

SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

# REPORT TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE



An Air Force F-15 Eagle flies in formation with a WWII-era B-17 during Sentry Eagle over Crater Lake, Ore., June 24, 2022. The exercise allows pilots to train against dissimilar aircraft and to practice aerial refueling and combat operations. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Penny Snoozy



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## ADVISORY COMMITTEE September 14, 2022

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Rebecca Cameron ..... Human Resources Manager  
Ana Potter ..... Aging Veteran Services Division Director  
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Derek Simmons..... Controller  
Cody Cox ..... Veteran's Home Loan Program Manager  
Troy Croff ..... Facilities and Construction Manager  
Nicole Hoeft ..... Communications Division Director  
David Kampff ..... Chief Information Officer



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## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, September 14, 2022 | 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Spirit Mountain Casino | 27100 SW Salmon River Hwy, Grand Ronde, OR 97347

ROOM: KALAPUYA B

**Meeting Materials:** Staff reports for individual agenda items, when available, can be found on the Committee's website by clicking on the following link:

<https://issuu.com/odva/stacks/38107bb40c054695831edf5634865ca4>

### I. WELCOME AND ADMINISTRATION – Business Meeting

- Call to Order – Chair James Gardner
- Pledge of Allegiance – Chair James Gardner
- Moment of Silence – Chair James Gardner
- Meeting Rules – Vice Chair Christine Gittins
- Committee Member Introductions
- Audience Introductions

### II. ODVA DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- ODVA Director, Kelly Fitzpatrick

### III. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Grand Ronde's Tribal Veteran Service Office – Ramona Quenelle, Tribal Veteran Service Officer
- ODVA's Work with Oregon's Tribes – Sheronne Blasi, Statewide Veterans Services Director
- Portland VA Community Care Updates–
  - Rachel Scarpelli, Associate Chief Nurse Executive, Community Care
  - Tracey Knight, Administrative Director of Community Care
  - Erin Kay, Program Specialist

### IV. OLD BUSINESS ITEMS

- Discuss updating By-Laws
  - Sub-Committees
- Continue to share with veterans that they can apply at any time to be an Advisory Committee member through the ODVA website. Applications remain in the queue for consideration for two years.
- Open for Committee Members

## V. NEW BUSINESS

- Topics for the next years meetings
  - Homelessness
  - VHA in Roseburg
  - VA updates from Boise, ID and Walla Walla, WA
- Locations for the next years meetings
- Open for Committee Members
- Next Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting:  
Date: Wednesday, December 7, 2022 | Time: 9:30 – Noon  
Location: Zoom

## VII. BUSINESS MEETING ADJOURNED

### TOWN HALL (Speakers Limited to 3 Minutes)

The town hall time is for individuals to bring up broader veteran community issues. Members of the community may also submit written public comments to the Committee at the following email address: [vaac@odva.state.or.us](mailto:vaac@odva.state.or.us)

## CONNECT WITH ODVA

### FIND ODVA

WEBSITE [www.oregon.gov/odva](http://www.oregon.gov/odva)

BLOG [www.oregondva.com](http://www.oregondva.com)

FACEBOOK [www.facebook.com/odvavet](https://www.facebook.com/odvavet)

TWITTER [@oregondva](https://twitter.com/oregondva) or [www.twitter.com/OregonDVA](https://www.twitter.com/OregonDVA)

### TALK TO US

ADVISORY COMMITTEE [vaac@odva.state.or.us](mailto:vaac@odva.state.or.us)

PUBLIC INFORMATION [ODVAinformation@odva.state.or.us](mailto:ODVAinformation@odva.state.or.us)

SUBMIT AN EVENT [www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Events.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Events.aspx)

SUBMIT A STORY [VetsNews@odva.state.or.us](mailto:VetsNews@odva.state.or.us)

### SIGN UP

EMAIL SUBSCRIBE & Vets News [www.oregon.gov/odva](http://www.oregon.gov/odva) (Under “Connect with ODVA then Agency Publications”)

LEGISLATIVE Page [www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Legislation.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Legislation.aspx)



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## Director's Message

### Kelly Fitzpatrick

#### **FY 2023-28 Strategic Plan**

I am pleased to share the agency's completion of the FY 2023 – 2028 Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) Strategic Plan. This plan is the dynamic blueprint for the continued evolution of the Department. The focus of this plan is to help ODVA become more agile and thus better able to respond to emerging needs of the Oregon veteran community. It does not change the direction we have been heading but increases the speed and depth at which we are able to achieve results.

We approached this plan through the lens of the Balanced Scorecard, working to ensure that we consider the four primary aspects of our duties. First, our focus is to serve our veterans, working effectively with our many partner stakeholders as we do so. Second, we strive to provide our employees with the best processes, proven technology, and equipment we can afford. Third, we invest in our employees to help them continually sharpen their skills so they can do their best work. Fourth, we keep our finances in order.

In this strategy, ODVA builds upon the agency's first strategic framework from 2014-2019 to dive further into the needs of the diverse veteran community, remove barriers that exist to accessing earned benefits and invest in core operational transformation needed to drive ODVA's strategy moving forward.

**Our mission** is to honor and serve all Oregon veterans and their families by aligning and delivering earned benefits and services that enhance and improve their lives in recognition of their service to our nation. **Our vision** is that all veterans and their families thrive in Oregon. **Our values** -- Stewardship, Excellence, Respect, Vision, Inclusivity, Commitment, and Equity -- guide our work in service to Oregon veterans and their families as intended at our founding.

We also developed this strategic plan with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at its core. Agency managers participated in training and discussions on DEI as we developed the foundation for this plan, ensuring that we challenged old norms as we strive to become an anti-racist culture with an affirming and welcoming environment for everyone. To keep this plan most effective in our ever-changing world, each year we will reflect on what we have accomplished the previous year, strengthen our intentions for the next four years, add a new fifth year, and select specific actions to hold ourselves accountable for the coming year.



