

*Olmsted County
Veteran Services
Veterans Advocate Newsletter
August 2020*

Changes in Olmsted County Veteran Services!

The Veteran Services Office will only meet face-to-face with veterans if they have a scheduled appointment. We are currently not accepting walk-ins with clients until further notice. Our objective is to offer as many services as possible without face-to-face contact. We will do our best to schedule phone appointments as needed or to address needs through the mail, via email, or fax. Many of the stakeholders we are working with are also in the process of implementing similar practices. We are working together to find the best possible solutions that effectively comply with efforts while also minimizing the impact on our veterans and their families.

Public: All visitors in Olmsted County government buildings will need to wear masks in public spaces even if six feet of distance can be maintained. When our veterans come into the building the expectation is, they are wearing a mask (most veterans are wearing a mask to include the younger population). However, there is an exception on this:

**The face mask requirement in Olmsted County buildings does not apply to:
Individuals unable to wear a face covering due to medical, disability, or developmental reasons.
Individuals speaking to someone who is deaf or hard of hearing and requires the mouth to be visible to communicate.**

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Emails:

Admin: Karen Applen, applen.karen@co.olmsted.mn.us

Supervisor and Service Officer: Nathan Pike, pike.nathan@co.olmsted.mn.us

Service Officer: Jennifer Shumaker, shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us

Service Officer: Ashley Laganieri, laganieri.ashley@co.olmsted.mn.us

VA Simplifies Travel Reimbursement System

VA rolls out simplified travel reimbursement system for Veterans, beneficiaries

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is rolling out a new system in July for Veterans and eligible beneficiaries to submit and track transportation reimbursement claims using VA's secure web-based portal, [Access VA](https://www.va.gov/covid19screen/) <https://www.va.gov/covid19screen/>.

The Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS), which is accessible 24/7, 365 days a year, will simplify how [eligible Veterans and beneficiaries](https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/) <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/> claim mileage reimbursement for travel to and from both VA health care or VA authorized non-VA health care service locations.

“VA is working diligently to find new ways to innovate and simplify how we serve Veterans and their beneficiaries,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Streamlining the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System will help our Veterans get their travel reimbursements more securely and efficiently.”

BTSSS enables Veterans and caregivers to submit claims for reimbursement of costs from a personally owned vehicle, common carrier, meals and/or lodging, and other travel related expenses such as tolls, parking and luggage.

The national implementation across [Veterans Integrated Service Networks \(VISN\)](https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/map.asp?dnum=1) <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/map.asp?dnum=1> will run in phases through November. The first phase will start in July and includes VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, Kansas City VA Medical Center, Bay Pines VA Health Care System, Bay Pines, FL and Minneapolis VA Health Care System. The implementation will continue in phases beginning on the following dates:

September 8: VISN's 1, 9, 12, 17, 21, 22

October 5: VISN's 2, 6, 10, 15, 20

November 2: VISN's 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, 19, 23

As BTSSS goes live, the use of kiosks will be discontinued however, in person claims and hard-copy submissions are still available. For more information on BTSSS and eligibility, visit the [VA Travel Pay Reimbursement](https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/webpage) <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/webpage>.

LAOC / IMAA FREE LEGAL CLINIC
MONTHLY ON THE 2ND AND 4TH WEDNESDAY
12:00 TO 3:00 PM
2500 VALLEYHIGH DR. NW
ROCHESTER, MN 55901

This legal clinic is an opportunity to **meet one-on-one virtually** with an attorney from Legal Assistance of Olmsted County to ask questions, discuss your legal options, and get brief legal advice on your legal matter. The attorney at the clinic does not become the attorney representing the case.

Clinics are offered **twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays** between 12:00 and 3:00 p.m. via **phone**. Pre-registration is encouraged as the meetings are via phone.

To register for the next available clinic, please call or email Nisha Kurup, 507-289-5960, ext. 110 or Nisha.kurup@imaa.net. Interpretive services are available.

Next Available Clinics:

August 12th, August 26th

NEW IMMIGRATION CLINIC AUGUST 14!

Call IMAA to register now!

10 am to 1 pm. Register now.



Areas of Advice Offered:

- Divorce
- Custody
- Child Support
- Parenting Time/Visitation
- Landlord Tenant Disputes
 - Eviction
 - Harassment
- Domestic Abuse
- Immigration
- Financial

Advice will not be offered on any CHIPS cases or if you already have an attorney retained.

Clinics are intended for people below the area median income without access to an attorney.

For More Information:

Legal Assistance of Olmsted County

1700 North Broadway Avenue
Suite 124, Entrance A
Rochester, MN 55906

(507) 287-2036

Info@laocmn.org

Visit us on the web: www.laocmn.org



Veteran Jolene Simmons (left) working with Stacey Kloek (right).

Finding a Positive Way Forward

U.S. Army veteran Jolene Simmons is a survivor of Military Sexual Trauma (MST). After decades of depression, she finally found life-changing support for veterans at LSS.

"I walk out of my LSS support group and it's like my feet aren't even touching the ground," Jolene said.

In the last ten years, LSS provided veterans and their family members with 21,820 hours of mental health counseling.

Minnesota Service C.O.R.E.

SERVICES FOR MINNESOTA'S VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. responds directly to the challenges veterans and their families face across the state by bringing casework, caregiver support, financial counseling, housing stability and behavioral health to their doorstep. Minnesota veterans and their families often experience challenges, from reintegration and managing finances to building a support network and addressing mental health or substance use.

