal. Some of those priorities were:
  - Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care
  - Serve Veterans with military environmental exposures
  - Support Veterans' whole health, their caregivers, and survivors
- Today, I'd like to share some of the actions we've taken to lead us toward meeting these goals

# Connect Veterans to the Soonest and Best Care

- Community Care
  - Partnering with local and regional entities to improve access for Veterans
  - Reducing the need for non-VA Hospitals through improved access and quality
- Technology
  - Patient Check-In tool
- Enrollment Opportunities
  - Increasing the number, and effectiveness of outreach events
    - Lowe's – East Wichita, Saturday, April 27, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
    - VetFest, Dole VA front-lawn, Friday, May 17, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (entertainment to follow)
    - Lowe's – Derby, Saturday, May 18, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

# Serve Veterans with Military Environmental Exposures

- Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT Act) was passed in 2022
- Since being signed into law, more than 3,800 Kansas Veterans have enrolled in VA health care
- On March 5 of this year, VA expanded health care eligibility to millions of Veterans years earlier than called for by the PACT Act
- Mr. Herndon will be speaking more to this during this Town Hall



# Support Veterans' Whole Health

- Whole Health prioritizes the whole Veteran through comprehensive and integrated care
- Utilize Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT)
- Whole Health Program
  - [Spring/Summer 2024 Course Catalog](#)
    - Programs are available for individuals or partners

# Combatting Veteran Homelessness

- Joined with United Way and the City of Wichita to achieve Functional Zero Homelessness in our community by the end of 2024
- Point-in-Time count
- Dole VA Homeless Program

# **PACT-Act Updates**

**Jeff Herndon**  
**Public Affairs Officer**



# Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 – 2024 Health Care Eligibility Changes

VHA Veteran/Stakeholder Overview



April 17, 2024



# PACT Act Overview



Expanded VA health care eligibility



Improved VA's presumption decision making process



Bolsters VA's toxic exposure resources



Strengthens VA's toxic exposure research



Increased VA benefits claims processing capacity



Strengthens VA's workforce



Authorized funding for VA facility leases



# 2024 PACT Act Health Care Eligibility: What Changed?

- Under the PACT Act, all toxic exposed Veterans were supposed to become eligible for VA care – in increments – between now and 2032.
- VA eliminated the phased-in approach – meaning that three new cohorts of Veterans are now eligible to enroll in VA health care as of March 5, 2024.

*Veterans must first meet the minimum active-duty service and discharge requirements to qualify for VA health care under PACT Act authorities.*





# Newly Eligible Veteran Cohorts

- 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 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.)
- 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.



# What Is Considered a TERA?

VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA:

- Air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires).
- Chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water).
- Occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams).
- Radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, nuclear weapon technicians and dental technicians, served on nuclear submarine and other nuclear ships or in shipyards, or were involved in nuclear weapons handling and maintenance, including clean-up after accidents).
- Warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons).

This is not a comprehensive list, and there's no timeline. Veterans can view additional military exposure categories on VA's Public Health website at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/>.



# Vietnam Era Veteran VA Health Care Eligibility

Veterans who served in the following locations and time periods are also eligible to enroll in VA health care effective on enactment (August 10, 2022):

- Republic of Vietnam (between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975),
- Thailand at any U.S. or Royal Thai base (between January 9, 1962, and June 30, 1976)
- Laos (between December 1, 1965, and September 30, 1969)
- Certain Provinces in Cambodia (between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969)
- Guam or American Samoa or their territorial waters (between January 9, 1962, and July 31, 1980)
- Johnston Atoll, or a ship that called there, between January 1, 1972, and September 30, 1977



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# VA Health Care Eligibility FAQs

## What are the minimum active-duty service requirements for VA health care?

In general, Veterans must have served 24 months of continuous active duty or the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty.

Former members of the Reserves or National Guard are eligible for VA health care if they have qualifying service (as described above) **and** meet one of the health care eligibility requirements in the PACT Act. Former members of the Reserves or National Guard who only served for training purposes may not be able to establish Veteran status if they did not incur a qualifying disability during such training.

