

Veteran Updates

News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Medical Center • May 2012

Thousands of Veterans Download “PTSD Coach”

The federal government is going high-tech to help wounded soldiers and Veterans.

According to the VA, more than 53,000 people have downloaded the mobile application (commonly known as “app”), called “PTSD Coach,” in the last year.

The app was created by Dr. Julia Hoffman, clinician at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System’s National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD), to help Veterans understand and deal with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The PTSD Coach is the first of a series of resources being offered for PTSD sufferers from the NCPTSD and the Defense Department’s National Center for Telehealth and Technology.

Some of the features of the app include:

- Reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work.
- Tools for screening and tracking your symptoms.
- Convenient, easy-to-use skills to help you handle stress.



- Direct links to support and help.
- Always with you when you need it.

Dr. Hoffman is developing other, similar apps. The next app will be the PTSD Family Coach, which will support family members of individuals with PTSD. Dr. Hoffman and her staff are also creating apps that will help patients and



providers to engage in evidence-based care.

You can download the free PTSD Coach from iTunes or the Android Play Store.

Though a useful device, the phone app is not intended to be a substitute for face-to-face treatment. If you are in a crisis, please call our Mental Health Central Access at (415) 750-6674.

VA Eliminates Co-Payment

Have you heard? VA will no longer charge Veterans a co-payment when they receive care in their homes from VA health professionals using video conferencing. This change will primarily benefit Veterans with limited mobility. When medically appropriate, VA will make the home the preferred place of care for Veterans to ensure timely and convenient access to VA services. Although home TeleHealth does not replace the need for nursing home care or for traditional non-institutional care programs, it does enhance the ability for many Veterans to better understand and manage chronic diseases. For more information about Telehealth, visit www.telehealth.va.gov.

Free Education/Training for Vets

Great news! VA has just partnered up with the Department of Labor (DOL) to offer a year's worth of free education and training to qualified, unemployed Veterans ages 35 – 60!

Starting May 15, the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program allows qualifying Veterans up to \$1,473 per month for 12 months of educational assistance—equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill active duty rate.

These funds may be used for a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school, leading to an associate's degree, non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation (as defined by DOL).

To qualify, Veterans must be 35-60 years old at the time of application, be unemployed on the date of application, and not dishonorably discharged. They must start training after July 1, 2012 and not be eligible for any other VA education program. Veterans must not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program within the last 180 days, and not be receiving VA compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployability. The program benefits will end on March 31, 2014.

Veterans may apply at www.benefits.va.gov/VOW, or call 800-827-1000. Veterans may also access the VRAP application through eBenefits at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

eBenefits: One-stop Shopping

What is eBenefits?

The eBenefits portal is a joint project between VA and the Department of Defense. It is a "one-stop shop" for benefits-related information. It's available to Wounded Warriors, Veterans, service members, their families, and their caretakers.

How can I register?

First, you must be registered for My HealthVet and have completed in-person authentication. Go to the My HealthVet website at www.myhealth.va.gov. Scroll down the page until you see the eBenefits logo on the right side of the screen. Request a DS Logon account.

What can I do at eBenefits?

Once registered you can apply for benefits, view your claims status, access documents (such as military records, health records and VA home loan certificate of eligibility), and transfer post 9/11 education benefits. You can also search for a job in the Veterans Job Bank, view the compensation and benefits handbook, or use the National Resource Directory. Those eligible can even order hearing aid batteries online.

There's a lot more. We invite you to become a registered user and explore all of your eBenefits. Questions? Call eBenefits customer support at 800-983-0937.

Do You Have Chronic Pain?

A patient education class will held at the **Santa Rosa VA Clinic** on **Tuesday, June 5 from 9-11 a.m.**

You'll learn about:

- The role of pain medications for chronic pain.
- How the nervous system works and how it changes when pain persists.
- How thoughts and feelings can impact behaviors and how one experiences pain.

This class is presented by the San Francisco VA Pain Clinic.

