

# Information for Veterans

## Accessing VA Care

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with \$19.57 billion in funding to ensure it has the equipment, tests, and support services necessary to provide veterans with the additional care they need at facilities in Hawaii and across the nation. This includes funding to cover treatment at VA hospitals and in community urgent care clinics and emergency rooms.

### **I'm a veteran and I have COVID-19 symptoms. Can I get tested at the VA?**

Yes, any veteran with symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath should immediately contact their VA provider. VA urges veterans to call before visiting. Upon arriving, all patients are screened for flu-like symptoms before they enter to protect patients and staff. Veterans can also sign into My HealthVet to send a secure message to VA or use telehealth options to explain their condition and receive a prompt diagnosis.

### **Do I need to worry about paying for the COVID-19 test?**

No. Under Section 3006 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the VA is required to cover the cost of test and your visit to receive the testing, without any cost sharing.

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## For Veterans Beneficiaries

The CARES Act protects veterans' health care benefits and pensions by preventing the 2020 Recovery Rebate payment from being counted as income.

### **I'm a veteran receiving pension and health care benefits from VA. Will the Recovery Rebate payment from the CARES Act count towards my income for determining my eligibility for pension, health care, and other needs-based benefits?**

No. Under Section 20010 of the CARES Act, the 2020 Recovery Rebate payment cannot be counted as income when determining a veteran's eligibility for any VA needs-based benefits.

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## For Veteran Homeowners

VA-backed mortgages are protected from foreclosure for 180 days if a veteran requests forbearance through their mortgage holder.

### **I have a VA-backed mortgage. Am I protected against foreclosure during the COVID-19 emergency declaration?**

Yes, under the CARES Act Section 4022, federally-backed mortgages, including those guaranteed by VA can be protected from foreclosure for 180 days by requesting a forbearance through your mortgage holder.

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## **For Veteran Business Owners**

Veteran-owned small businesses can receive support through the Small Business Paycheck Protection Program, which can be used to cover payroll, mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs. Up to 8 weeks of these business expenses are eligible for forgiveness.

### **I run a veteran-owned small business. Can the CARES Act help me?**

Yes. If you are a veteran-owned small business, you can receive support through the Small Business Paycheck Protection Program to cover 8-weeks of your payroll, mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs. You can apply to your lender to forgive your loan for the amount of payroll costs plus payments of mortgage interest, rent, and utilities incurred during the 8-week period after the loan is disbursed. The amount that can be forgiven is proportionate to maintaining employees and wages. Any loan amounts not forgiven are carried forward as an ongoing loan with max terms of 10 years, at a maximum interest rate of 4 percent.

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## **For VA Patients**

For veterans utilizing VA prosthetic services, the CARES Act gives VA increased flexibility for veterans to get new prosthetics or get their prosthetics adjusted by a community provider. For veterans utilizing mental health services, the bill also allows VA to work with telecommunications companies to offer subsidized fixed and mobile internet services to veterans so they can utilize telemental health services.

### **I use VA's prosthetics service and need to get my prosthetic adjusted, but I am nervous to go into a VA facility because I have underlying conditions that makes me more at risk of complications from COVID-19. Where can I go to get my prosthetic adjusted?**

This bill gives VA more flexibility to allow veterans who need their prosthetics created or adjusted to do so in their local community. Call your local VA provider or message them on MyHealtheVet and ask about this option.

### **I am a veteran living in a rural area and am being told that my appointments will now be through telehealth, but I can't afford internet services or don't have a good internet connection. How will this bill help me?**

Talk to your provider and local VA about getting an iPad or other tablet from VA. This bill allows VA to enter into partnerships with local telecommunications companies to subsidize or completely pay for broadband internet services. Call your local VA facility or send a secure message to your provider on My HealtheVet to ask about this option.

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## **For VA employees and Home Health Workers**

The CARES Act waives the federal pay cap to allow VA employees to get paid overtime even if they exceed the federal pay cap. The bill also directs VA to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to any VA employees or contractors who are doing home health visits.

### **I'm a VA employee working lots of overtime due to COVID-19. Can I still receive overtime pay for hours worked, even if it puts me above the federal pay cap?**

Yes. Under Section 20008 of the CARES Act, any VA employee involved in COVID-19 response efforts can receive pay for all hours worked, even above the normal pay caps, for work done in support of VA's response to COVID-19.

**I'm a home health care worker for the VA, can I receive PPE for providing home care services to veterans?**

Yes. Under Section 20009 of the CARES Act, VA must provide PPE to any home health worker employed by or contracted with VA to provide services to veterans.

