



All Things PACT Act 101

# PACT ACT OVERVIEW



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**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs





# What is the PACT Act?



Vietnam



Gulf War Era



Post-9/11 Afghanistan and Iraq



## **The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022**

is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

### **The PACT Act :**

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.
- Expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances.





# PACT Act Placemat (Continued)

## Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022

Public Law 117-168



### TITLE I: EXPANSION OF HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY

(Sections 101-111)

*Short Title: Covenant Act of 2022*

- Expands eligibility to specific categories of Toxic-Exposed Veterans
- Expands eligibility to Veterans supporting certain overseas contingency operations
- Expands eligibility period for certain eras
- Creates a one-year open enrollment period for certain Post 9/11 combat Veterans who did not enroll in VA health care previously to enroll or receive care



### TITLE II: TOXIC EXPOSURE PRESUMPTION PROCESS

(Sections 201-204)

*Short Title: TEAM Act of 2022*

- Improves the decision-making process for presumptions of service connection based on toxic exposure



### TITLE III: IMPROVING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SERVICE CONNECTION PROCESS FOR TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS

(Sections 301-303)

*Short Title: Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act of 2022*

- Any entry in an exposure tracking record system is a qualifying toxic exposure risk activity
- Any entry in an exposure tracking record system is a presumption of exposure for a claim for service connection



### TITLE IV: PRESUMPTIONS OF SERVICE CONNECTION

(Sections 401-407)

- Expands Agent Orange exposure and adds hypertension & monoclonal gammopathy to the list of presumptions
- Establishes a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers related to burn pits and airborne hazards exposure
- Improves compensation for Persian Gulf War Veterans with disabilities



### TITLE IX: IMPROVEMENT OF WORKFORCE OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Sections 901-909)

- Improves national rural recruitment and hiring planning for VHA
- Improves the ability of VA to hire and retain staff, including health care providers



### TITLE VIII: RECORDS AND OTHER MATTERS

(Sections 801-808)

*Short Title: Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 (s.804)*

- Creates a fund to cover health care and benefits expenses associated with exposure to environmental hazards in service



### TITLE VII: RESOURCING

(Sections 701-707)

- Appropriations to enhance claims processing capacity and automation
- Authorizes 31 major medical facility leases across 19 states



### TITLE VI: IMPROVEMENT OF RESOURCES AND TRAINING REGARDING TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS

(Sections 601-604)

*Short Title: Fairly Assessing Service-Related Toxic Exposure Residuals Presumptions Act of 2022*

- Requires VA to create a list of resources and outreach program for toxic-exposed Veterans
- Incorporates a clinical toxic exposure screening for VHA enrollees
- Requires additional training for health care personnel and claims processors



### TITLE V: RESEARCH MATTERS

(Sections 501-510)

- Improves compensation for Persian Gulf War Veterans with disabilities
- Includes studies on mortality of Veterans who served in certain locations during certain periods, post-9/11 Veterans' health trends, Veterans' cancer rates, and the effects of toxic exposures and mental health outcomes
- Includes studies on the effects of waste related to the Manhattan Project, Veterans in Territories of the United States, and the health effects of jet fuels
- Establishes interagency working groups on toxic exposure research





# New Radiation Presumptive Locations



If you were called to respond to one of the listed cleanup and response missions below, you may be eligible for radiation exposure presumptives under the PACT Act.

Response Effort	Dates
Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll	January 1, 1977-December 31, 1980
Cleanup of the AirForce B-52 bomber Carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of <b>Palomares, Spain</b>	January 17, 1966-March 31, 1967
Response to the fire onboard an Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons near <b>Thule Air Force Base in Greenland</b>	January 21, 1968-September 25, 1968





# Conditions Presumed to be Service-Connected

As of August 10, 2022, a long list of new conditions are presumed to be service-connected due to various in-service toxic exposures. **APPLY NOW** at [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) to expedite your claim and benefits.

- Asthma (diagnosed after service)
- Brain cancer
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Granulomatous disease
- Head cancer of any type
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Sarcoidosis





# Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans

**WHO:** All Veterans enrolled in VA health care

**WHAT:** A quick (5-10 minute) series of questions to identify and document any potential exposures to toxins during military service

**WHEN:** At least one every 5 years

**WHERE:** VA medical centers and clinics

**WHY:** Supports Veteran long-term health plans and informed, whole-health care

**HOW:** Veterans can ask about the screening at their next VA appointment





# Health Care Enrollment Eligibility

Veterans who served in the following locations and time periods can enroll in VA health care **NOW**:



- **Republic of Vietnam** (between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975)
- **Thailand at any US or Royal Thai base** (between January 9, 1962 and June 30, 1976)
- **Laos** (between December 1, 1965 and September 30, 1969)
- **Certain Provinces in Cambodia** (between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969)
- **Guam or American Samoa or their territorial waters** (between January 9, 1962 and July 31, 1980)
- **Johnston Atoll, or a ship that called there** (between January 1, 1972 and September 30, 1977)



Vietnam-era Veterans are now able to apply for two new Agent Orange presumptive conditions:

- **Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)**
- **Hypertension (high blood pressure)**

For more info, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MyVA411





# Gulf War Era and Post-9/11 Eligibility

If a Veteran served in any of these locations and time periods, they are eligible for the new Gulf War-related presumptions. This includes the airspace above any of these locations.



