



Guide to the CARES Act: Veterans

The CARES Act includes \$19.6 billion in new resources for the VA in order to serve veterans and protect health care workers, including \$14.4 billion for testing kits, personal protective equipment (PPE), and medical supplies to support the growing demand for health care services at VA facilities and through telehealth services. The law also provides new flexibility for health care workers who serve our veterans at home and in our communities.

Specifically:

- **\$2.1 billion to support increased demand for care in the community**, especially at emergency rooms and urgent care facilities. Allows vulnerable veterans with limb loss to seek prosthetic assistance at community providers instead of VA.
- **\$2.15 billion to bolster telehealth capabilities** to deliver health care services directly related to coronavirus and mitigate the risk of virus transmission.
- **\$13 million to safeguard VA benefits** through the Veterans Benefits Administration. Veterans and their families will remain eligible for pension and other income-dependent benefits, even if a direct emergency payment by the government would have put them over the threshold.
- **\$150 million to assist State Veterans Homes** in their response to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus. Payment to State Veterans Homes will continue when residents are transferred to acute care due to COVID-19, regardless of their occupancy rate, and allow VA to provide any available PPE to state Homes.
- **Requires VA to provide PPE to all home health care workers** serving veterans at home and in the community.
- **Waives pay caps for VA staff working overtime** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Enables VA to provide additional support for vulnerable veterans**, including through programs to assist homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless veterans, as well as within VA-run nursing homes and community living centers.
- **Provides flexibility for veterans and their caregivers in the home-based Veteran Directed Care program**, preventing the need for institutional care.

Frequently Asked Questions for Veteran Health Care Providers and Workers

1. I run a State Veterans Home. Will I be penalized if my residents come down with COVID-19 and are transferred to acute care, putting me under the 90% occupancy rate threshold needed for payment from VA?
2. I run a State Veterans Home and I don't have enough PPE or supplies. What support can VA provide?
3. I run an area agency on aging/agency that provides services to veterans in the Veteran Directed Care program. Our county is telling us to limit face-to-face services and home visits. Can I still process new participants and renewals?

4. I'm a VA employee working lots of overtime due to COVID-19. Can I still receive overtime pay for hours worked, even if it puts me above the Federal pay caps?
5. I'm a home health care worker for the VA, can I receive PPE for providing home care services to veterans?
6. I am a VA HUD-VASH caseworker, how can I make sure I am keeping up with my veterans in the HUD-VASH program?
7. I am a Grant and Per Diem provider. Will I be able to keep my veterans enrolled after they are absent for 14 days?
8. Will I continue to get paid for veterans who are absent from my program for more than 3 days?
9. Will I get paid the same amount as before?
10. I am an SSVF provider. How does this bill allow me to continue to help homeless veterans?
11. I run a veteran-owned small business. Can the CARES Act help me?

Frequently Asked Questions for Veterans

1. I am a veteran living in a rural area and am being told that my appointments will now be through telehealth, but I can't afford internet services or don't have a good internet connection. How will this bill help me?
2. I'm a veteran in need of home-based care. Can I still enroll or renew my participation in the Veteran Directed Care program?
3. I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I can't get to a printer or post office to send in my renewal paperwork due to COVID-19. Will I be kicked out of the program?
4. I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I am currently living outside of my home state and can't travel home due to COVID-19 restrictions and health concerns. Can my caregiver still be paid for services, even if we are out of state?
5. I use VA's prosthetics service and need to get my prosthetic adjusted, but am nervous to go into a VA facility because I have underlying conditions that make me more at risk of complications from COVID-19. Where can I go to get my prosthetic adjusted?
6. I'm a veteran receiving pension and health care benefits from VA. Will the emergency income from the CARES Act (the Recovery Rebate) count towards my income for determining my eligibility for pension, health care, and other needs-based benefits?
7. I have a VA-backed mortgage, am I protected against foreclosure during the COVID-19 emergency declaration?
8. My school is converting to online education because of COVID-19, will I still receive my housing allowance?

VETERAN HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND WORKERS

1. **I run a State Veterans Home. Will I be penalized if my residents come down with COVID-19 and are transferred to acute care, putting me under the 90% occupancy rate threshold needed for payment from VA?** No. State Veterans Homes will continue to receive payment from VA during the COVID-19 pandemic, even if they don't meet the 90% occupancy rate or the 75% veteran occupancy rate requirements for per diem payment.
2. **I run a State Veterans Home and I don't have enough PPE or supplies. What support can VA provide?** In addition to requesting emergency supplies and PPE from your county or state emergency

coordinator, the CARES Act also allows VA to share PPE and supplies with State Veterans Homes to keep residents and staff safe.

