

TDVS Benefits Bulletin

24-9

TDVS Updates

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Practice Like a Pro

Advocate Spotlight

This month's bulletin is 1,480 words and will take just over 6 minutes of your time.

1 big thing: TDVS Advocacy Summit – Registration Closes Thursday, September 19th at 3 p.m. CST

ANNUAL TRAINING 2024
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE
ADVOCACY SUMMIT
TN Department of Veterans Services

REGISTER NOW FOR THIS FREE EVENT!
LUNCH PROVIDED

"LEADING THE NATION - TENNESSEE VETERAN ADVOCACY"

Supporting Veterans Through Community -
Opening Remarks by
Tennessee Department of Veterans Services
Commissioner Tommy Baker (MG Ret.)

Panel Discussion -
Partner Introductions & New Resources
to Support Your Community

Data & Collaboration Session - Tools to Support and
Examples of Community Advocacy

Community Conversations -
Community Driven & Solution Focused Best
Practices

Register at
<https://www.tn.gov/veteran/2024-summit>

REGISTER HERE!

October 2, 2024
11:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. EST
Chattanooga Convention Center
1 Carter Plaza, Chattanooga, TN 37402

Here's your **one-stop shop** for all things Advocacy Summit.

TDVS Updates

Claims Management System – Request for Proposals

On May 28th, TDVS released a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit a potential replacement for VetraSpec, the current claims management system.

Why it matters: The decision to replace VetraSpec follows a review process started in April 2022, led by a working group of State and County Veteran Service Officers. Their recommendations have shaped the criteria for the RFP.

What's new: A vendor has been identified through the competitive procurement process. The State and vendor are working final details, and the vendor will be announced once the contract is signed.

I need more:

- [Benefits Bulletin 23-7](#) contained an update of the group's work.
- [Commissioner Baker's Letter](#) to County Mayors and Executives
- [Stakeholder Engagement Portal](#)
 - FAQs
 - Got a Question – [Ask It Here](#)

👉 **Don't forget:** TDVS is covering VetraSpec licensing fees for County. Please submit invoices to TDVS.AP@tn.gov with a courtesy copy to your Regional Director, travis.murphy@tn.gov and Jonathan.soto@tn.gov.

Annual Conference 2024

"Leading the Nation – Tennessee Veteran Advocacy"

TDVS's Annual Conference will be held September 30th – October 2nd, 2024, at the Chattanooga Convention Center & Chattanooga Marriott Downtown, 1 Carter Street, Chattanooga, TN.





👉 **Don't forget:** Awards Banquet Registration and Advocacy Summit Registration close Thursday, September 19th.

Here's your [one-stop shop](#) for all things Annual Conference. Check out --

- Information on Parking & Venue

- Things To Do in Chattanooga
- Speaker Bios and Presentations
- And More

TDVS' Knowledge Library

-  Added [September 2024 CSO Contact Roster](#) – VSO Tools - Organizations
-  Added [PACT Act Overview: All things PACT Act 101 – June 2024](#) – *Honoring Our PACT Act Toolbox – Outreach*
-  Added [Benefits Bulletin 24-8](#) – VSO Tools – TDVS Benefits Bulletin – 2024
-  Added [VA PACT Act Second Anniversary Toolkit](#) – *Honoring Our PACT Act Toolbox – Job Aids*

Training Updates

What's next: Here's the training schedule for the remainder of the calendar year:

- Annual Conference / Awards Banquet / Advocacy Summit – Monday, September 30 - Wednesday, October 2
- October Initial Accreditation Training, Monday, October 21, 2024 – Friday, October 25, 2024
- Annual Examination – Friday, November 15th **OR** Monday, November 18th – Virtual
- December Lunch & Learn – Wednesday, December 11, 2024 – Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Centerstone
- [2024 Training Schedule](#)

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Protecting Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families from Fraud and Scams

The federal government has launched a [government-wide effort](#) to protect Veterans, service members, and their families from fraud and scams.

Zoom in: VBA also launched a [Claims Predators Fraud Prevention Campaign](#) to spread awareness of predatory companies and individuals targeting Veterans and their families when they file initial claims for their benefits.

Background: Claims predators often try to unlawfully charge Veterans and their families a fee to “help” them prepare and consult on their claims with VA. Aggressive communication via emails, phone calls, and/or text messages is used to get Veterans to sign legally binding contracts that are not to the Veteran's advantage. They advertise expedited claim processing

times and/or guarantee higher disability ratings in exchange for their paid services. These [fraudulent schemes](#) target Veterans hard-earned benefits and may subject them to excessive fees. Veterans need to be aware that ONLY [VA accredited attorneys, claims agents, and VSO representatives](#) can lawfully assist them with their initial benefits claims.