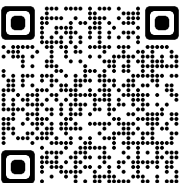
## On or After August 2, 1990:

- Bahrain
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Somalia
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE)



## On or After September 11, 2001:

- Afghanistan
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Uzbekistan
- Yemen







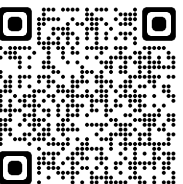
# Filing Claims to Receive Benefits

Veterans can file a claim for the new presumptive conditions:

- **New Claim**—Veteran has never filed for the presumptive condition
  - **Supplemental Claim**—the presumptive condition was previously denied but is now considered to be presumptive
- 
- If VA denied one of the new presumptive conditions in the past but the Veteran may now be eligible for benefits, VA will try to contact them. There is no need to wait to file a Supplemental Claim.
  - VA is prioritizing the claims of Veterans with cancer to make sure they get timely access to the care and benefits they need.
  - **Pending Claims:** If a Veteran's condition was added to the list of [presumptive conditions](#)\* after the claim was filed, VA will consider it on a presumptive basis.



\*Presumptive conditions do not require proof that the military service caused the condition. Veterans only need to meet the service requirements and have a current diagnosis of the presumptive condition. Veterans should submit any supporting documentation to assist with their claim.





# Other Affected Veterans and Survivors

What about additional benefits and care for other Veterans and their survivors?

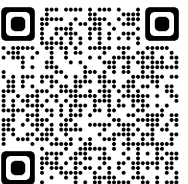


Under the PACT Act, survivors may be eligible for VA benefits, including Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and Burial benefits.

- [Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#)
- [Burial Benefits](#)



Get the care and benefits you **EARNED** and **DESERVE!**  
Apply at [\*\*VA.gov/PACT\*\*](https://www.va.gov/PACT) today.





# When or How Should I File a Claim?



**APPLY NOW!**

## What if I have previously been denied?

Veterans previously denied a toxic-exposure related claim are encouraged to file a supplemental claim. Once a supplemental claim is received, VA will review the claim under the new law.

For more info, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MyVA411





# PACT Act By the Numbers

## Expanding Benefits



**544,924**

Total PACT Act  
Claims Approved  
(08/10/2022–11/04/2023)



**710,703**

Cumulative Total  
PACT Related  
Claims Completed  
(08/10/2022–11/04/2023)



**155.0**

Average Days  
for PACT Act  
Related Claim  
Completion  
(11/04/2023)



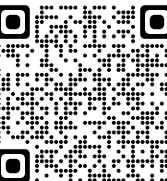
**46.4%**

PACT Act  
Related Claims  
Completed  
≤ 125 days  
(11/04/2023)



**76.7%**

Approval Rate  
for PACT Act  
Related Claims  
(11/04/2023)





# PACT Act By the Numbers



## Top 5 Most Frequent Conditions on PACT Act Related Claims

(As of 11/04/2023)

Condition	Number of Claims	Number of Issues	Percent Granted	Percent Denied
Hypertensive Vascular Disease	203,660	206,513	76%	24%
Allergic Rhinitis	124,968	126,866	81%	19%
Maxillary Sinusitis	60,023	60,492	53%	47%
Bronchial Asthma	55,546	56,562	49%	51%
Malignant Growths of Genitourinary System	31,937	32,757	64%	36%



## Most Frequent Denial Reasons

(as of 11/04/2023)

- 1 No Diagnosis
- 2 Not Incurred or Not Caused by Service
- 3 Not Established by Presumption

For more info, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://VA.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MyVA411





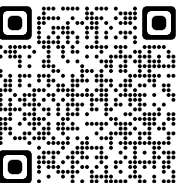
# Apply for VA Healthcare in 4 Easy Ways

1. Online: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction>.
2. By calling the toll-free hotline: 877-222-8387.
3. By mailing VA Form 10-10EZ to:  
Health Eligibility Center  
2957 Clairmont Rd., Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30329
4. In person at the nearest VA medical center or clinic





**Questions?**





# Federal Advisory Committee on U.S. Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States Survivor Benefits

**Briefed by: Scott Bell**  
December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023



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- Marine Gunnery Sgt. John David Fry Scholarship
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- Home Loan Guaranty Benefits
- Other Benefits and Services



# General Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs oversees a suite of benefits and services extended to the surviving family of deceased Veterans and service members.

These programs are located throughout the entirety of the enterprise, to include each administration within the department.

- Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)
- National Cemetery Administration (NCA)



# Burial and Memorial Benefits

## National or State Veterans Cemetery Interment

- Gravesite, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave/niche, perpetual care of the site

*The National Cemetery Administration operates 155 national cemeteries and 34 soldier's lots and monument sites over 42 states and Puerto Rico. In addition, NCA provides funding for 122 Veterans cemeteries in 49 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan.*

## Headstone/Marker or Medallion

- VA provides the option for applying for a traditional headstone or marker for placement at private cemeteries, or a medallion to affix to a privately purchased headstone or marker.
- VA will deliver at no cost, anywhere in the world.



