



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

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# Service Bulletin

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## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

<http://www.va.gov>

### VA Launches VAntage Point Blog

<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>

VA has launched its first official blog, opening a new line of communication between the department and its stakeholders. The blog, called *VAntage Point*, will be edited by VA's Director of New Media Brandon Friedman. The blog launched with two primary features: a main column of articles written each day by VA staff and a section comprised of guest pieces submitted by other stakeholders including employees and the public. Readers will be able to comment and participate on all articles.

The main column will initially be authored by two VA employees. VA staff writer Alex Horton, a former infantryman who began his writing career by blogging from Iraq, will address veterans issues, while Lauren Bailey, special assistant to the chief technology officer, will provide readers with the latest on VA's information technology initiatives meant to modernize the department. Both writers will interact with readers.

Since creating an Office of New Media in late 2009, VA has launched a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. Each major component of VA (health, benefits, and national cemeteries) has its own Facebook page and Twitter feed, while the department has simultaneously begun to roll out these platforms to all 153 VA medical centers. Currently, 55 medical centers maintain a presence on Facebook and 30 are operating Twitter feeds. The department currently has the largest Facebook subscriber base among cabinet-level agencies with over 70,000 subscribers.

## **VA Expands Support for Families of Low-Income Veterans**

<http://www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/SSVF.asp>

VA has announced a program designed to provide enhanced services to low-income veterans and their families who are at risk of being homeless. Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, VA will provide grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that will help break the cycle of homelessness among veterans at risk.

The program will deliver grants to community agencies for vocational and rehabilitation counseling, employment and training service, educational assistance and health care services. Agencies will also provide direct financial assistance for daily living, transportation, child care, rent and utilities and other expenses. Agencies may also propose funding for additional services in their supportive services grant application based on the specific needs of their communities and local veterans. VA officials will provide local agencies with the instructions necessary to apply for grants under the program. For additional information visit the internet site linked above.

Eligible veteran families include those who are residing in permanent housing, are homeless and scheduled to become residents of permanent housing within a specified time period, or who have left permanent housing and are seeking other housing that is responsive to such very low-income veteran family's needs and preferences.

## **FY 2010 VA Performance and Accountability Report Published**

<http://www4.va.gov/budget/report/>

On November 15th, 2010 VA published its FY 2010 Performance and Accountability Report (PAR). The PAR is VA's report card and contains FY 2010 performance targets and results achieved against those targets during FY 2010. It enables the President, Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and the public to assess VA's performance on behalf of America's veterans.

## **VA Announces Use of Standard Payment Rates for Some Non-VA Care**

[www.nonvacare.va.gov](http://www.nonvacare.va.gov)

VA will begin using Medicare's standard payment rates for certain medical procedures performed by non-VA providers on Feb. 16, 2011. The new adjustment was made in federal regulations and will affect the following treatments VA provides to veterans through contracted care: ambulatory surgical center care, anesthesia, clinical laboratory, hospital outpatient perspective payment systems, and end stage renal disease.

Veterans who are eligible for care will continue to receive the uninterrupted care they need. Non-VA doctors and facilities will still get paid for services they provide to eligible veterans but at rates set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

(CMS) Prospective Payment Systems (PPS) and Fee Schedules. Existing contracts will not be affected and the rule allows for new contracts using the new rates.

The pricing methodology changes are a result of a rule change to 38 CFR 17.56, the federal regulation that governs VA when paying medical claims for veterans treated in community facilities. VA is providing written notifications to veterans and non-VA providers. As additional information becomes available, it will be posted to the VA's "Non-VA Purchased Care" Web site, [www.nonvacare.va.gov](http://www.nonvacare.va.gov).

### **Department of Labor (DoL)**

<http://www.dol.gov/>

#### **DoL Launches Veterans Hiring Toolkit for Employers**

<http://www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit>

The U.S. Department of Labor has a new online toolkit to guide employers through the process for hiring veterans. The free toolkit is designed to assist and educate employers who have made the proactive decision to include veterans and wounded warriors in their recruitment and hiring initiatives.

Developed as part of the department's "America's Heroes at Work" initiative, the Veterans Hiring Toolkit features a six-step process pinpointing helpful tools for a business to design a veterans hiring initiative. These steps include creating an educated and welcoming environment for veteran employees; actively recruiting veterans, wounded warriors and military spouses; learning how to accommodate qualified veterans and wounded warriors in the workplace; and promoting an inclusive workplace to help retain veteran employees. The toolkit also helps employers navigate the numerous resources for hiring veterans available to them.



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