Some exceptions apply. Please visit [www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility](http://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility) for more information.

## What are the exceptions to the minimum active-duty service requirements for VA health care?

The minimum active-duty service requirement for VA health care may not apply if any of these are true:

- The Veteran was discharged or released for a qualifying reason (e.g., early discharge, hardship, medical discharge).
- The Veteran was discharged for a disability that was caused—or made worse—by active-duty service.
- The Veteran served prior to the early 1980s.

VA encourages all Veterans to apply to determine their enrollment eligibility. Please visit [www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility](http://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility) for more information.



# Apply for VA Health Care in 4 Easy Ways

1. Online: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction>.
2. By calling the toll-free hotline: 877-222-8387.
3. By mailing VA Form 10-10EZ to:  
Health Eligibility Center  
2957 Clairmont Rd., Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30329
4. In person at the nearest VA medical center or clinic



# Why VA?

- VA provides the best and most affordable health care for Veterans in America – and *this* is your chance to apply.
- Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than those who get their care elsewhere. And this year alone, VA has beaten non-VA hospitals in quality ratings *and* patient satisfaction ratings.
- That’s because our clinicians know Veterans – they often *are* Veterans – and they know exactly how to help.
- And VA health care isn’t only the best option for Veterans – it’s often the most affordable – with copays as low as \$0 for prescriptions, urgent care, outpatient care, and more for some Veterans at VA.
- So don’t wait – get the world-class care you’ve earned.





# VA Toxic Exposure Screening Quick Facts

- **Who:** All Veterans enrolled in VA health care.
- **What:** A brief screening averaging 5–10 minutes to identify and document any potential exposures to toxins during military service.
- **When:** At least once every 5 years.
- **Where:** At VA medical centers/clinics, including virtual encounters.
- **Why:** To support the long-term health plan of the Veteran—ensuring they receive informed, whole-health care—and connect them with follow-up resources as requested.

⇒ **EXPOSURE-INFORMED CARE**



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# Expanding Presumptions of Service Connection

The PACT Act establishes presumptions of service connection for more than 20 presumptive disease categories related to toxic exposures.

## For Gulf War and Post-9/11 Veterans

Asthma diagnosed after service	Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
Brain cancer	Kidney cancer
Chronic bronchitis	Lymphoma of any type
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	Melanoma
Chronic rhinitis	Neck cancer
Chronic sinusitis	Pancreatic cancer
Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis	Pleuritis
Emphysema	Pulmonary fibrosis
Gastrointestinal cancer of any type	Reproductive cancer of any type
Glioblastoma	Respiratory cancer of any type
Granulomatous disease	Sarcoidosis
Head cancer of any type	

## For Vietnam Veterans and other Veterans exposed to tactical herbicides

Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
High blood pressure (also called hypertension)



# Filing and Processing Claims Associated with the PACT Act



VA will contact Veterans when a presumption of service connection is established or changed. Veterans can learn more at [www.va.gov/PACT](http://www.va.gov/PACT).



However, Veterans who were previously denied a toxic-exposure-related claim are encouraged to file a **supplemental claim** using VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim. Most claims that were previously denied will not be automatically reviewed under the PACT Act. Survivors who were previously denied dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), related to any of the new presumptive conditions, are likewise encouraged to re-file a claim.



Veterans who have not previously filed a claim and are diagnosed with one of the new presumptive conditions and meet eligibility requirements should **submit a new claim** on VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits. Survivors who have not previously filed a claim and meet eligibility requirements should **submit a new claim** on VA Form 21P-534EZ, Application for DIC, Survivors Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits.



Veterans should be prepared to submit any supportive medical and lay evidence along with their claims.



# Other Resources

- Veterans can learn more about the PACT Act at [www.va.gov/PACT](http://www.va.gov/PACT).
- How to apply for VA health care:
  - [Apply For Health Care | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#)
- How to submit a VBA claim:
  - [File for disability compensation with VA Form 21-526EZ | Veterans Affairs](#)
- Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry: [HOME - Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry \(va.gov\)](#)
- Visit [this blog post](#) to access a suite of external products (included translated versions).