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## Director's Message

### Kelly Fitzpatrick

#### **2023-25 Agency Request Budget**

In August, ODVA successfully submitted the 2021-23 Agency Request Budget to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). One of the primary focus areas of this budget cycle was to develop and propose policy option packages that funded resources in support of the implementation of the agency's FY 2023-28 Strategic Plan goals, including funding the agency's current IT modernization efforts. The full 2023-25 Agency Request Budget can be viewed on ODVA's website at: <https://www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Reports.aspx#Budget>

#### **Agency Highlights**

As the state has re-opened for in-person services, the agency has also reengaged outreach efforts across the diverse veteran community and partnerships. In this quarter, ODVA participated in multiple community Stand Downs and Yellow Ribbon events to introduce National Guard service members to veteran benefits they may be entitled to through their active duty service. The agency also conducted introductory trainings for new county and tribal VSO's and held the second annual Campus Veteran Resource Summit for campus veteran resource center coordinators. The Veteran Volunteer program also restarted efforts to recruit volunteers to help conduct outreach to Oregon aging veterans across the state. We were also proud to have partnered with the federal VA at their annual Caregiver Summit and participate in the Oregon Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) annual conference. More information about other agency engagements can be found within the program reports.

#### **New Staff**

On August 1, Jay DeFillipo joined the agency as the new Legislative Director. Jay has more than 38 years of military and legislative experience, serving 22 years in the active duty U.S. Army before working as a Department of the Army Civilian congressional liaison in Alaska.

Also in August, Michelle Lovejoy returned to the Oregon Military Department after serving as Interim Deputy Director. ODVA has begun the transition of welcoming back Deputy Director Sean O'Day to the position effective November 1, 2022. Sean, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves Judge Advocate General Corps, has been serving a yearlong deployment in Kuwait. ODVA is proud to support not only Oregon veterans, but those who actively serve in the Oregon Army and Air National Guard, and in the Reserves.



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## Director's Message

Kelly Fitzpatrick

I'm very proud of the work the entire ODVA team continues to do every single day. They continue to show great resilience and rise to every challenge in order to continue to serve and advocate for Oregon veterans and their families.



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## COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Nicole Hoeft, Director

### Communications

This quarter ODVA supported many diverse communication and outreach initiatives aimed at engaging with veterans and partners to increase agency program awareness, and drive veterans to services across diverse advocacy areas including:

- *Pride Month*: The agency celebrated Pride Month throughout the agency and promoted awareness of LGBTQ+ Veteran Program and services through support of outreach efforts with printed information and online promotion.
- *Veteran Volunteer Program*: Developed outreach materials and communication to recruit volunteers across the state.
- *Veteran Educational Bridge Grant*: Boosted regular communication about this veteran grant available to veterans currently participating in apprenticeships, On-the-Job training, or enrolled in higher education and using their GI Bill.
- *Veterans Services Grant and Houseless Coordinator services*: ODVA was joined Oregon Congressional Representative Peter DeFazio, Crossroads Communities, Lebanon Mayor Paul Aziz, and other community service organizations to tour the recently opened Applegate Landing, a 48-unit affordable housing complex for veterans with onsite supportive services in Lebanon. Crossroads Communities is an ODVA Veteran Services Grant recipient.
- *National Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month*: In September ODVA stood up the 'Connect. You're Not Alone' campaign to encourage veterans to connect to VA resources and other crisis, preventative and educational information aimed at preventing veteran suicide. This campaign also drives veterans to a new ODVA webpage developed to host the most current VA and state behavioral health resources available to veterans in crisis.
- *Portland Thorns Women Veterans Night*: On Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, ODVA and the Portland Thorns will celebrate Oregon's women veterans at the final regular season home match. A portion of ticket sales will be donated to the Oregon Women Veterans Fund.
- *The PACT Act*: Promoted the passage of the PACT Act, driving veterans to the federal VA's new PACT Act webpage for detailed information and linking readers to locating Veteran Service Offices across the state.





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## COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Nicole Hoeft, Director

- *Veterans Crisis Line:* Promoted Awareness of the new Veterans Crisis Line phone number (988, Veterans Press 1). Permanent links to this crisis line can be found on the footer of ODVA's homepage.
- *Senate Bill 1509 Ceremonial Bill Signing:* ODVA was honored to support the bill signing of SB 1509 which dedicates State Highway 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway in honor of the state's Japanese American World War II veterans.

### **Information Services**

This quarter Information Services continued on-boarding of new team members and recruiting efforts to fill key technical support positions with an eye toward the modernization of core systems within the agency.

***IT Projects:*** IT Modernization remains a primary focus of ODVA, and in July the agency finished instantiating its first IT Governance Committee. The purpose of IT Governance is to ensure that ODVA technology investments are aligned with the agency's strategic vision and set the priorities of which technology projects the agency can reasonably manage. Governance activities are targeted at understanding the issues and strategic importance of IT, enabling the agency to sustain its operations, and implementing the strategies required to advance IT in response to future needs of the agency and the veterans that we serve. Governance practices aim at ensuring that the expectations for IT are met and IT risks are mitigated.

***Strategic and Operational Planning:*** As part of the IT Governance process, ODVA has focused on establishing IT objectives from both a strategic and operational perspective. The committee is currently developing recommended priorities to ensure that the required IT assets are available and that new project initiatives are aligned with the direction of the agency.

Within this process and approach, ODVA Executive Leadership and IT Management are primarily focused on:

- Aligning IT strategy with a well-defined business strategy that is supported by clearly documented business processes;
- Ensuring that IT delivers against the strategy through clearly defined expectations and measurement;
- Directing IT strategy to balance investments between systems that support the enterprise as-is, as well as transform IT capabilities to enable the business to grow and support new programs and/or directives;



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## COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Nicole Hoeft, Director

- Making deliberate decisions about the focus of IT resources, including personnel, contracted services, hardware and software assets.

***IT Asset Management (ITAM):*** In December of 2021 ODVA hired its first IT Asset Manager and began establishing an IT Asset Portfolio focusing on current operations. Two categories of assets are included in this portfolio: hard assets and soft assets. Hard assets are the physical items of value, such as hardware, computing facilities, production applications and tools, and personnel. Soft assets include items such as data, services, capabilities, knowledge and skills.