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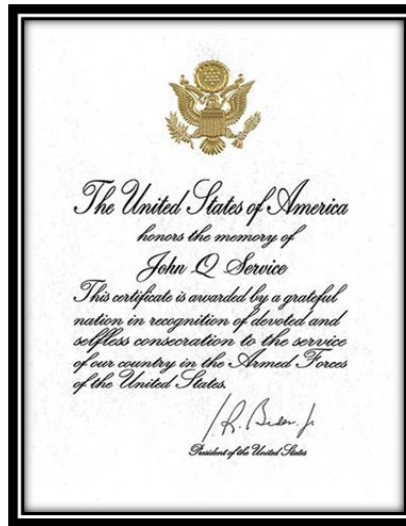
# Burial and Memorial Benefits

## Burial Flag

- VA will supply a memorial flag which is often used during the presentation of military funeral honors.

## Presidential Memorial Certificate

- Embossed paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of service members or honorably discharged deceased veterans.



# Bereavement and Support

The Department of Veterans Affairs offers multiple paths in providing support to recently bereaved surviving family members.

- Eligible survivors may obtain counseling services at community-based VA Vet Centers.
- Chaplaincy and spiritual counseling is made available at most major clinics and medical centers.
- Further wraparound services are in development within the Veterans Health Administration.



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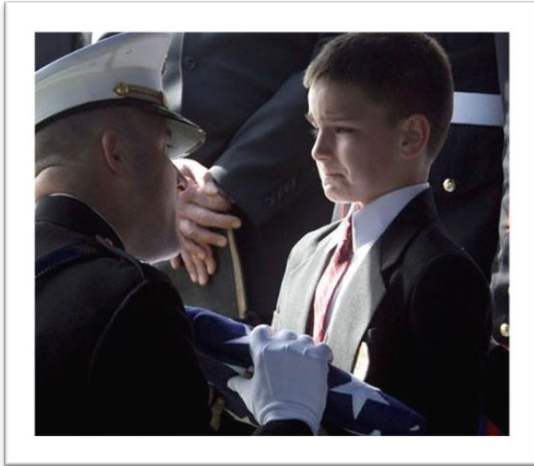
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# Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

- Monthly tax-exempt benefit paid to the surviving spouse of a service member who died in the line of duty, or Veteran who died due to a service-related condition.
- Spouses receive a minimum of \$1,612.74/month.
- Spouses with dependent children receive an additional \$399.54 per child.
- When a surviving spouse is not present, a child could receive up to \$680.94/month paid to their guardian.



# Dependency and Indemnity Compensation



## Children's DIC:

- Surviving minor children may receive DIC even when (a) there is no surviving spouse, or (b) the child is not in the custody of the surviving spouse
- Children over the age of 18 may continue to receive DIC when enrolled in an education program up until the age of 23

# Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

## Parent's DIC

- Monthly benefit available to the parents of a deceased Veteran.
- Eligibility based on a service-related death and financial need.
- Monthly rate determined by the applicant's countable income and assets. This benefit is means tested with payments depending upon the circumstances of the applicant.





# Survivor's Pension

VA Survivor's Pension offers monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime veterans who meet certain income and asset limitations set by Congress.

- The amount offered is dependent upon the applicant's income and asset situation.
- Medical expenses may be used to lower the applicant's countable income, potentially making them eligible for the benefit or increasing their monthly amount.



# Survivor's and Dependent's Education Assistance

- Eligibility based upon service-connected death or 100% veteran disability rating
- Payment rate contingent on level of enrollment. Monthly payments up to \$1,488 are available for full time attendance.
- 36 months of benefits, or the equivalent in part time training.



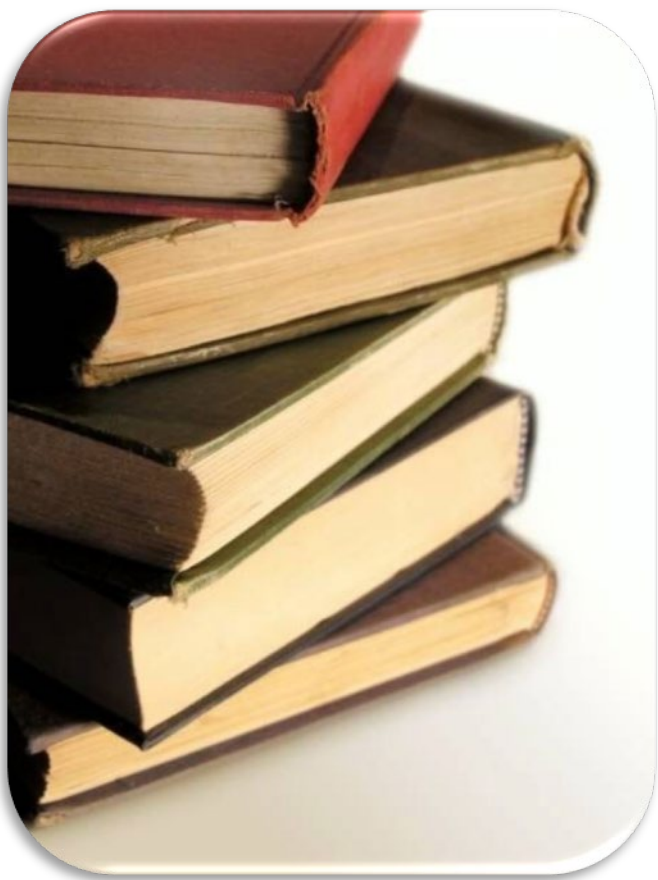
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# Marine Gunnery SGT. John David Fry Scholarship



