

Q&A: VETERANS AFFAIRS

What support is included for VA health care facilities and their COVID-19 response?

The CARES Act includes \$19.57 billion in funding to ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has the equipment, tests, telehealth capabilities and support services necessary to support veterans and the health care workforce at facilities nationwide.

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.

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 required.

I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I can't 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 can't 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 should continue to receive payments for care.

I use VA's prosthetics service and need to get my prosthetic adjusted, but am nervous to go into a VA facility because I have underlying conditions that make 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'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 caps?

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.

I'm a veteran receiving pension and health care benefits from VA. Will the emergency income from the CARES Act (the Recovery Rebate) 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.

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, the mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs. There will be up to 100% loan forgiveness options for a veteran-owned small businesses that protects/fully maintains their workers.

I have a VA-backed mortgage, am I protected against foreclosure during the COVID-19 emergency declaration?

Yes, under CARES Act Section 4022, federally backed mortgages, including those guaranteed or insured by the VA are protected from foreclosure for 60 days beginning on March 18, 2020. If borrowers are facing financial hardship, they can by requesting a forbearance for up to 6 months, with a possible extension for another 6 months, through their mortgage holder.

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% 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 don't meet the 90% occupancy rate or the 75% veteran occupancy rate requirements for per diem payment.

I run a State Veterans Home and I don't 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.

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

This bill 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 3 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 3 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 <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/>.

STUDENT VETERANS

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, VA will continue to make housing allowance payments to students using VA education benefits at the on campus rate, if the school converted to online education due to COVID-19.