Management of these assets involves maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of daily utilization. Many of the hard assets have a finite lifespan. Therefore, another responsibility of managing the IT Asset Portfolio is to properly retire assets that have reached the end of their useful life. Within the IT Asset Portfolio, it is also important to identify areas that require operational improvement. Deficiencies or sub-optimization of existing assets are identified, and incremental improvement strategies are developed.

### **Records and Information Management Services**

Records and Information Management Services continues to support the agency's records functions and mandates including the management of more than 100,000 military service discharge records for Oregon veterans. Requests for records can be made online or by calling ODVA.



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## AGING VETERANS SERVICES

Ana Potter, Director

### Report Regarding the State Veterans' Homes

Care at the Oregon Veterans' Homes is an earned benefit meant to provide first-class, long-term care at an affordable price exclusively to veterans, their spouses, and parents whose child died while serving in the Armed Forces. The Homes offer skilled nursing services to individuals who may need short term care for rehabilitation services or those who require long-term assistance to meet their needs.

To qualify for admission (beyond the basic qualification of veteran/spousal status) the individual must need 24-hour nursing care as recommended by their Primary Care Physician (PCP), and the USDVA must concur with the physician on this assessment. Skilled nursing includes individualized, goal-oriented care that includes comprehensive around-the-clock services, on-call physician coverage, medication administration, certified physical rehabilitation, and speech and occupational therapists.

Staff at the Oregon Veterans' Homes are dedicated to serving the medical needs of all veterans, including those with dementia and other memory related illnesses. ODVA is proud to have both of our Homes endorsed to provide memory care for our residents.<sup>1</sup> Staff in the memory care portion of the facility focus on the unique needs of each resident and family we serve. The care in this unit is a partnership among staff, residents, and their families. Beginning with the resident's life story and continuing with collaborative care planning, staff welcomes the involvement of residents and their families in all aspects of life in this department. Many different elements are used to contribute to the daily living and compassionate care of residents. One example of this is the Lebanon Veterans' Home's purchase of a Tovertafel<sup>2</sup>, an interactive multisensory machine with activities designed to help dementia residents develop or maintain skills in a fun and playful way by stimulating movement and social interaction with residents and staff.

Part of the Homes' affordability comes from an established benefit which allows veteran residents to combine private, federal, and/or Medicare or Medicaid funding to cover daily costs. Both Homes typically experience a higher than state average occupancy rate due primarily to the commitment to providing the highest quality of care at lower costs to veteran residents.

The cost of care for veterans varies between the two homes. The daily rate at The Dalles is \$238 for general care and \$245 for memory care. The cost of spouses is a bit higher; \$290 for general care and \$297 for memory care. The Lebanon home provides private rooms which increases the cost of care to a daily rate for veterans being \$316 generally and \$326 for memory care. Care for spouses costs \$343 generally and \$353 in the memory care portion.

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<sup>1</sup> There are over 130 nursing homes in Oregon, with only 11 who have an endorsement to provide memory care services. Of those 11, two are Oregon Veterans' Homes

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tover.care/uk/>



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## AGING VETERANS SERVICES

Ana Potter, Director

Daily rates include room, board, medication management and skilled nursing care, as well as amenities and activities. The cost of care is reviewed every year and any increases take effect on October 1<sup>st</sup> each year. In comparison, the average daily cost of nursing home care in Oregon as of October 1, 2021 is \$340 for general, non-memory care in a semi-private room, \$365 for a general, non-memory care in a private room, and \$423 for memory care.

The Oregon Veterans' Homes provide an environment filled with comfort and familiarity. For many veterans, the comradery and friendship they found in service is found again with fellow residents and staff. The Homes strive to honor traditions and provide an atmosphere entrenched in military culture.

There are many examples as to what sets our Homes apart from other nursing homes. Some of these are:

- Recognition honors and awards that residents, employees and volunteers received while in service by presenting them with their earned military awards in frames.
- Heightened awareness and activities regarding veteran holidays. This may include volunteer uniformed military members at events, coordinate trips to military bases, and ceremonies.
- Each home has a Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Table. This tradition is setting a separate table in honor of our prisoners of war and missing. The manner in which this table is decorated is full of special symbols to remember our brothers and sisters in arms.
- Both homes offer music therapy with personalized playlists, and massage therapy.

One of the most important ways the Homes' honor residents is the "Walk of Honor". When a veteran passes, a burial flag is draped over them while they are escorted out of the facility. Fellow residents and staff line the hallways to salute their fellow veteran and pay their respects. The flag is then folded in appropriate military protocol and presented to the family.

### **Impact of COVID-19:**

COVID-19 significantly impacted, and still continues to impact all long-term care facilities. Our veterans' homes are no exception.

The graph below shows the census at both homes prior to when COVID started to this year. As you can see, there has been a significant decrease in census at both homes.<sup>3</sup> The Lebanon Veterans' Home is increasing their occupancy on a quicker scale than The Dalles Veterans' Home. We believe this is due to a few key contributing factors such as the rural location of The Dalles, semi-private rooms (vs. private rooms offered in Lebanon) and staffing has been and continues to be challenging in rural areas.

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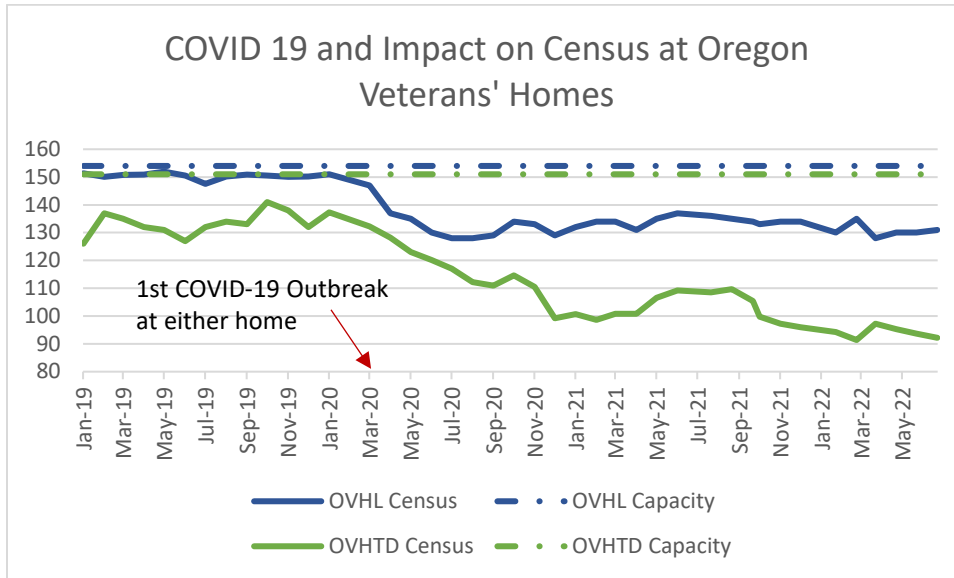
<sup>3</sup> Should be noted that the census was lower at OVHTD due to remodel project that was just completed prior to when COVID hit.