# Upcoming Opportunities to Meet With Us

- **Veteran Mobile Enrollment and Claims Fair**
  - **East Wichita Lowe's, 11959 E. Kellogg Dr.**
  - **Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**
  - PACT Act info, VA health care enrollment, assistance with disability claims and other benefits
  
- **Veteran Mobile Enrollment and Claims Fair**
  - **Derby Lowe's, 424 W. Patriot Ave.**
  - **Saturday, May 18, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.**
  - PACT Act info, VA health care enrollment, assistance with disability claims and other benefits



# Upcoming Opportunities to Meet With Us

- ***Salute to Our Veterans: PACT Act Spring Fling***
  - **Dole VA Flagpole on the south lawn**
  - **Friday, May 17, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**
  - PACT Act town hall, health care enrollment, disability claims processing
  - Demonstrations for yoga, tai chi, and healthy cooking
  - Information booths for VA services
  - Health screenings
  - Free food begins at noon, until it's gone – Cooking provided courtesy of the Wichita Wagonmasters
  - Have your DD-214 recorded with the Sedgwick County Register of Deeds
  - **Stick around after 2:00 for country music artists:**  
Local musician Jaelen Johnston, Jared Blake, Bigg Vinny, Jason Michael Carroll, Craig Campbell





# Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony

- Tuesday, April 30, 9:00 a.m. – Noon
- WSU's Hughes Metroplex
- Honoring 150 Vietnam-era Veterans during this ceremony
- *ALL SLOTS ARE ALREADY FILLED and we have a short standby list*



- During these ceremonies, every Vietnam-era Veteran is presented a commemorative lapel pin and letter from the U.S. President
- We do hope to host another ceremony later this year, as well as at least one in 2025



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# Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony

- Living U.S. Veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period of November 1, 1955, to May 15, 1975, regardless of location
- We make no distinction between Veterans who served in-country, in-theater, or who were stationed elsewhere during the Vietnam War period
  - All were called to serve, none could self-determine where they were stationed
- Visit this website to find a commemorative event near you or request a lapel pin by mail from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee:



[https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/about/vietnam\\_veteran\\_lapel\\_pin/](https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/about/vietnam_veteran_lapel_pin/)

# Construction Updates

**Nick Howard**  
**Healthcare Engineer**



# 3 East (Med/Surg) Patient Privacy

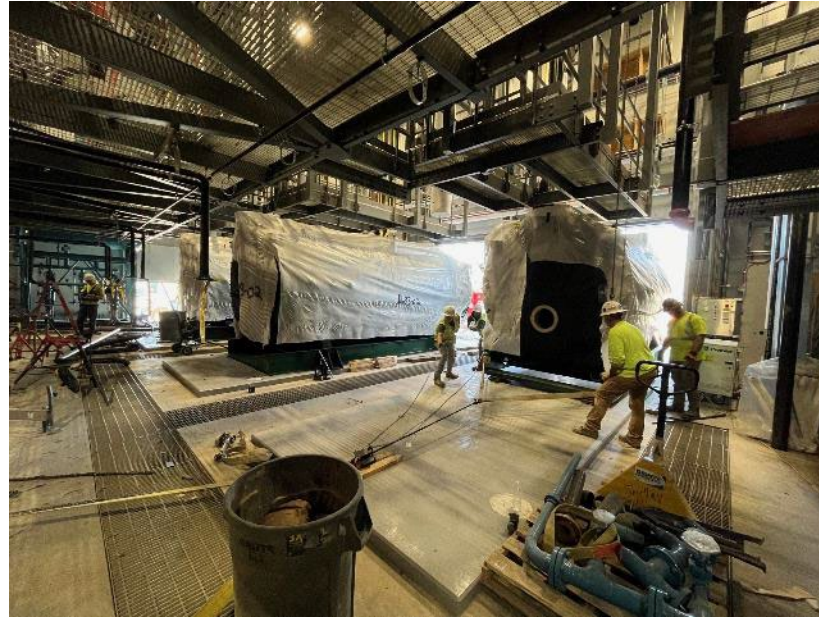
- Construction nearing completion but requires some minor corrections to room conditioning systems.
- New space provides private rooms and restrooms.





