

## **VERY IMPORTANT INFO REGARDING TRICARE, RAO AND VA**

TRICARE-----This Friday is the final day for enrollment of you or your dependents into the TRICARE SELECT Program, that we have been advising on for the past 3 months. Failure to enroll can result in you not being able to obtain TRICARE services if you are select eligible, beginning 1 Jan 2021.

RAO----- Will be closed on 26,27 and 30 November, in observance of Thanksgiving and Bonifacio Day holidays.

VA----- Yesterday we attended a very informative and educational teleconference with VA Manila. Below are some pointers on how they are thinking out of the box, to help serve us, which were never considered back in BC. (Before Covid) They expect to be back to about 85% strength beginning next week. Some new ways of doing business are becoming available through the leadership of Tracy Betts, Dan Gutkoski and Connie Santos. Things like telephone appts and Video Appts. Big thumbs up to them for finding a way to use tech to serve us.

Also briefly discussed was the recent news regarding the China Virus Vaccine. They anticipate getting a limited quantity of it once FDA approves it. There are a lot of considerations they need to make to administer the program and are already purchasing the equipment to do it. One thing is the vaccine must be kept at -70 Celsius (-94 F), so they have already contracted for that equipment. Another consideration is portability, as stated above the vaccine must be maintained at the very LOW temp so we will have to go to it, vice it coming to us. Another part of it is, it will require 2 vaccinations about 6 wks apart, so they have to be sure the vets selected for it will make both appts. Transpo is normally the biggest problem with appts, so having a few thoughts on how RAO might be able to come up with an idea to take that out of the equation, more on this later. The biggest part of the vaccine program is that you will have to be eligible to receive care at VA Manila to be eligible for the vaccine. That basically means you have to have a service connected injury/illness, as is mandated by congress to receive care at VA Manila. Before the questions start let me say "THIS PROGRAM IS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS ONLY". VA is not authorized to provide care for Family members in the Philippines except on rare occasions. There is a remote possibility that somewhere in the future TRICARE will cover the vaccine. They already do so for some vaccines and hopefully this will follow suite. TRICARE also currently covers PCR TESTING WITH STRICT PARAMETERS. As I said at the beginning, nothing will happen on the vaccine until FDA approves it and then VA will announce eligibility and procedures, so please hold your comments and questions until we know more, this is just a heads up, thanks and stay safe.

## Manila VA Regional Office

While the Regional Office remains closed to in-person visitors at this time, we are pleased to announce that you can now schedule a telephonic or virtual appointment for your benefit needs.

Use the website link to schedule your appointment online:

<https://v2.waitwhile.com/book/vamanila>

A representative will contact you on the date and time you scheduled.

**Alternative ways to reach us:**

- **ONLINE INQUIRY:** <https://iris.custhelp.va.gov/app/ask>
- **ONLINE SUBMISSION:** <http://www.va.gov> (sign in with DS Logon, My HealtheVet, or ID.me)
- **PHONE:** #MyVA (#6982) or 028-550-3888, Toll Free 1-800-1888-5252, Option 1 for Regional Benefits Office (Mondays-Fridays 8:00 am to 12:00 pm) *Effective November 23, 2020, phone agents will be available until 3:00 pm.*
- **FAX:** 028-550-3942 (with domestic long-distance charges); #MyVA (#6982) or 1-800-1888-5252 and dial 3942 once you hear the voice prompt (no domestic long-distance charges)
- **MAIL:** Department of Veterans Affairs Claim Intake Center PO Box 4444 Janesville, WI 53547-4444
- **OTHER VA NUMBERS:**
  - Manila Outpatient Clinic, #MyVA (#6982) or 028-550-3888, Option 2
  - VES Exams, #MyVA (#6982) or 028-550-3888, Option 3
  - FMP-PHONE, #MyVA (#6982) or 028-550-3888, Option 4
  - FMP-FAX, 028-550-3943 (with domestic long distance charges); #MyVA (#6982) or 1-800-1888-5252 and dial 3943 once you hear the voice prompt (no domestic long distance charges)
  - Other U.S. VA Toll Free Numbers, #MyVA (#6982) or 028-550-3888, Option 5

**VA Website:** <http://www.va.gov>

**VA Forms:** <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/default.asp>

**Online VA Federal Benefits Handbook:**

[https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book.asp](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp)

We are announcing a new **local fax number** for the **Foreign Medical Program (FMP)**. You can now fax your FMP claim and supporting documents

**without international costs.**

- If you are calling from inside the Metro Manila, dial **8-550-3943**.

- If you are calling from outside of the Metro Manila, you have the following options:

- } **028-550-3943** (*with domestic long-distance charges*)

- } **#MyVA** (#6982) or **1-800-1888-5252** and dial **3943** once you hear the voice prompt (*no domestic long-distance charges*)