



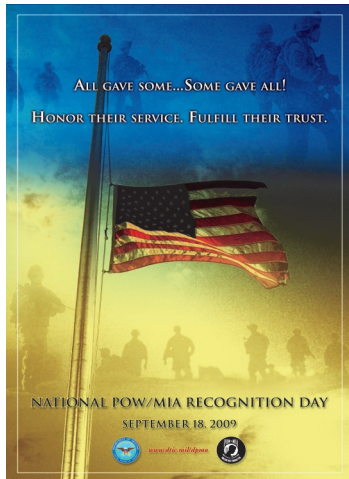
Veteran's Advocate

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POW/MIA Recognition Day

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is traditionally observed on the third Friday of September and this year the day will be commemorated on September 18th. Since WWI more than 140,000 Americans have been captured and held as POWs and there are more than 88,000 warriors who are still unaccounted-for from past conflicts. Ceremonies are held throughout the U.S. and around the world at military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools, churches, and police and fire departments.



The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office offers at no cost various size posters up to 11 x 17 inch that commemorates this day. POW/MIA Recognition Day posters highlighting this year's observance are available for order online at www.dtic.mil/dpmpo/Posterform.htm or by phone at (703) 699-1131. Past years' posters are also available. To order posters by mail, send a request to DPMO, Attn: Posters, 241 18th St. S., Suite 800, Arlington, VA 22202. Additional information that may be useful for event planners that wish to organize a POW/MIA Recognition Day event locally can be found at www.dtic.mil/dpmpo/powday/index2009.htm.

POW/MIA VA Presumptive POW Diseases



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is amending its adjudication regulations to establish a presumption of service connection for osteoporosis for former Prisoners of War (POWs) who were detained or interned for at least 30 days and whose osteoporosis is at least 10% disabling. The amendment implements a decision by the Secretary to establish such a presumption based on scientific studies. VA is additionally amending its adjudication regulations to establish a presumption of service connection for osteoporosis for POWs who were detained or interned for any period of time, have a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and whose osteoporosis is at least 10% disabling. This amendment reflects statutory provisions of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008. Effective Date for the amendment is September 28, 2009.

Former American prisoners of war (POWs) are eligible for special veterans benefits, including enrollment in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care for treatment in VA hospitals and clinics without copayments as well as disability compensation for injuries and diseases that have been associated with internment.

Studies have shown that the physical hardships and psychological stress endured by POWs have life-long effects on health and on social and vocational adjustment. These studies also indicate increased vulnerability to psychological stress. The laws on former POW benefits recognize that military medical records do not cover

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VA's Suicide Prevention Program Adds Chat Service

WASHINGTON (August 31, 2009) - The Suicide Prevention campaign of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its outreach to all Veterans by piloting an online, one-to-one "chat service" for Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet.

Called "Veterans Chat," the new service enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If a "chatter" is determined to be in a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the person to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.

"This online feature is intended to reach out to all Veterans who may or may not be enrolled in the VA health care system and provide them with online access to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline," said Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "It is meant to provide Veterans with an anonymous way to access VA's suicide prevention services."

Veterans, family members or friends can access Veterans Chat through the suicide prevention Web site (www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) There is a veterans tab on the left-hand side of the website that will take them directly to Veteran resource information. On this page, they can see the Hotline number (1-800-273-TALK), and click on the Veterans Chat tab on the right side of the Web page to enter.

Veterans retain anonymity by entering whatever names they choose once they enter the one-on-one chat. They are then joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller.

If the counselor decides the caller is in a crisis, the counselor will encourage the Veteran to call the Suicide Prevention Hotline, where a trained suicide prevention counselor will determine whether crisis intervention techniques are required.

The pilot program, which has been in operation since July 3, has already had positive results. In one instance, the online counselor determined that a Veteran in the chat required immediate assistance. The counselor convinced the Veteran to provide the counselor with a home telephone number and then remained in the chat room with the Veteran while the hotline staff called the number and talked to the Veteran's mother. The hotline counselor worked with the Veteran's mother to convince the Veteran to be admitted to a medical facility for further treatment.

"The chat line is not intended to be a crisis response line," said Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's National Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the VA medical center in Canandaigua, N.Y., where VA's trained counselors staff the chat line 24 hours a day, seven days a week. VA's suicide prevention hotline is also staffed continuously.

"Chat responders are trained in an intervention method specifically developed for the chat line to assist people with emotional distress and concerns," Kemp said. "We have procedures they can use to transfer chatters in crisis to the hotline for more immediate assistance."

Both Veterans Chat and the VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline have been established under the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which was established through collaboration between VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Since becoming operational in July 2007, VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline has received more than 150,000 calls, resulting in 4,000 rescues.

Veterans Office closed and no veteran's van service on Labor Day, Monday, September 7th!

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periods of captivity. For many diseases, unless there is evidence of some other cause, VA disability compensation can be paid on the basis of a presumption that a disease present today is associated with the veteran's captivity or internment.

For POWs detained for 30 days or more, such eligibility covers any of the following illnesses that are found at a compensable level (at least 10 percent disabling): avitaminosis; beriberi; chronic dysentery; cirrhosis of the liver; helminthiasis; irritable bowel syndrome and malnutrition, including associated optic atrophy. Also covered are: pellagra and any other nutritional deficiency; peptic ulcer disease; and peripheral neuropathy, except where directly related to infectious causes. Several categories of diseases are presumptively associated with captivity without any 30-day limit: psychosis; any anxiety state; dysthymic disorders; cold injury; post-traumatic arthritis; strokes and common heart diseases.

Spouses of veterans who die as a result of service-connected disabilities are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation. Spouses of former POWs who were rated 100 percent disabled and who died of a condition unrelated to their service also may be eligible, depending on the date of death and how long the veteran held the 100 percent disability rating. Those non-service-connected deaths prior to October 1999 are covered if the former POW had been 100 percent disabled for at least 10 years. More recent non-service-connected deaths are covered under a law that provides the benefit when the former POW was 100 percent disabled for a year or more.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED