

TDVS Benefits Bulletin
22-10

[TDVS Updates](#)
[VA and Veteran Benefit Updates](#)
[Practice Like a Pro](#)
[Advocate Spotlight](#)

This month's bulletin is 959 words and will take less than 4 minutes of your time.

1 big thing: TDVS will host first town hall

A graphic for a town hall event. On the left, a dark blue background contains the text "TN DEPT. OF VETERANS SERVICES" in white, followed by "TOWN HALL" in large, bold, white letters. Below this, white text reads: "Come out to hear from TDVS Commissioner Tommy Baker and other community leaders. Ask questions, share your story, and make sure your voice is heard!". At the bottom left, it says "OCTOBER 20, 2022" with a circular icon containing three stars, followed by "5:00 - 7:00 PM" and "119 Riverside Dr, Memphis, TN". On the right side of the graphic is a photograph of a man in a military uniform, wearing a cap and saluting with his right hand. The name "MITCHELL" is visible on his uniform. The background of the photo is blurred green foliage.

TN DEPT. OF
VETERANS SERVICES

TOWN HALL

Come out to hear from TDVS Commissioner Tommy Baker and other community leaders. Ask questions, share your story, and make sure your voice is heard!

OCTOBER 20, 2022  5:00 - 7:00 PM
119 Riverside Dr, Memphis, TN

TDVS Updates

Training Through End of Calendar Year

- October Initial Accreditation Training October 17th – 21st
- November Lunch and Learn, November 9th, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST – TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD)
- Annual Examination, Friday, November 18th or Monday, November 21st
- December Lunch and Learn, December 14th, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Regulatory Updates

VA extended eligibility for legacy participants in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance of Family Caregivers (PCAFC or Caregivers) through September 30, 2025 in an [Interim Final Rule](#).

- **VA also [expanded Caregivers](#)** to eligible Veterans and family caregivers of all eras, effective October 1st.

I'd like more: Here are the fits and starts of the PCAFC Program in a TDVS [Fact Sheet](#).

Service Members, Veterans and Their Families (SMVF) Suicide Prevention

VA's 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention [Annual Report](#) documents decreases in Veteran suicide deaths and suicide rates during 2019 and 2020.

- **Why it matters:** This report includes Veteran suicide information for two decades, from 2001 through 2020. It also evaluates Veteran suicide during the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yes but: Tennessee's Veteran suicide rate is too high. It's higher than the national rate and higher than peers across the Southeast. You can get Tennessee State-level Veteran Suicide Data [here](#).

You can make a difference: Here are tools that allow you to make a difference.

- [Psych Armor Learning Opportunities](#)
 - S.A.V.E. - **S**igns of suicide, **A**sking about suicide, **V**alidating feelings, **E**ncouraging help and **E**xpediting treatment
- [Tennessee's Efforts to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families](#) - March 2021 Monthly Training
- [VSO's Role in Suicide Prevention](#) - June 2021 Monthly Training
- [VA S.A.V.E.: A Review of Suicide Prevention Efforts](#) - March 2022 Monthly Training

Here's a quick recap of available resources --

- [Veterans Crisis Line \(988 or 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1\)](#) – Use when confronted with an immediate need for intervention.

- [Regional Directors](#) at the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) are a resource for training and suicide prevention, intervention and postvention resources for your organization, but not when confronted with an immediate need for intervention.
- [Suicide Prevention Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator \(CEPC\)](#) at VA are federal partners that serve as subject matter experts for community-based suicide prevention and integration of suicide prevention education throughout your community.

Debt Management Center Updates

VA's Debt Management Center (DMC) took several actions in response to the national emergency concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are a few updates from DMC --

- Veterans currently in a hardship suspension status will have it extended through December 31st.
- DMC has begun referring delinquent debts to the Treasury Department for collection. Veterans have 60 days to contact DMC for help to avoid referral to Treasury.

Contact the Debt Management Center 1-800-827-0648 or visit DMC's website on VA.gov for assistance.

VA Expands Eligibility for VA Health Care Under PACT Act

On October 1st, VA expanded eligibility for VA health care for certain Veterans of the Gulf War and post-9/11 era. This follows an expansion to Vietnam-era Veterans who served in certain locations such as U.S. or Royal Thai base in Thailand.

- **Why it matters:** Veterans who did not previously enroll in VA health care now have a 1-year window to enroll if they –
 - Served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, or
 - Served in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998, and
 - Were discharged or released from active service between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013.

Check out TDVS's [PACT Act Toolbox](#) for the latest tools, information, and resources.

Practice Like a Pro

Effective advocates help Veterans obtain supporting evidence – often a difficult task.

- **Why it matters:** Frequently, Veterans have private medical evidence that can support their claim. Here are best practices to help get private record without a fee:
 - Keep copies or bookmarks to Records Authorization for Release forms for hospitals or providers in your area. Assist Veterans in completing and have records returned to your office. In some cases, this may avoid a fee.
 - Assist Veterans in obtaining records online and help them print to avoid a fee.

Obtaining and reviewing private medical evidence without the use of VA Form 4142 and 4142a will not only speed the claim but also ensure evidence provided to VA is relevant and supports the Veteran's claim.

Advocate Spotlight

TDVS's partnership with the Nashville RO benefits a Veteran and results in award of Aid and Attendance (A&A).

- **Why it matters:** VA received a claim for Special Monthly Compensation (A&A) in June, however the Veteran did not have a 100% s/c disability. A Nashville RO employee noticed dementia in the Veteran's medical records and solicited a claim for dementia secondary to PTSD with alcohol dependence. TDVS filed the claim at VA's request and the Veteran was awarded service-connection at 100% and granted A&A the same day.

A&A is not a standalone benefit. Whether it's Special Monthly Compensation or Special Monthly Pension there are underlying requirements that must be met before a Veteran or survivor can be awarded A&A.

If you have an example of teamwork between Veteran service offices/organizations across the state making a difference in the lives of Tennessee veterans, please share with your Regional Director for possible inclusion in an upcoming "Advocate Spotlight."

TDVS Benefits Bulletins Can Be Found on the [VSO Tools](#) Portion of TDVS's Website

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