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**For Homeless Providers**

The CARES Act waives the authorizing limit for the support services for veterans' families and Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program so that more funding can flow to local providers. The bill also waives the cap on per diem payments to GPD providers so VA can pay more for each veteran "head in a bed." It also allows VA to continue to pay per diem payments even if a veteran is absent more than three days from the program and prohibits veterans from being dis-enrolled in the GPD program if they are absent more than 14 days. Finally, the bill directs VA to use more flexibilities to provide HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) case management services through telehealth.

**I am a VA HUD-VASH caseworker, how can I make sure I am keeping up with my veterans in the HUD-VASH program?**

The CARES Act encourages VA to use more telehealth capabilities for yourself and your veterans. Call each other or use Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger Video Chat, Google Hangouts Video, or Skype. Ask your local VA about access to an iPad or other tablet for you or your veterans to use to facilitate virtual meetings.

**I am a Grant and Per Diem provider. Will I be able to keep my veterans enrolled after they are absent for 14 days?**

Yes. This bill waives VA's requirement to automatically dis-enroll veterans using the GPD program if they are absent more than 14 days.

**Will I continue to get paid for veterans who are absent from my program for more than three days?**

This bill gives VA the authority to pay GPD providers for a veteran even if they are absent from the program for more than three days. Contact your local VA about this option.

**Will I get paid the same amount as before?**

This bill waives the current limit on the amount VA can pay GPD providers during the COVID-19 emergency. Contact your local VA about this option. This bill includes additional funding for VA to increase payments to many service providers, including the GPD program.

**I am an SSVF provider. How does this bill allow me to continue to help homeless veterans?**

This bill includes additional funding for VA to increase payments to many service providers, including the SSVF program. For more information about how to help veterans during COVID-19, visit [www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/).

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## **For State Veterans Homes**

The CARES Act allows VA to give State Veterans Homes PPE so they can care for elderly veterans. It also allows VA to pay State Veterans Homes for veteran patients even if they are under the 90 percent occupancy threshold or under the 75 percent veteran occupancy threshold.

**I run a State Veterans Home. Will I be penalized if my residents come down with COVID-19 and are transferred to acute care, putting me under the 90 percent occupancy rate threshold needed for payment from VA?**

No. Under Section 20005 of the CARES Act, State Veterans Homes will continue to receive payment from VA during the COVID-19 pandemic, even if they do not meet the 90 percent occupancy rate or the 75 percent veteran occupancy rate requirements for per diem payment.

**I run a State Veterans Home and I do not have enough PPE or supplies. What support can VA provide?**

In addition to requesting emergency supplies and PPE from your county or state emergency coordinator, Section 20005 of the CARES Act also allows VA to share PPE and supplies with State Veterans Homes to keep residents and staff safe.

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## **For Veteran Directed Care Participants and Providers**

The CARES Act allows veterans to enroll in or renew their participation in the Veteran Directed Care (VDC) program through telephone or telehealth, without requiring an in-home visit. Importantly, the bill does not penalize or dis-enroll veterans from the VDC program if they do not submit paperwork on time. Finally, it waives the requirement that veterans and caregivers cannot be out of state for more than 14 days, and it allows them to continue receiving payments.

**I'm a veteran in need of home-based care. Can I still enroll or renew my participation in the Veteran Directed Care program?**

Yes. Under Section 20006 of the CARES Act, you can enroll or renew your participation in the Veteran Directed Care program through telephone or telehealth, no in-home visit is required.

**I run an area agency on aging or other agency that provides services to veterans in the Veteran Directed Care program. Our county is telling us to limit face-to-face services and home visits. Can I still process new participants and renewals?**

Yes. Under Section 20006 of the CARES Act, agencies can now enroll or renew veterans in the Veteran Directed Care program through telephone or telehealth, no in-home visit required.

**I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I cannot get to a printer or post office to send in my renewal paperwork due to COVID-19. Will I be kicked out of the program?**

No. Under Section 20006 of the CARES Act, veterans and their caregivers will not be penalized for late paperwork and will not be dis-enrolled or suspended from the program.

**I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I am currently living outside of my home state and cannot travel home due to COVID-19 restrictions and health concerns. Can my caregiver still be paid for services, even if we are out of state?**

Yes. Under Section 20006 of the CARES Act, veterans and their caregivers will not be penalized for being out of state for more than 14 days during the COVID-19 emergency, and they should continue to receive payments for care.

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### **For Student Veterans**

The Senate recently passed a bill that the president signed into law that directs VA to continue to pay student veterans their housing benefits at normal rates, even if their courses are moved online during an emergency.

**My school is converting to online education because of COVID-19, will I still receive my housing allowance?**

Yes, with the passage of Senate Bill 3503 into law (P.L. 116-128), VA will continue to make housing allowance payments to students using VA education benefits at the on-campus rate, even if the school converted to online education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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### **More Information**

For more information about how the VA is supporting veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit the [VA's coronavirus response website](#), or contact your [local](#) VA provider.