- Available to children and spouses of service members who have died in the line of duty.
- 36 months of benefits
- Covers full tuition and fees at public institutions, or up to \$27,120.05/year at private or foreign institutions and may be supplemented by the Yellow Ribbon program.
- No time restrictions on usage.
- Housing allowance.
- Books and supplies stipend



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# Home Loan Guaranty

- Available to surviving spouses in receipt of DIC.
- Features the right to prepay without penalty.
- Funding fee waivers.
- Negotiated interest rates
- Special assistance available to those experiencing difficulty making loan payments.
- No down payments.



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# Other Benefits and Services

- Preference in federal employment.
- Life insurance benefits and financial counseling.
- Potential benefits offered by state and local governments.



# Questions and Contacts

Please reach out to us at:

[officeofsurvivors@va.gov](mailto:officeofsurvivors@va.gov)

You may also find us at:

[www.va.gov/survivors](http://www.va.gov/survivors)



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# Role of District and Regional Offices



Sandra D. Flint  
Director, VBA Continental District  
Acting Director, VBA Pacific District



# District Office Role

- The Pacific District Office is responsible for the oversight and delivery of compensation, pension and vocational rehabilitation benefits for 13 Regional Offices (RO) which include Albuquerque, Anchorage, Boise, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Manila, Oakland, Phoenix, Portland, Reno, Salt Lake City, San Diego and Seattle.
- In coordination with VBA's Office of Field Operations, Pacific District strategizes and determines quality and production targets for various business line operations within our RO's.
- Pacific District monitors RO's progress in achieving stated targets with the goal of providing world class benefits and services to our Nations Veterans.





# Indo-Pacific Representation

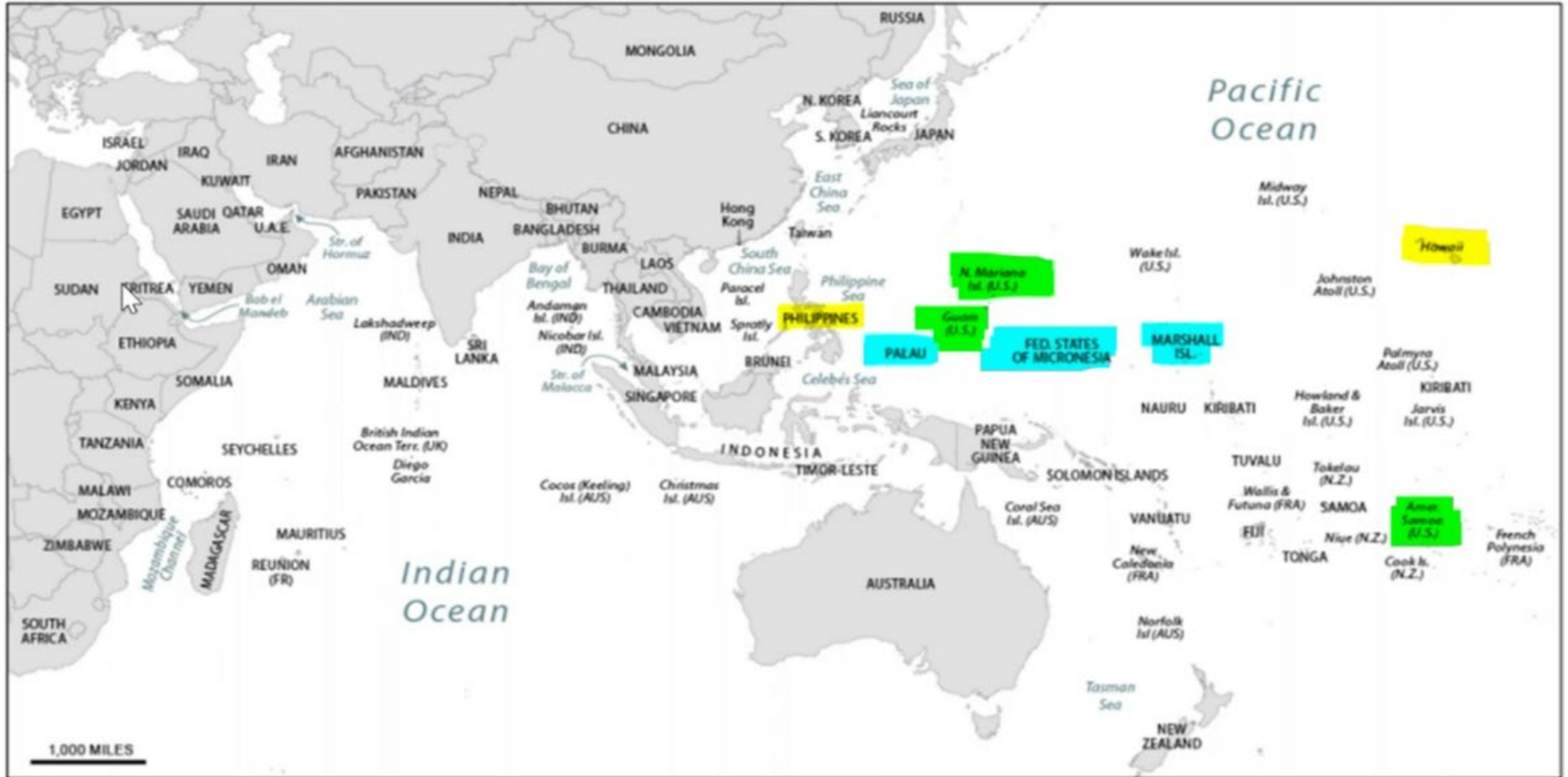
Pacific District has two Regional Offices (RO) responsible for the Indo-Pacific Region