# Install New Boilers, Building 13

- Project is on schedule for completion Dec 2024. Commissioning and start-up to begin in late May.
- Project upgrades infrastructure that provides steam for heat and other essential services.





# Renovate and Repair Structural Bldg. 4

- East side ground floor is 90% completed.
- Prosthetics will be moving to the renovated space in May
- Extensive lead abatement and other construction requirements have delayed the completion and opening of the auditorium.



# EHRM Infrastructure and Training Spaces

- EHRM Infrastructure Upgrades
  - Project is 85% complete
  - Project updates infrastructure for the new of the medical records system.
- EHRM Training and Admin Space Support
  - Project is 90% complete
  - Project provides staff training space for the new medical records system





**Veterans Health Administration  
Minority Veteran Program Coordinator**

April 17, 2024

**Greg Harden**

**Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center**



# Center for Minority Veterans Mission:

The Center for Minority Veterans has a statutorily\* defined mission to provide Veterans a voice and representation within the Department of Veterans Affairs with a focus to all underserved Veteran communities, with a focus on:

- African Americans
- Hispanics
- Native Americans
- Alaskan Natives
- Asian Americans
- Pacific Islanders
- LGBTQ+

***\* Per Public Law 103-446 - VA Directive 0801***



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# Minority Veterans Program Coordinator

- Promoting the use of VA benefits, programs, and services by minority Veterans
- Supporting and initiating activities that educate and sensitize internal staff to the unique needs of minority Veterans
- Targeting outreach efforts to minority Veterans through community networks
- Identifying gaps in services and making recommendations to improve service delivery within their facilities for minority Veterans



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# Minority Veterans Program Coordinator



## Gregory Harden

Minority Veteran Program Coordinator

**Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center**

Building 7, Room 101

316-685-2221 x53012

[gregory.harden@va.gov](mailto:gregory.harden@va.gov)



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# **VA Regional Office**

**Aaron Filsinger**

**Acting Director, Regional  
Office**



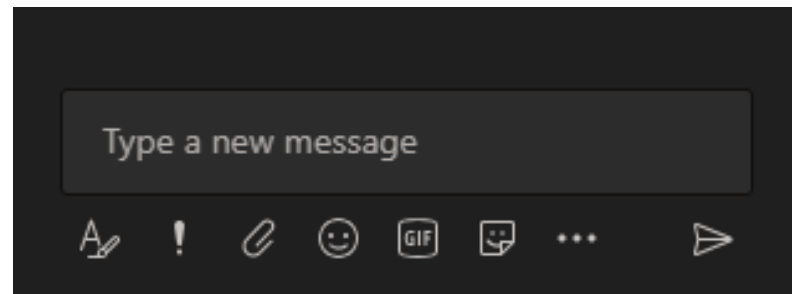
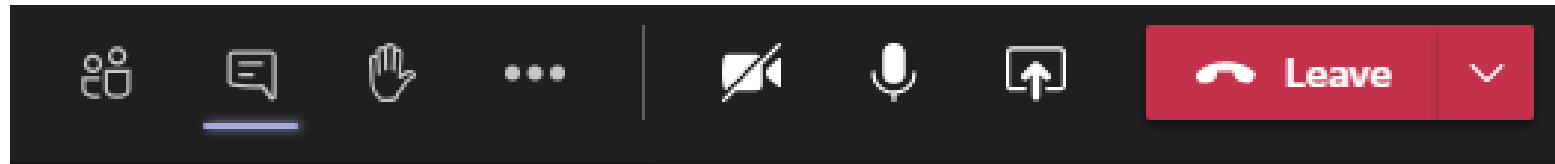
# VA Regional Office

- Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting
- PACT Act
- Outreach
- Hiring



# Q&A

**Please submit your questions through the Chat window!**





**Want a copy of today's  
presentation?**

**Send an email to:  
[Gene.Kimble@va.gov](mailto:Gene.Kimble@va.gov)**

