

CLASSIFICATION

24 January 22

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: National Guard Bureau and Department of Veterans Affairs Memorandum of Understanding in Support of National Guard Service Members

PURPOSE: Provide 54 States, Territories, and DC with the process and requirements for obtaining Vet Center services for eligible National Guard Service members

KEY POINTS:

- June 28, 2019, the National Guard Bureau (NGB) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in support of Presidential Executive Order 13822 addressing the complex challenges faced by transitioning Service members and Veterans.
 - MOU establishes a partnership between NGB and VA to provide services, such as RCS, for eligible National Guard (NG) Service members.
 - Services are provided through 300 Vet Centers (VCs), 83 Mobile Vet Centers (MVCs), and the Vet Center Call Center (877-WAR-VETS).
 - Decreases barriers associated with receiving care by providing services during non-traditional hours or in non-traditional settings.

- VC staff can provide on-site outreach, counseling, and referrals for NG Service members and their families during locally agreed upon drill weekends. Due to NG training schedules, VC staff will remain flexible in providing services, and will deliver those services during non-traditional hours when needed.
 - To schedule RCS support during drill weekends, the NG can connect with local VC staff via www.vetcenter.va.gov (search "Locations") or VC staff can connect with NG Behavioral Health contacts via www.nationalguard.mil/wrf. RCS support includes referrals to other available VA resources within the local community when individuals are not eligible for services from VA.
 - VC staff can provide direct counseling during drill weekends to eligible individuals, utilizing onsite MVC or space designated by NG unit/wing.
 - If Service members need more than readjustment counseling, VC staff can work with NG and Reserve units/wings and refer members to appropriate resources or other VA organizations (e.g., Veterans Health Administration).

- All eligible Veterans and Service members are encouraged to use VC services. Veterans and current Service members, to include NG and Reserve members, are eligible for services if any of the following applies:
 - Served on active duty in any combat theater or area of hostility.
 - Experienced a military sexual trauma (regardless of gender or service area).
 - Provided direct emergent medical care or mortuary services, while serving on active duty, to the casualties of war.

CLASSIFICATION

CLASSIFICATION

- Performed as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat zone or area of hostility.
 - Received Vet Center services prior to January 2, 2013 as a Veteran of the Vietnam Era.
 - Responded to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the President or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in an active duty status (Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act).
 - Current Reserve Component member assigned to a military reserve command in drilling status, including Active Guard Reserves, with a behavioral health condition or psychological trauma related to military service and has an adverse effect on their desired quality of life or hinders their adjustment to civilian life (National Defense Authorization Act 2021).
- VC readjustment counseling services may also be provided to family members of Veterans and Service members in three categories: (1) when it is found to aid the readjustment of the eligible Veteran or Service member; (2) to help cope with the deployment of a loved one; and (3) to provide bereavement counseling for families who experience the death of a loved while on active duty.
 - Will VC staff participate on all NG drill weekends?
 - No. There are more than 3,000 Army National Guard units and more than 90 Air National Guard wings drilling throughout a month. VC staff will be available as needed and requested.
 - Will VC staff see non-eligible Service members during drill weekend?
 - Yes, but for limited services. If it is known that the individual does not meet eligibility criteria for Vet Center services, they should be referred to internal NG Behavioral Health contacts or directly to other community resources. No Service member in crisis will be turned away for services by VC staff. Although the VC has specific eligibility criteria, if it is determined that a Service member is not eligible for Vet Center services, they can be seen for assessment and referral to community resources.
 - Will VC staff assist with benefits, education, or GI bill questions?
 - Yes. VC staff are knowledgeable about VA benefits and can answer basic questions as needed. They are not benefits experts though they can work to make appropriate connections to VA benefits staff.
 - Will VC staff share Service member information with NG unit/wing leadership?
 - No. Only in a situation where the Service member is in an immediate crisis and is a threat to himself/herself or others will this information be shared.

Prepared by: NGB-J1-WRF, MAJ Emily Vernon, 202-630-6538

CLASSIFICATION