I need more:

- Visit [VSAFE.gov](#) - Fraud prevention, response, and reporting information hub.
- Report fraud, scam, and predatory practice related concerns at [www.vsafe.gov](#) or by calling 833-38V-SAFE.
- Visit [Protecting Veterans From Fraud | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#) to learn more about fraud, predatory practices targeting the Veteran community and how to protect their benefits from fraud,
- Check out VA's collaboration with federal partners such as [Federal Trade Commission](#), [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#), [U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission](#) and [Social Security Administration](#), and [developing communications](#) to spread awareness of the rising threat of claims predators.
- [Veteran Fraud Protection Resource Kit](#)
- Share information from [VA's Claims Predators Communications Campaign](#)

VA Updates VA Form 20-0998, Your Right to Seek Review of Our Decision

An updated version of [VA Form 20-0998](#), *You Right to Seek Review of Our Decision*, has been released by VA's Office of Administrative Review.

Why it matters: The form was updated in VA systems on August 25, 2024, and became available to the general public on August 26, 2024, on the [VA Forms](#) web page.

What's new:

- Updated VA Seal in the upper left corner.
- Incorporated verbiage both under the Supplemental Claim column and on page 2 as a sub-bullet under the first paragraph.
 - In the Supplemental Claim column, VA added: "You are entitled to a hearing at any time in the supplemental claims process."
 - On page 2 as a sub-bullet, VA added: "If you wish to have a hearing during the supplemental claim process, you can contact us online through Ask VA: <https://ask.va.gov/> or call us toll-free at 1-800-827-1000 (TTY:711)."
- Hyperlinked the form number in the "Form to File" row to its respective form.
- Edited the contested claim paragraph with the addition of the words "or claims for life insurance."

Tennessee Valley Healthcare Summit Community Mental health Summit



This event will be virtual on September 25, 2024. [Register now](#), so you don't miss out on these amazing presentations!

- **"Healing Hearts Collectively: Promoting Group Therapy,"** delivered by Dr. Umieca Hankton, from the VHA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System.
- **"Maximizing Impact: Harnessing the Collaborative Power of NAMI Homefront and NAMI Support Groups,"** led by Mallory Kloucek and Anita Herron from the NAMI National Education Program.


Practice Like a Pro

Digits to Digits (D2D) Sunset


👉 **Don't forget:** VA will be permanently shutting down D2D on October 1, 2024. If you haven't already, begin filing POA and ITF with Benefits Claims as soon as possible. This SOP should provide everything you need to get started - [Benefits Claims – How to Use 08.10.2024](#).

I need more: Here's your [one-stop shop](#) for all things VetraSpec Release 24-1. Check out --

- Release Notes Detailing Changes and New Features
- VA's Official communication Regarding the Move from D2D to Benefits Claims
- User Guide for Benefits Claims - Available to Users Who Currently Have D2D Access
- Instructions for Clearing Browser Cache

 Contact your Regional Director or the Appeals & Accreditation Division [Training Team](#) for Small Group Training.

Advocate Spotlight

 **In recognition of Suicide Prevention Month, this advocate spotlight is on you** – Tennessee's network of over 200 accredited advocates - and the work you do in support of suicide prevention.

Why it matters: VA's [2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#) documented increases in suicide rates in 2021 for Veterans and non-Veteran U.S. adults. Tennessee saw a slight decline from 39.9 in 2020 to 39.4 in 2021 in its [Veteran suicide rate](#). Although an anchor of hope, Tennessee's Veteran suicide rate is too high. It is higher than both the National and Southern Region Veteran Suicide rates.

What have you done:

- Each of you have learned to recognize the signs of distress and learn about resources you can recommend to fellow Veterans by taking VA's S.A.V.E. training course.
 - Visit <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-save> to access the free, online course if you need a refresher.
- You're promoting and helping Veterans build protective factors by connecting them to VA benefits including VA health care.
 - [Tennessee was recognized](#) as one of the states with the most new enrollees over the past year.
 - Check out [TDVS's 2024 Spring Regional Training](#) for a refresher on VA's health care expansion.

What else can we do:

Access VA prevention resources, support, and ways to take action—like spreading the word about suicide prevention or learning how to talk with a Veteran in crisis—by visiting www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/ or checking out the resources below:

- **Participate in VA's Buddy Check week** in October. Take the pledge to talk to 10 Veterans you know. You'll receive resources, tips, and updates via email: <https://department.va.gov/veterans-experience/va-veteran-buddy-checks/>
- **Reach out to a veteran:** Call or text to check on a friend or loved one. Simply asking: "How's everything going? I'm here for you if you want to talk or need help finding support."
- **Locate resources:** Visit [Reach.gov/SPM](https://reach.gov/SPM) to find support near you. Just enter a zip code for a range of acute care and outpatient services.

National crisis resources are available 24/7. The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource that connects any veteran or their loved ones to a live person specially trained to support veterans:



Do you have an advocacy success story or something you'd like to see included in an upcoming bulletin? If so, [share](#) for a future bulletin.

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

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