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## AGING VETERANS SERVICES

Ana Potter, Director



As of August 17, Lebanon Veterans’ Home had ten residents and two staff with COVID-19. In addition, since the start of the pandemic Lebanon has lost thirteen residents due to COVID or with COVID as a contributing factor. The total number of residents who have had COVID in the facility is eighty-four. The Dalles Veterans’ Home at this time has four staff with COVID-19. In addition, since the start of the pandemic Lebanon has lost six residents due to COVID or with COVID as a contributing factor. The total number of residents who have had COVID in the facility is forty-five.

Both homes have been, and will continue to encourage staff and residents to get vaccinated and receive all eligible booster shots for COVID-19. As you can see from the data below, we are above the national average in all populations.

	% of Residents Fully Vaccinated	% of Staff Fully Vaccinated
National Average	81%	59.3%
Lebanon Veterans’ Home	97%	85%
The Dalles Veterans’ Home	95%	89%

ODVA is especially thankful that 100% of the residents who reside in the memory care portion of both facilities are vaccinated.

### Other Key News

Lebanon Veterans’ Home:



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## AGING VETERANS SERVICES

Ana Potter, Director

There are a couple of physical improvements to this home. Construction is complete on the new activity room in the memory care portion of the facility. This is very exciting and has increased the activity space for these residents by 1,600 square feet. In addition to the physical room, ODVA purchased a Tovertafel sensory machine that helps residents with cognitive difficulties to once again be able to play all different types of games, as well as just sit and watch the koi fish swim on the floor or table from the overhead projector. The AV system in the activity room also features a 100-inch TV with personal headphones so that each resident can adjust the volume of the activity.

Additional physical improvements are the structural completion of the additional building in the back parking lot which has half the building for storage and the other half to be completed as a training room. This designated training space will allow Lebanon to seek approval for a certified nursing assistant (CNA) training program and will allow the facility more options for hiring CNA's, one of the hardest hit professions due to the pandemic.

In addition to the physical increase in size, Lebanon is also in the process of installing bi-polar ionization which works with the heating and cooling system to help decrease the spread of airborne viruses.

### The Dalles Veterans' Home:

Sarah Reed was hired as the new program director for The Dalles in February 2022. She has been enjoying getting to know the residents and staff the Home.

Recently, the facility was notified of a fire that was close to the facility and staff were instructed to get the residents ready in case an evacuation was necessary. Thankfully, evacuation was not necessary. This incident did allow staff at the facility to go through the procedures for a fire evacuation which was followed up with an after action review with the local emergency management personnel from the county. Director Fitzpatrick and ODVA staff in AVS and Communications also drafted communications to residents' families to alert them in case of evacuation. Since there was no actual evacuation, this was a useful emergency management exercise.

The Dalles has been providing their nursing assistant class every 6 weeks and is in the process of becoming approved to be a testing center. Weekly staff appreciation meals are provided to thank and honor the hard work and dedication of all staff in the facility.

The Dalles activity staff have some exciting activities planned over the next few months for residents including trick horses performing, a magic show and a luau. In addition to activities on site at the home, several favorite outings are taking place with the residents including a trip to the Casino, rides on the sternwheeler and fishing.

While COVID-19 is still impacting residents' lives, social activities at the home are slowly increasing as appropriate.



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## STATEWIDE VETERANS SERVICES

Sheronne Blasi, Director

### Campus Veteran Coordinator Program Update

The lifting of COVID restrictions on travel earlier this year opened up opportunities for Joe Mah, the Campus Veteran Coordinator (CVC) to get on the road to engage with Oregon's public Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). Some of the initial outreach opportunities included shadowing the Oregon Legislature's Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education (JTUSHE) which began a tour of Public Universities and Community Colleges. The committee facilitated listening sessions with campus leadership and students in order to meet with these populations and incorporate feedback into policy proposals. The CVC worked to make veteran and military serving professionals on campus aware of the opportunity to represent the voice of campus veterans, and share their experiences. These visits also allowed the CVC to visit Veteran Resource Centers (VRC) and speak with veteran-serving staff and student vets. To date, the CVC has visited 14 individual campuses with plans to visit more in the coming weeks. Campus visits have been valuable opportunities to connect with important partners in the higher education community and learn about the current needs of student veterans.

The opportunity to engage in campus visits over the past few months has had a number of positive impacts on the campus programs and the veteran-serving campus professionals. The CVC has been able to observe the activity in Veteran Resource Centers and the effectiveness of programs like peer mentorship and food pantries that campus coordinators have initiated. Campus visits had the additional benefit of getting the CVC out to more remote locations in Eastern and Southern Oregon where coordinators were glad to welcome the CVC to show off their work and discuss the unique needs of their student veterans. The CVC was also able to share resources for coordinators and students including the Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant and Veterans Educational Bridge Grant. Campuses that did not previously apply for a Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant indicated an interest in applying during the next round after speaking with the CVC.

In addition to visiting the various campuses, the CVC program hosted its second annual Campus Veteran Coordinator Summit on July 13-14, 2022. This event is a culmination of the quarterly meetings among the community of veteran-focused professionals that work at Oregon IHLs. The virtual event allowed this group to discuss successes and needs on their campuses, learn about resources, and connect in facilitated breakouts with a theme of "Maintaining Mental Health". Feedback was very positive and plans are being made for an in-person or possibly hybrid event for 2023.



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## STATEWIDE VETERANS SERVICES

Sheronne Blasi, Director

### **LGBTQ+ Veteran Coordinator Program: Pride 2022 Update**

LGBTQ+ Pride Month is celebrated annually in June to honor and celebrate the LGBTQ+ Community's work to achieve equal justice opportunities. This year, ODVA celebrated Pride month by serving and supporting LGBTQ+ Veterans with 12 separate events around Oregon.

More than half of Oregon's veterans are aged 65 or older. Wanting to target a key demographic, ODVA kicked off Pride Month with a presentation from the LGBTQ+ Coordinator as well as the Aging Veteran Services team presenting to Northwest Senior and Disability Services. This presentation was titled "LGBTQ+ Military History & LGBTQ+ Veteran Advocacy", and was designed to highlight specific services and support provided to Aging LGBTQ+ Veterans.

Following that event, the LGBTQ+ program partnered with the Portland VA Medical Center (VAMC) to provide two separate "lunch and learn" opportunities to VAMC employees about the history of LGBTQ+ veterans, as well as information about current USDVA and ODVA advocacy support.

Celebrating Pride takes many shapes and sizes, with Pride Festivals being the prime way to celebrate, honor, and engage with Oregon's LGBTQ+ veteran community and their families. For the Portland Pride Fest, ODVA partnered with the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, Portland Vet Center Counselors, County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs), and ODVA's Statewide Veteran Services Programs to offer a one-stop-shop opportunity to answer questions and address concerns. This collective group was nicknamed the "Veteran Village". The Veteran Village successfully engaged with hundreds of individuals over a two-day period and was successful in reaching veterans and families who were not aware of this targeted advocacy. Following Portland Pride, ODVA participated in Bend's Pride celebration, which again, connected LGBTQ+ veterans to their local CVSOs, as well as area schools to provide additional support while pursuing higher education.

In 2019 ODVA released "Breaking the Silence: An Oral History of LGBTQ+ Veterans and Service Members." (BTS). This groundbreaking film chronicles the lives and experiences of five LGBTQ+ Oregonians who served their country with honor-even through official military policy sought to





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Sheronne Blasi, Director

prohibit them from doing so. For Pride Month 2022, ODVA placed BTS on its homepage for online visitors to watch. June Pride Month concluded with a virtual showing of the BTS film following by a Q&A session with both the ODVA LGBTQ+ coordinator, and ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick.

### **LGBTQ+ Success Story:**

During a Pride Month in-person viewing of BTS, a veteran who identifies as queer seemed agitated and upset. The veteran did not want to talk to anyone about their service. When asked, the veteran shared that it was their belief that no one cared for them. The LGBTQ+ Coordinator reassured this veteran that we did indeed care and handed the veteran his business card.

The following week the veteran reached out to discuss pursuing a claim for disabilities due to the way that they were treated in the military, which included threats and physical violence because of their sexuality. Because of this advocacy, this veteran now has a claim pending for their earned benefits.

Following the submittal of this veteran's claim, the claimant said, "thank you for taking the time to listen to me, it shows me you care and gives me hope for a brighter future."



# **Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs**

## **Tribal Veterans Update**

**Sheronne Blasi, Director Statewide Veteran Services**  
**September 14, 2022**





## **12% VETERANS OF COLOR IN OREGON**

2% Asian, Pacific Islander | 4.3% Hispanic Or Latino | 1.6% Black | 1.1% Native American | 3% Multiracial



**NEARLY 10% OF  
OREGON VETERANS  
ARE WOMEN**

**MORE THAN HALF  
OF OREGON VETERANS ARE  
AGED 65 OR OLDER**



# History of Native American Service

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- Historically, Native Americans have served in the U.S. military at a higher rate (proportionally) than any other group.
- According to the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs:
  - From the Revolutionary War through the Civil War, American Indians served as auxiliary troops and as scouts.
- Roughly 12,000 Native Americans served in the military during World War I.



# History of Native American Service Con't

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- Over 44,000 Native Americans served between 1941 and 1945. The entire population of Native Americans in the United States was less than 350,000 at the time.
- Approximately 10,000 Native Americans served in the military during the Korean War.
- During the Vietnam War, more than 42,000 Native Americans served in the military, and over 90 percent of these Servicemembers were volunteers.



# ODVA Advocacy for Oregon Tribal Veterans

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- Annual training for Tribal Veteran Advocates on benefits and services to tribal veterans & their families
- Training, accreditation, & funding for Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSOs)
- Grants for targeted work with tribal veterans
- Program Coordinators at ODVA
- Participation in Govt to Govt meetings & outreach



# Training for Tribal Veteran Advocates

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- ODVA Tribal Veteran Advocate Conference since 2015
  - In partnership with USDVA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR)
  - Attended by those who work with and/or advocate for tribal veterans
  - Information on state and federal veteran's benefits
  - Culturally specific training and information



# 2022 Tribal Veteran Advocate Conference

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- In partnership again with USDVA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR)
- Was co-hosted this year with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Host nations were the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.
- Training on veterans' issues and programing, specific to tribal veterans and their culture





# Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSO)

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- Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSOs)
  - Somewhat different than Tribal Veteran Representatives
  - Accredited to file VA claims & appeals on behalf of veterans/eligible dependents
  - Have had three in Oregon to date
- TVSOs assist tribal veterans and their families in applying for earned benefits, and help provide access to other services and resources, in a culturally specific manner
- ODVA pass-through funding available to tribes for TVSO services
  - Annual financial support to expand & enhance tribal veteran services



# ODVA Grants Available to Tribes

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## *Veteran Services Grant*

- Competitive grants of \$25,000 - \$250,000
- For physical or behavioral health services, housing stability or homelessness, employment training, transportation, legal services, or other services

## *Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant*

- Approximately \$4,000 - \$5,000
- For efforts to raise awareness around behavioral health risks & supports, destigmatize asking for help, and prevention



