

Date: April 1, 2021
From: Acting Under Secretary for Health (10)
Subj: SAVE LIVES Act
To: Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors (15N1 – 15N23)
VISN Chief Medical Officers
Thru: Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations (15)

1. Pursuant to Public Law (P.L.) 117-4 Strengthening and Amplifying Vaccination Efforts to Locally Immunize All Veterans and Every Spouse Act or the SAVE LIVES Act, VA is authorized to provide COVID-19 vaccine to covered individuals during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional clarification on covered individuals.
2. The following individuals are included in the definition of “covered individuals”:
 - a. Never activated National Guard, Reserve and Coast Guard who are retired
 - b. All categories of Veterans regardless of Character of Discharge
3. The expanded authority under the SAVES LIVES Act depends on readily available COVID-19 vaccine supply and requires VA to continue to prioritize for Veterans enrolled in VA care.
4. Questions can be submitted to Tammy Czarniecki, Deputy to the Under Secretary for Health Operations at Tammy.Czarniecki2@va.gov.



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SAVE LIVES Act: High-Level Messages

External High-Level Messages (as of 04/01/21)

General SAVE LIVES Qualifications

- The expanded authority under the SAVES LIVES Act depends on readily available COVID-19 vaccine supply and requires VA to continue to prioritize for Veterans enrolled in VA care.
- These groups are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine at VA when their local VA facilities are able to offer more vaccines:
 - Veterans
 - Spouses of a Veteran
 - Caregivers of a Veteran
 - Recipients of Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) benefits

Eligible Veterans

- Anyone who served in the U.S. military is eligible to be vaccinated through VA.

Eligible Spouse

- For COVID-19 vaccine eligibility, we define a spouse to include marriage, same-sex and common-law marriages. This includes a widow or widower of a Veteran. If you characterize your relationship as spousal, you can receive the vaccine.

Eligible Caregivers

- For COVID-19 vaccine eligibility, we define a caregiver as a family member or friend who provides care to the Veteran. Caregivers may help the Veteran with personal needs like feeding, bathing, or dressing. They may also help the Veteran with tasks like shopping or transportation.

When and How to Get a Vaccine

- At this time, we still have a limited amount of vaccines. We're working to determine how quickly we can begin to offer vaccines to these other groups. This may vary by facility. Some facilities may be able to offer vaccines to these groups now, while others may not.
- The best way to stay informed is to [sign up to tell us you'd like a COVID-19 vaccine through VA](https://www.va.gov/covid-19-vaccine): (www.va.gov/covid-19-vaccine). Your local VA facility will then contact you when they have a vaccine for you. They may invite you to a large vaccination

event (like a drive-thru clinic). Or they may ask you to schedule a vaccine appointment. You may receive an invite by phone, email, or text message.

- For your continued health and safety during the pandemic, please **do not** visit the VA facilities for a COVID-19 vaccine without an appointment.
- Your employer, pharmacy, health care provider's office, or local public health officials may offer you a COVID-19 vaccine. We encourage you to take the first opportunity you have to get a vaccine at the most convenient location for you.

SAVE LIVES Act: High-Level Messages

Internal High-Level Messages (as of 04/01/21)

- The expanded authority under the SAVES LIVES Act depends on readily available COVID-19 vaccine supply and requires VA to continue to prioritize for Veterans enrolled in VA care.
- For your continued health and safety during the pandemic, please **do not** visit the VA facilities for a COVID-19 vaccine without an appointment.
- As VA receives increased allocation of vaccine, VA will begin offering vaccine to all Veterans, and their spouses and caregivers. Prior to the SAVE LIVES Act, VA was only vaccinating Veterans receiving care at the VA. Presently, there are several pilot facilities with adequate vaccine supply that have started to rollout the SAVE LIVES Act now and we anticipate gradually increasing the number of VA facilities as the allocation of vaccine increases in the coming weeks. We are advising Veterans to check out your local VA medical center websites for the latest updates regarding vaccine availability.
- Since the start of the pandemic, VA has been focused on vaccinating as many Veterans as possible. Under this new law we've been given an expanded charge to vaccinate as many individuals as possible. This is an extension of our sacred mission of caring for Veterans and those who care for Veterans. This is about saving peoples' lives.
- If you tell VA that you are a Veteran, a caregiver of a Veteran or a spouse of a Veteran, the SAVE LIVES Act authorizes that VA can vaccinate you as vaccine supply becomes available. No formal documentation is required.
 - **Caregiver Definition:** For COVID-19 vaccine eligibility, we define a caregiver as a family member or friend who provides care to a Veteran. Caregivers may help the Veteran with personal needs like feeding, bathing, or dressing. They may also help the Veteran with tasks like shopping or transportation. A person stating that they are the caregiver of a Veteran, and giving the Veteran's name is sufficient to give them a vaccine. There is no need to check for further documentation.
 - **Spouse Definition:** For the purpose of this Act, a spouse includes marriage, same-sex and common-law marriages. If you characterize your relationship as spousal, you can receive the vaccine. A spouse includes a widow and a widower of a Veteran. A person stating that they are the spouse of a Veteran and giving the Veteran's name is sufficient to give them a vaccine. There is no need to check for further documentation.
 - **Veteran Definition:** Anyone who served in the U.S. military is eligible to be vaccinated through VA.