- Wilder Research (2015) found that 66% of statewide veteran respondents reported that there were no behavioral health services available in their area.
- In 2018 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) found increased suicide rates among veterans ages 18 to 34; female veteran suicide rates were 1.8 times higher than females who were not veterans.

Through the Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. program, a caseworker connects each veteran, and their family, to existing programs and facilitates access to informal supports, existing benefits and available services wherever possible. When barriers to access, such as cost, distance, or appointment availability are identified, or when these services are not otherwise covered, they are provided through the LSS C.O.R.E. program.

LSS Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. by the numbers:*

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019
Veterans Served	575	748	822	659

LSS C.O.R.E. services reached veterans in 70 of 87 Minnesota counties in 2019. 99% of veterans report satisfaction with LSS C.O.R.E. services.

* MDVA fiscal year runs July through June each year.

Our Services

Our free, confidential services include trauma-informed care; caregiver respite and support; financial counseling; individual, family and couples counseling; housing services for veterans experiencing homelessness; and more.

For more information call:
1.844.LSS.CORE
(1.844.577.2673)

www.lssmn.org/veterans

Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS).

Minnesota Service C.O.R.E. - Casework, Outreach, Referral and Education

August 1st!!

DMC Rochester is not currently included in this contract, but they are smoothing a process to get any patient there who needs the specialty care that Mayo has to offer.

We received some good news late last week. Optum, our community care network contractor, has executed a contract with the Mayo Health Care System.

High-level Mayo VA Community Care Network overview:

- Effective date of the contract is August 1, 2020. After Optum has transmitted Mayo provider/facility data to VA systems we will be able to send referrals.
- This contract will include the following services:
Behavioral Health, Professional Services, Dialysis, General Acute Care, Home Health, Hospice, Critical Access and Rural Health Clinic.

This represents years of work and consistent, passionate advocacy from many of the Congressional offices, County Veteran Service Officers and Veteran Service Organizations.



PTSD Support Group

SEMCIL, and Olmsted County Veteran Services is offering a support group for Veterans that have been diagnosed with PTSD, or those who have signs and symptoms of PTSD, and their family members. Sometimes the most painful injuries aren't physical. Whether it's PTSD, TBI, combat stress, or any other mental health condition, we're here to help you get through it. The group will be facilitated by Jennifer Shumaker, Veteran and Olmsted County Veterans Service Officer.

CANCELLED

Thursday, August 27

630pm-800pm

VFW

2775 43rd Street NW

Rochester, MN 55901

Jennifer Shumaker

(507) 328-6324

shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us

LOCAL MEETINGS

Some organizations have resumed meetings. Call each one respectively for more information.

Rochester American Legion Post 92

(507)282-1322
915 21st Ave SE
Rochester, MN 55904
3rd Tuesday of each month
7pm
Auxiliary Unit 92
3rd Tuesday of each month
5:30pm
Sons of the American Legion
2nd Thursday of each month
6PM
Legion Riders
3rd Thursday of each month
7pm

Rochester VFW Post Meeting

(507) 289-9818
2775 43rd St. NW
Rochester, MN 55901
2nd Tuesday of each Month VFW Post 1215
7pm
Marine Corps League
2nd Tuesday of each month
7pm

Byron American Legion Post 119

(507) 775-6871
505 Frontage Road NW, Byron, MN
3rd Monday of the month
7pm

Vietnam Veterans of America

(507) 990-1347
Meets 4th Monday each month
at 7:00pm,
Vietnam Veterans Spouse Support Group
Meets 4th Monday each month
At 7:00pm
Thor Detachment 606 Marine Corp League Meeting
4th Tuesday of the month, 7pm
MOPH
3rd Thursday of the month 6pm
VFW Post 1215
2775 43rd St NW, Rochester, MN 55901

Stewartville American Legion Post 164

(507) 533-9281
1100 2nd Ave NW, Stewartville
Meeting 3rd Monday each month, 7:30pm

Stewartville VFW Post 8980

(507) 533-9281
1100 2nd Ave NW, Stewartville
Meeting 1st Monday each month, 7pm

DAV Meeting

(507) 773-5055
1652 Hwy 52 N, Rochester, MN 55901
2nd Monday, of each Month Rochester's Elks Lodge
5:30pm dinner, meeting at 6:00pm

Korean Veterans

Every Monday at Grandmas Kitchen
1514 N Broadway, Rochester, MN 55906
(Silver lake plaza)
8 AM

Kasson American Legion Post 333

(507) 634-4353
212 West Main Street , Kasson, MN 55944
Third Thursday of the month, 8pm

Chatfield VFW Post 6913

(507) 867-3144
9- 2nd St SW, Chatfield, MN
2nd Monday of the month 7:00pm

Eyota American Legion Post 551

(507) 545-2688
2nd Monday each month 6:30pm
11 Madison Ave NW
Eyota, MN 55934
Legion Riders
4th Wednesday each month 7:30pm

Pine Island American Legion Post 184

(507)356-8991
2nd Monday of the month 7PM
108 1st Ave SE
Pine Island, MN

Oronoco VFW Post 9647

(507) 367-4635
First Tuesday of each month 7pm
Auxiliary meeting same time, separate meeting
5 MN Avenue S
Oronoco, MN 55960

Dodge Center American Legion Post 384

(507) 633-6420
401 Highway St W
Dodge Center, MN 55927
2nd Monday each month 7pm

“To promote the interests and welfare of veterans, their dependents and survivors and to enhance their quality of life through counseling, claims assistance, education, advocacy and special projects.”

Veteran Services
2100 Campus Drive
SE, Suite 200
Rochester, MN 55904