- Manila RO serves:
  - Philippines
  - Palau
  - Micronesia
  - Marshall Islands
- Honolulu RO serves:
  - Hawaii
  - American Samoa
  - Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)
  - Guam



# Indo-Pacific Representation

Figure I. The Indo-Pacific



# Manila at a Glance

- 81 Employees (76 locally employed staff, 5 U.S. direct hires)
- Monthly Compensation Payments
  - Live Comp \$17M (Oct 23)
  - DIC \$4.5M (Oct 23)
- Outreach Activity (FY23)
  - 96 outreach events attended
  - 319 hours of outreach completed
  - 19,525 Veteran/dependent engagements



# Manila Public Contact

- Manila's Public Contact Team and their LASs have a scheduled rotation for phone duties, in-person appointments, and going to Outreach events in various parts in the Philippines as well as Palau, Micronesia, and Marshall Islands.
  - Manila PCT serves both US and Filipino Veterans living in the Philippines, as well as surviving spouses, dependents and VSOs with their VA-related benefit questions, etc.
  - They also serve Embassy employees with their VA-related inquiries.
  - Visitors seeking assistance from Manila RO PCT schedule virtual or in-person appointments through VERA (Visitor Engagement Reporting Application) or call the phone center.
    - During FY23, the phone center was staffed by an average of 4 employees, answering a total of 20,694 calls.



# Manila Additional Programs

- **Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund:**
  - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of February 2009 authorized a one-time payment to eligible WWII Filipino Veterans
  - \$15,000 for U.S. citizens and \$9,000 for Filipino citizens
  - \$226,310,204.00 total awards paid to date
- **Provides outreach to:**
  - The Federated States of Micronesia
  - The Republic of the Marshall Islands
  - The Republic of Palau



# Manila's Other Programs

## Foreign Medical Program

- Claims are processed by VA's Office of Community Care in Denver Colorado
- Program reimburses Service-Connected medical care for Veterans living abroad
- Implemented in the Philippines on October 1, 2017

FISCAL YEAR	BILLED AMOUNT \$	PAID CLAIMS \$	DISAPPROVED \$	% OF DISAPPROVAL
2022	4,116,630.26	3,606,626.04	(510,004.22)	12%
2023	3,902,215.69	3,814,453.29	(87,762.40)	2%



# Manila Outpatient Clinic Services

- **Specialty Care**
  - **Audiology/ENT**
  - **Cardiology**
  - **Endocrinology**
  - **Gastroenterology**
  - **Nephrology/Renal**
  - **Neurology**
  - **Ophthalmology**
  - **Pulmonology**
  - **Rheumatology**
  - **Psychology (Eff. 2Q FY23)**
- **Internal Medicine**
- **Mental Health**
- **Social Work Services**
- **Laboratory Services**
- **Radiology Services**



# Honolulu at a Glance

- 196 Employees
- Monthly Compensation Payments
  - Live Comp \$109.2M (Oct 23)
  - DIC \$1.9M (Oct 23)
- Outreach Activity (FY23)
  - 308 outreach events attended
  - 901 hours of outreach completed
  - 2,089 Veteran/dependent engagements





# VA Honolulu Serves U.S. Territories

VA Honolulu RO is responsible for delivering non-medical VA benefits and services to approximately 129,274 Veterans and their families in Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

Location	Number of Veterans
Hawaii	112,756
Guam	12,800*
American Samoa	2,723*
CNMI	995*
Total	129,274*

\*estimates



# VBA Honolulu Presence

Honolulu RO maintains a presence at the following locations:

- **American Samoa**
  - 1 Full Time LAS since November 2021
- **Guam**
  - 5 Full Time LAS since 2011
  - 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- **Saipan**
  - 1 Full Time LAS since September 2021
  - LAS stationed in Saipan travels to both Tinian and Rota Monthly
    - Tinian 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month
    - Rota 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month



# VA Honolulu Serves U.S. Territories

## Services Provided:

- General Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) customer service.
- Counseling session with Veterans, their dependents, and their beneficiaries face to face and by phone regarding all benefits available through the VA.
- Coordinates outreach and VA benefits briefings and presentations to Veterans, Service members, stakeholders, and local community groups.
- Answers inquiries to assist Veterans, their dependents, and their beneficiaries in resolving errors, delays, or other problems in obtaining benefits.



# MDEO Exam Support - GUAM

- VBA has two vendors providing contract exams in Guam, Veterans Evaluation Services (VES) and QTC Management (QTC). VES is the incumbent and has been doing examinations in Guam since Fiscal Year 2017. QTC was awarded a contract in April 2022. Both vendors continue to add to their provider network as well as rely on traveling providers and alternative examination methods, such as tele-C&P and Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE), when applicable. Examinations in Guam are managed under the international contract for exams. U.S. territories and countries named in the international contract are processed in the same way as exams in the continental United States.
- Most examinations are completed on island by local or traveling providers located in Guam. In the limited occasion when vendors are unable to complete the examinations on the island due to network unavailability, vendors have processes in place to pay for travel outside of Guam at **no cost** to the Veteran.



# Overseas Exam Timeliness

Vendors are expected to complete international examinations with overall targets for **average** days pending (ADP) of 28 days and **average** days to complete (ADC) of 36 days for the Examination Scheduling Request (ESR).

- **Overall Exam Timeliness Overseas\***

- ADC
  - FY 2023: 50.5
  - FYTD 2024: 48.8
- ADP
  - FY 2023: 31.9
  - FYTD 2024: 47.8

- **Exam timeliness in Guam\***

- ADC
  - FY 2023: 56.3
  - FYTD 2024: 36.4
- ADP
  - FY 2023: 52.6
  - FYTD 2024: 40.7



# Challenges for U.S. Territories

- Veterans in Rota, Tinian and Saipan frequently express concerns about being able to afford to pay for their airfare to go to C&P exams in Guam. Veterans must pay upfront and then file for reimbursement.
- Veterans residing in U.S. Territories are unable to contact the VBA call center through the toll-free number. The Veteran incurs long distance charges when calling.
  - However, Veterans are provided local phone numbers to the Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa Benefits Offices' which is listed on the Honolulu VA Regional Office website and provided through flyers at events.



# Questions

Questions or inquiries can be sent to the Pacific District mailbox at [pacific.vavba@va.gov](mailto:pacific.vavba@va.gov)

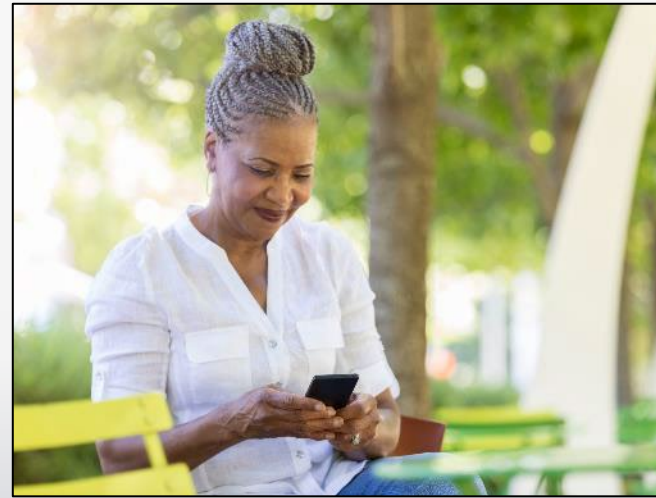


# VA Caribbean Healthcare System

## Sistema de Salud de Veteranos del Caribe

# Welcome!

# ¡Bienvenidos!





# Who we SERVE >>

# 66,187 Vets and counting

## VETERANS OF U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



### VETERANS ENROLLED IN VA CARE

2,100

### VETERANS BY GENDER\*



382  
FEMALE



1,718  
MALE

### MALE VETERANS BY AGE

18 - 34	59	65 - 74	316
35 - 54	336	75+	497
55 - 64	324		



### FEMALE VETERANS BY AGE



18 - 34	29	65 - 74	51
35 - 54	167	75+	9
55 - 64	117		

### PERIOD OF SERVICE

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR	12
GULF WAR ERA	935
VIETNAM ERA	668
KOREAN WAR	134
WORLD WAR II	630



### SERVICE CONNECTION STATUS\*



1,905  
SERVICE-CONNECTED

195  
NOT SERVICE-CONNECTED

## VETERANS OF PUERTO RICO

### VETERANS ENROLLED IN VA CARE

64,087



### VETERANS BY GENDER\*



3,632  
FEMALE



60,449  
MALE

### MALE VETERANS BY AGE

18 - 34	2,829	65-74	14,124
35 - 54	10,688	75+	23,996
55 - 64	8,812	Unknown 6	



### FEMALE VETERANS BY AGE



18 - 34	500	65 - 74	571
35 - 54	1,625	75+	166
55 - 64	770	Unknown 6	

### PERIOD OF SERVICE

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR	288	KOREAN WAR	9,576
GULF WAR ERA	25,540	WORLD WAR II	503
VIETNAM ERA	28,158	Unknown	11



### SERVICE CONNECTION STATUS\*



30,117  
CONNECTED

33,586  
NOT CONNECTED

### INCOME STATUS\*

30,117  
BELOW POVERTY LINE

33,586  
ABOVE POVERTY LINE



### EMPLOYMENT STATUS\*

23,530  
EMPLOYED



10,200  
UNEMPLOYED

# VA Catchment Area



★ Mayagüez Outpatient Clinic  
PR #2 Km. 149.9 Ave. Algarrobo #175  
Bo. Sabanetas, Mayagüez, PR 00682  
Phone: 787-834-6900

★ Eurípides Rubio (Ponce) Outpatient Clinic  
Paseo Del Veterano #1010, Ponce, PR 00716-2001  
Phone: 787-812-3030 or 787-651-4100

★ Arecibo Community Based Outpatient Clinic  
PR-2 Interception PR-660, Km. 78, Bo. Hato Abajo  
Arecibo, PR 00612  
Phone: 787-641-7582 Ext. 28690  
Toll Free: 1-866-874-6569

★ Ceiba Community Based Outpatient Clinic  
311 Lauro Piñero, Ceiba, PR 00735  
Phone: 787-522-2662 or 787-641-7582  
Ext. 29001

★ Guayama Community Based Outpatient Clinic  
FISA Bldg. Paseo Del Pueblo St., Guayama, PR 00784  
Phone: 787-641-7582 Ext. 28001 / 28002  
Direct Phone: 787-866-8886

★ St. Thomas Community Based Outpatient Clinic  
Medical Foundation Building  
Suite 101, St. Thomas, VI 00802  
Phone: 340-774-6674

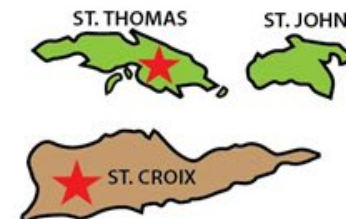
★ St. Croix Community Based Outpatient Clinic  
Box 12, RR-02, The Village Mall  
#113 Kings Hill, VI 00850-4701  
Phone: 787-641-7582 Ext. 25601

★ Comerío Rural Outpatient Clinic  
15 De Diego Street, Comerío, PR 00782  
Phone: 787-522-2660

★ Utuado Rural Outpatient Clinic  
Isaac González Street, Equina Ledesma, Utuado, PR 00641  
Phone: 787-522-2650

★ Vieques Rural Outpatient Clinic  
PO Box 1544 Vieques, PR 00765  
Phone: 787-522-2690 or 787-641-7582 Ext. 28601

★ San Juan Medical Center  
10 Casia Street, San Juan, PR 00921  
Phone: 787-641-7582



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**  
Veterans Health Administration  
VA Caribbean Healthcare System

# Accomplishments

- Meeting all national metrics for six consecutive years, including CLC
- National leader in the management of Mental Health and Behavioral Services
- 75 years as the leading provider of choice to Veterans
- Only VA healthcare system self accredited by ACGME providing 11 Medical Subspecialties
- First in VISN 8 to implement an Employee Engagement Management program
- 90% Market Penetration



# Challenges

- Exodus of clinical professionals and retention of personnel
  - National compensation policy impacting the ability to provide competitive salaries with the mainland
  - Severely medically underserved patients due to professions shortage
  - Highest in the nation with severely medically complex elderly Veteran population, leading to a higher-than-average inpatient daily occupancy rate
- Propensity to natural disasters, that impact operations
- Only ONE Trauma Center in the Caribbean, owned and operated by the Government of Puerto Rico
- No accredited State Nursing Homes
- Language disparities
- Champ VA
- Insular Laws affecting the Medicare/Medicaid program in both territories
- Infrastructure & Space: limiting growth and expansion of programs

# Opportunities

- AIR Commission Report Opportunities Recommendations
  - Second Campus
  - Expand specialty care
  - Ensure preparedness for women's care (34% growth in VACHS)
- Become a TRICARE provider
- Expand partnership with DoD
- Fisher House
- Become a center for excellence for translation and multicultural services for the VA
- Become the model of healthcare in the territories
  - Expand academic opportunities
  - Women services
    - Obstetricians
    - Breast biopsies
    - Pelvic Floor
    - Integrate our program and services with the National Healthcare Foreign Affairs (we support Veterans in the Caribbean and Central America)

# Academic Programs



- Being the unique VA sponsor of graduate medical education programs since 1956 sustaining national accreditation by the ACGME as a reflection of educational quality
  - Being the only VA hospital recognized in the nation by the Gold Foundation and the ACMGE in 2016 for a clinical learning environment that fosters humanism and respect
  - Being the only VA hospital who have competed at the American College of Physicians Doctor's Dilemma Competition winning the 4th place
  - Hundreds of scientific publications in peer reviewed journals throughout our history in the medical fields generated by our own faculty