# ODVA Grants Available to Tribes

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## *Rural Veteran Healthcare Transportation Grant*

- Administered by the Oregon Dept. of Transportation (ODOT), in partnership with ODVA
- Prior awards averaged \$35,000 - \$75,000
- To provide free rides for rural and highly rural veterans, to healthcare or behavioral healthcare appointments, or related services such as Rx drug pick-up
- Contact: Frank Thomas, Oregon Dept. of Transportation
  - [Frank.Thomas@ODOT.Oregon.gov](mailto:Frank.Thomas@ODOT.Oregon.gov)



# ODVA Grants Available to Tribal Veterans

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## Veteran Emergency Financial Assistance Grant

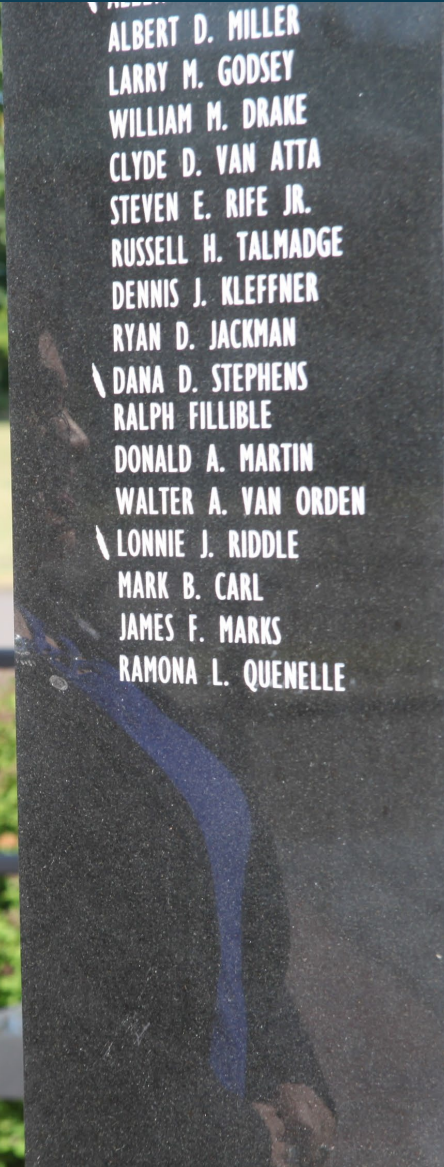
- Awarded monthly – emergency need based
- Tribal Veteran Services Officer or ODVA staff can assist with application
- Or the application can be completed by the veteran
- Contact Mackenzie Pritchett
- [Mackenzie.Pritchett@ODVA.Oregon.gov](mailto:Mackenzie.Pritchett@ODVA.Oregon.gov)

## Veteran Educational Bridge Grant

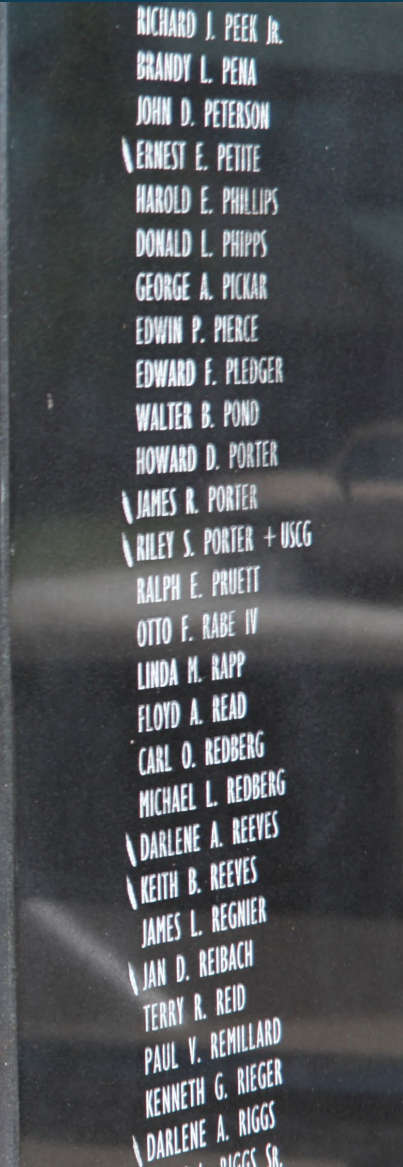
- Up to \$5,000 per student veteran
- Provides support to student veterans that find themselves unable to complete their academic programs on time, due to the unavailability of a required class
- Contact: Joe Mah, ODVA Campus Veteran Coordinator
- [Joe.Mah@ODVA.Oregon.gov](mailto:Joe.Mah@ODVA.Oregon.gov)



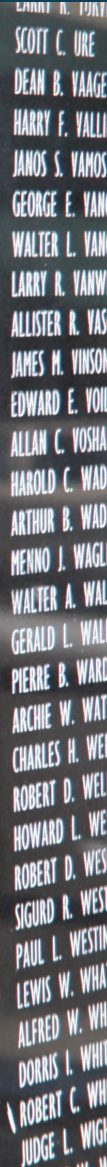
# Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSO)



ALBERT D. MILLER  
LARRY M. GODSEY  
WILLIAM M. DRAKE  
CLYDE D. VAN ATTA  
STEVEN E. RIFE JR.  
RUSSELL H. TALMADGE  
DENNIS J. KLEFFNER  
RYAN D. JACKMAN  
DANA D. STEPHENS  
RALPH FILLIBLE  
DONALD A. MARTIN  
WALTER A. VAN ORDEN  
LONNIE J. RIDDLE  
MARK B. CARL  
JAMES F. MARKS  
RAMONA L. QUENELLE



RICHARD J. PEEK JR.  
BRANDY L. PENNA  
JOHN D. PETERSON  
ERNEST E. PETITE  
HAROLD E. PHILLIPS  
DONALD L. PHIPPS  
GEORGE A. PICKAR  
EDWIN P. PIERCE  
EDWARD F. PLEDGER  
WALTER B. POND  
HOWARD D. PORTER  
JAMES R. PORTER  
RILEY S. PORTER + USCG  
RALPH E. PRUETT  
OTTO F. RABE IV  
LINDA M. RAPP  
FLOYD A. READ  
CARL O. REDBERG  
MICHAEL L. REDBERG  
DARLENE A. REEVES  
KEITH B. REEVES  
JAMES L. REGNIER  
JAN D. REIBACH  
TERRY R. REID  
PAUL V. REMILLARD  
KENNETH G. RIEGER  
DARLENE A. RIGGS  
RIGGS SR.



