

VA**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

News Release

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CARES Act helping VA boost protections for Veterans

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun implementing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, signed into law March 27, to protect America's Veterans.

The CARES Act is best known as the law providing \$2.2 trillion in economic relief to Americans and has language critical to ensuring the safety of Veterans.

"President Trump signed this legislation into law with a sharp eye on ensuring the safety of our nation's Veterans," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Since the President signed the CARES Act, VA has been moving quickly to implement the President's intent to hire new staff, take care of homeless Veterans, use our cutting-edge telehealth technology to keep appointments, help state-run Veterans homes."

The bill contains important funding increases in support of VA's nationwide response to the challenge.

This includes \$17.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration, where money is already being used, to hire new staff and make sure existing personnel have the resources they need to deal with the evolving needs of the pandemic.

The funding has also been used to add beds, provide overtime pay and purchase needed supplies such as ventilators, pharmaceuticals and personal protective equipment.

Other CARES Act benefits to Veterans includes:

Homelessness

- Increasing the amount to support the additional costs of aiding Veterans in today's more difficult economic circumstances. Before the CARES Act, VA provided up to \$48.50 per day for each Veteran that grantees assist.
- Expecting loan servicers to comply with all home loan related provisions of the CARES Act, giving borrowers the right to loan forbearance upon request and protecting against foreclosures, evictions and adverse credit reporting. During the COVID-19 emergency, servicers must also comply with all other federal, state and local requirements implemented to address the servicing of home loans.

Telehealth

- Allowing VA to enter into short-term agreements with telecommunications companies to deliver free or subsidized support for mental health services through a telehealth connection or VA's Video Connect service.
- Working to ensure Veterans participating in the HUD-VA Supportive Housing program (HUD-VASH) have access to telehealth equipment.

State Veterans Homes

- Waiving a requirement that VA state homes maintain a 90% occupancy rate in order to receive federal benefits for times when the Veteran is not in the home. The change recognizes the importance of social distancing, especially among the older Veteran population.
- Permitting State Veterans Homes to admit more spouses of Veterans and Gold Star parents.

Additionally, the CARES Act law allocates \$150 million for emergency State Veterans Home construction and \$2.15 billion for information technology.

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