## Post Graduate Education Training Programs that are **Sponsored** by VA Caribbean Healthcare System

Program Name	Original Accreditation/Initiation date	Accreditation status	Sponsoring Institution
Dietetic Internship Program	1950	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Internal Medicine	June 29, 1956	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Physical Med & Rehabilitation	August 28, 1958	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Dental Medicine	1964	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Infectious Disease	(1975) July 1, 1987	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Cardiovascular Disease	July 1, 1987	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Nephrology	(1972) July 1, 1987	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Pharmacy Residency	1997	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Psychology internship	2000	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Gastroenterology	July 1, 2001	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Pulmonary Disease & Critical Care Medicine	July 1, 2001	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Critical Care Medicine	July 1, 2005	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Psychology Post Doctorate	2011	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Chief Resident Quality and Safety	2016	Revalidated	OAA sponsored
Sleep Medicine	January 24, 2020	Continued Accreditation	VA Caribbean Healthcare System

**120 med surge positions | 30 associated health**

**Key: Only residency program in PR**

## Post Graduate Education Training Programs that VA Fund for the Affiliates

Program Name	Number of positions	Accreditation status	Sponsoring Institution
General Psychiatry	12	Continued Accreditation	Ponce Health Sciences University
Consultation & Liaison	1	Continued Accreditation	Ponce Health Sciences University
Addiction psychiatry	1	Continued Accreditation	Ponce Health Sciences University
Hematology & Oncology	3	Continued Accreditation	San Juan City Hospital
Anesthesia	4	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
Ophthalmology	3	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
Urology	2	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
Neurology	4	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
General Surgery	8	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
Geriatrics Family Medicine	2	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
Geriatrics Internal Medicine	2	Continued Accreditation	University of PR
Social Work Master	7	Continued accreditation	University of PR
Audiology	1	Continued accreditation	University of PR
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>		



# Key takeaways

- Residency programs add critical value to the healthcare mission
- VACHS embraces the responsibility of being a sponsoring institution with pride and commitment
- Territories have unique challenges in executing both the clinical and healthcare mission but our historic journey shows that this is possible successfully
- Advisory Committees can advocate for flexibilities necessary for territories' unique contribution to Veterans' health



# Key takeaways

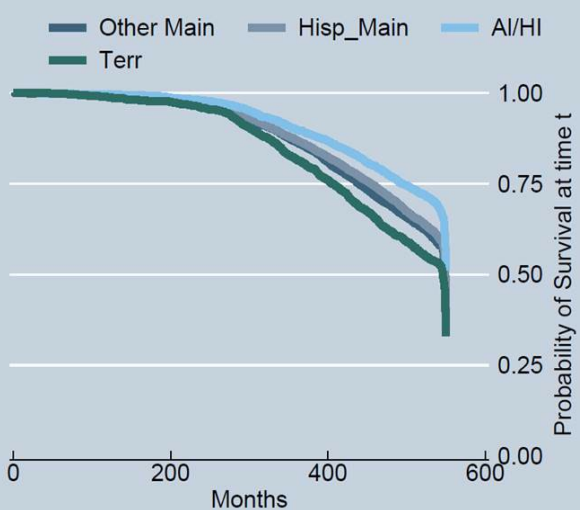
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# Research



- VA ORH Sponsored Studies in the VACHS
  - Operational Manuals for TBI Care – Spanish Materials
  - Operational Manual for Telehealth Satisfaction Surveys – Spanish Surveys
  - USA Territories and increased mortality in Veterans with TBI
  - TBI Telehealth care using a language-tailored approach
- Outcome Directed **USA Territories REsearch Consortium for Health Equity (OUTREACH-E)**
- Geodatabases Information System and the USA Territories
- **E**mergency **CO**ntinuity of **CaRE ToolBox**
- (**E-CORE** ToolBox)
- Explore Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and impact in care
- Home Base Visits and Interviews with CBOC Providers at the US Territories
- The inclusion of the FAS in the **OUTREACH-E**

Kaplan–Meier survival estimates



# Freely Associated States (FAS): Ideas Pending Funding

## Problem Statement:

- Rural/Islanders Veterans residing in the Freely Associated States (FAS) of Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Marshall Islands confront unique challenges related to geographic healthcare disparities.
- The VA healthcare provided is limited and difficult to access.
- A specific number for Veterans residing in the FAS is not available since they are not included in the US Census.
- The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (VANCVAS) provides estimates of Veteran population in the five USA territories, but lacks information on Veteran census for the FAS

## First Year

Create a census of FAS Veterans

Contact Veterans and Non-Profit-Organizations that serve as Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) in these geographical areas to explore barriers/facilitators to VA healthcare

Analyze the federal law regulating Veteran benefits that does not allow VA to provide direct services on foreign soil and how it applies to non-direct, but virtual, and not in foreign soil, but from US soil via VA Video Connect (VVC)

## Second year

Get a representation of FAS Veterans to travel to their nearest CBOC (Guam or Hawaii) and have the opportunity to enroll them in the system, provide a Primary Care oriented visit, and conduct interviews on their healthcare barriers in order to enhance access to care.

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs  
VA Caribbean Healthcare System

**Thank you!**  
**¡Gracias!**