LENNY R. RYAN  
SCOTT C. URE  
DEAN B. VAAGE  
HARRY F. VALLI  
JANOS S. YAMOS  
GEORGE E. VAN  
WALTER L. VAN  
LARRY R. VANW  
ALLISTER R. VAS  
JAMES M. VINSON  
EDWARD E. VOI  
ALLAN C. VOSHA  
HAROLD C. WAD  
ARTHUR B. WAD  
MENNO J. WAGL  
WALTER A. WAL  
GERALD L. WALL  
PIERRE B. WARD  
ARCHIE W. WAT  
CHARLES H. WE  
ROBERT D. WE  
HOWARD L. WE  
ROBERT D. WES  
SIGURD R. WEST  
PAUL L. WESTI  
LEWIS W. WHA  
ALFRED W. WHI  
DORRIS I. WHIT  
ROBERT C. WH  
JUDGE L. WIG



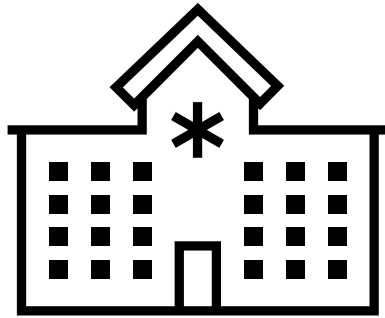
# QUESTIONS



OREGON DEPARTMENT  
of VETERANS' AFFAIRS

*Proudly serving veterans since 1945*

*Sheronne Blasi,  
Director Statewide Veteran Services  
Email: [Sheronne.BLASI@odva.oregon.gov](mailto:Sheronne.BLASI@odva.oregon.gov)*



# *VA Portland Community Care*

*Rachel Scarpelli MSN, RN*

*Associate Chief Nurse Executive*

*Community Care*

*Tracie Knight*

*Administrative Director*

*Community Care*

*Erin Kays*

*Program Specialist*

*Community Care*



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

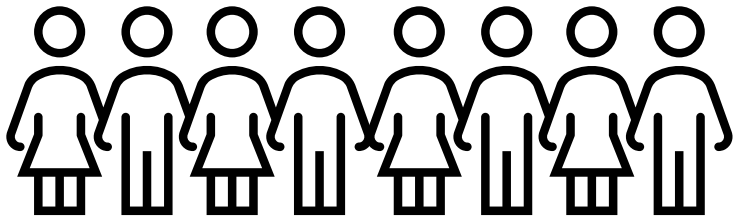


# What is Community Care?

Community Care is the hub for most Veterans receiving care in the community

Goal is to provide streamlined, coordinated care in a Veteran-centric, efficient and cost-effective manner

CC staff are the liaisons between the VA and the community

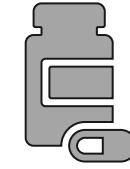


# Community Care Eligibility

- Eligibility
  - Access standards
    - Wait Time
      - Primary Care/MH: 20 days
      - Specialty Care: 28 days
    - Drive Time
      - Primary Care/MH: 30 minutes
      - Specialty Care: 60 minutes
  - Services Unavailable
  - Best Medical Interest

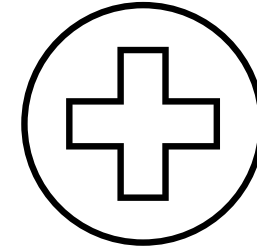


# Urgent Care Benefit



- Urgent care is for illness or injuries that require prompt attention, but are *not* life-threatening
- Some examples:
  - Flu like symptoms
  - Strep throat
  - Minor burns
  - Ear/skin/eye infections
- Unlimited visits annually, however co-pay may be required based on Veteran's priority group
- MUST be with an in-network provider
  - <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>

# Community Emergency Room



- If a Veteran is unable to reasonably get to a VA Medical Center for emergency room care or delay could result in adverse outcome
- Notification needs to happen within 72 hours from the start of the Episode of Care (EOC)
- Veteran/family or community facilities can:
  - VA Emergency Care Reporting portal  
<https://emergencycarereporting.communitycare.va.gov/#/request>
  - Call 844-724-7842
- Notification allows for VA assistance in coordination of care or transfer to the VA, if available

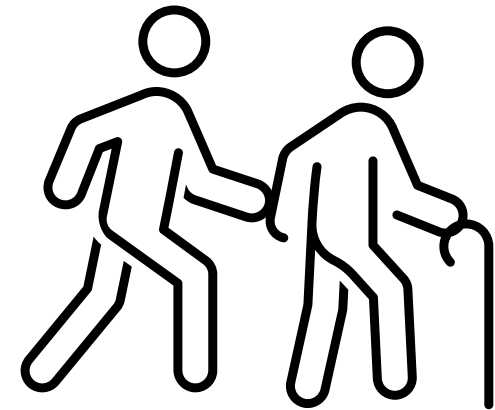
# Community Care Updates

## Veteran Scheduling Changes

- For some Community Care services, Veterans are now able to schedule their own appointments, with a VA approval letter & authorization number
- Letter provides Veterans several community provider options and ability to expedite scheduling
- Screening mammography, optometry, audiology, allergy, general surgery, are several examples of services Veterans may now be able to schedule themselves

## Complementary and Integrative Health (CIH) Services Change

- Acupuncture, Physical Therapy, Chiropractic Care, Massage Therapy
- Providers send additional care requests without any medical documentation to justify additional care, making it impossible to review
- Very high volume of requests being sent prematurely, leading to frustrations among providers and Veterans
- To ensure Veterans are receiving appropriate, high-quality care in the community, VA Portland will be following VA guidance for the number of care visits and respective time frames. **The time frame of the authorization must expire before the VA will review and consider approving additional visits.**



# Resources for Veterans

## [Whole Health](#)

- VA Whole Health is a cutting-edge approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. This means your health team will get to know you as a person, before working with you to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs, and goals.

## [Mindfulness Institute](#)

- The Mindfulness Institute is a new Whole Health program focused on improving the health and well-being of Veterans and Staff, through the promotion of evidence-based Mindfulness Training across the VA Portland Healthcare System.

## [Active Movement Classes](#)

- VA Portland offers a number of Whole Health-related active movement in-person and virtual classes which provides many health benefits. This includes Tai Chi/Qigong, Yoga and strength and conditioning, and open gym. ([Detailed class schedule.](#))

## [Nutrition Classes](#)

- Your VA dietitians offer many nutrition classes designed to help you achieve your health goals via virtual appointment. Virtual appointments make VA health care more convenient for you and other Veterans and caregivers. Virtual appointments enable you to quickly and easily meet with your VA care team through secure and private videoconferencing sessions. You can attend nutrition classes in a virtual medical room using the camera on your phone, computer, or tablet. There are NO Co-Pays for virtual appointments.

## [Pain Center, Center for Integrative Pain Care](#)

- VA Pain Center-Center for Integrative Pain Care (CIPC) at VA Portland is committed to providing the highest quality, innovative, multidisciplinary and evidence based advanced pain care to Veterans in chronic pain. We strive towards providing a comprehensive, biopsychosocial approach to pain management utilizing the Whole Health model of care delivery.

## [Weight Management](#)

- VA Portland can help you with your weight loss and health goals through weight management classes, medication and surgery. Commonly treated health conditions linked with being overweight and obese are diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cholesterol problems, gallbladder disease, female health disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer and sleep apnea. Losing 5-10% of your body weight may help decrease risk of these conditions.

Thank you for your service and for giving us the honor of serving you.

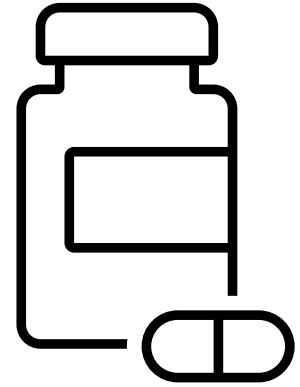
# Recent Community Care Questions

Veterans and providers are having difficulties getting prescriptions filled through the CCN Pharmacy Network

- We are working with TriWest's pharmacy team as well as Express Scripts to problem-solve
- Call our Community Care Call Center for assistance (Opt 2)

Concerns related to limited access / availability of community providers.

- We are experiencing this in many different specialties and geographic areas
- If it's a network issue, we discuss this with TriWest
- Access issues in the community
  - Limiting what diagnoses providers will schedule
  - Not accepting new patients, but seeing established patients
  - Limiting volume of accepted referrals
  - Community practice staffing concerns



# Questions Continued...

Community Care dental claims rejected/denied due to missing dental codes on the authorization

- Intent was always to cover the codes, but there were many dentists that received authorizations without them
- We are working with TriWest, Delta Dental, our VA and community dentists to resolve these
- If Veterans are experiencing billing issues related to this, please reach out to Erin [Erin.Kays@va.gov](mailto:Erin.Kays@va.gov) and Rachel [Rachel.Scarpelli@va.gov](mailto:Rachel.Scarpelli@va.gov)

Community providers refusing to join the VA Community Care network due to slow payments and low payment amounts from VA/TriWest

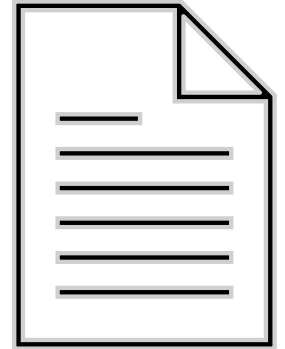
- Heard similar feedback at times
- Work with those providers and TriWest to facilitate problem-solving

Veterans getting billed vs VA getting billed

- Can be very challenging and time-consuming to problem solve billing issues
- Contributing factors can be provider error, authorization issue or TriWest error (or combination of these)
- Veterans should call Community Care Call Center, Opt 1

Medicare/ Medicaid/VA billing issues

- Often stems from misunderstanding, often between the community provider and the Veteran. Providers should be ensuring a VA authorization is in place, and Veterans should also ensure provider has a VA authorization and bills VA
- If Medicare/Medicaid are billed by the provider and pay, it can be lengthy and challenging to get this corrected. Provider needs to bill VA for services, once VA pays, community provider can reimburse other payor





# Helpful Information

Community Care Office: **360-759-1674**

1 for Claims or Billing questions

2 for Community Care appointments

3 for VA appointments

4 for Pharmacy questions

5 for Travel questions

6 for Enrollment questions

Community Care Fax: 360-905-1731

TriWest & TriWest Claims: **855-722-2838**

VA Pharmacy fax: 360-905-1767

POM Claims Status Line: 1-877-881-7618

Helpful links:

[Veterans Overview - Community Care \(va.gov\)](#)

[Provider Education and Training Resources - Community Care \(va.gov\)](#)

[Find VA Locations | Veterans Affairs](#) (For in-network providers, pharmacies, urgent care facilities, etc)

- Billing, Adverse Credit Reporting or Debt Collection Questions:

Ph: 877-881-7618

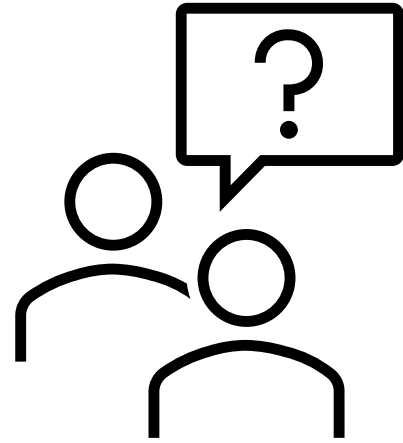
Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–9 p.m., ET

Option 1 for Veterans

Option 2 for Providers



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



Questions?