3. **I run an area agency on aging/agency that provides services to veterans in the Veteran Directed Care program. Our county is telling us to limit face-to-face services and home visits. Can I still process new participants and renewals?** Yes. Agencies can now enroll or renew veterans in the Veteran Directed Care program through telephone or telehealth, no in-home visit required.
4. **I'm a VA employee working a lot of overtime due to COVID-19. Can I still receive overtime pay for hours worked, even if it puts me above the Federal pay caps?** Yes. Any VA employee involved in COVID-19 response efforts can receive pay for all hours worked, even above the normal pay caps, for work done in support of VA's response to COVID-19.
5. **I'm a home health care worker for the VA, can I receive PPE for providing home care services to veterans?** Yes. VA must provide PPE to any home health worker employed by or contracted with VA to provide services to veterans.
6. **I am a VA HUD-VASH caseworker, how can I make sure I am keeping up with my veterans in the HUD-VASH program?** The CARES Act encourages VA to use more telehealth capabilities for you and your veterans. Call each other or use Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger Video Chat, Google Hangouts Video, or Skype. Ask your local VA about access to an iPad or other tablet for you or your veterans to use to facilitate virtual meetings.
7. **I am a Grant and Per Diem provider. Will I be able to keep my veterans enrolled after they are absent for 14 days?** Yes. The CARES Act waives VA's requirement to automatically dis-enroll veterans using the GPD program if they are absent more than 14 days.
8. **Will I continue to get paid for veterans who are absent from my program for more than 3 days?** The CARES Act gives VA the authority to pay GPD providers for a veteran even if they are absent from the program for more than 3 days. Contact your local VA about this option.
9. **Will I get paid the same amount as before?** The CARES Act waives the current limit on the amount VA can pay GPD providers during the COVID-19 emergency. Contact your local VA about this option. This bill includes additional funding for VA to increase payments to many service providers, including the GPD program.
10. **I am an SSVF provider. How does this bill allow me to continue to help homeless veterans?** This bill includes additional funding for VA to increase payments to many service providers, including the SSVF program. For more information about how to help veterans during COVID-19, visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/>.
11. **I run a veteran-owned small business. Can the CARES Act help me?** Yes. If you are a veteran-owned small business, you can receive support through the Small Business Paycheck Protection Program to cover 8-weeks of your payroll, the mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs. There will be up to 100% loan forgiveness options for a veteran-owned small businesses that protects/fully maintains their workers.

VETERANS

1. **I am a veteran living in a rural area and am being told that my appointments will now be through telehealth, but I can't afford internet services or don't have a good internet connection. How will this bill help me?** Talk to your provider and local VA about getting an iPad or other tablet from VA. The CARES Act allows VA to enter into partnerships with local telecommunications companies to subsidize

or completely pay for broadband internet services. Call your local VA facility or send a secure message to your provider on My HealthVet to ask about this option.

2. **I'm a veteran in need of home-based care. Can I still enroll or renew my participation in the Veteran Directed Care program?** Yes. You can enroll or renew your participation in the Veteran Directed Care program through telephone or telehealth, no in-home visit required.
3. **I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I can't get to a printer or post office to send in my renewal paperwork due to COVID-19. Will I be kicked out of the program?** No. Veterans and their caregivers will not be penalized for late paperwork and will not be dis-enrolled or suspended from the program.
4. **I'm a veteran using the Veteran Directed Care program for home-based care, but I am currently living outside of my home state and can't travel home due to COVID-19 restrictions and health concerns. Can my caregiver still be paid for services, even if we are out of state?** Yes. Veterans and their caregivers will not be penalized for being out of state for more than 14 days during the COVID-19 emergency, and should continue to receive payments for care.
5. **I use VA's prosthetics service and need to get my prosthetic adjusted, but am nervous to go into a VA facility because I have underlying conditions that make me more at risk of complications from COVID-19. Where can I go to get my prosthetic adjusted?** The CARES Act gives VA more flexibility to allow veterans who need their prosthetics created or adjusted to do so in their local community. Call your local VA provider or message them on MyHealthVet and ask about this option.
6. **I'm a veteran receiving pension and health care benefits from VA. Will the emergency income from the CARES Act (the Recovery Rebate) count towards my income for determining my eligibility for pension, health care, and other needs-based benefits?** No. The 2020 Recovery Rebate payment cannot be counted as income when determining a veteran's eligibility for any VA needs-based benefits.
7. **I have a VA-backed mortgage, am I protected against foreclosure during the COVID-19 emergency declaration?** Yes, Federally backed mortgages, including those guaranteed or insured by the VA are protected from foreclosure for 60 days beginning on March 18, 2020. If borrowers are facing financial hardship, they can request a forbearance for up to 6 months, with a possible extension for another 6 months, through their mortgage holder.
8. **My school is converting to online education because of COVID-19, will I still receive my housing allowance?** Yes, The VA will continue to make housing allowance payments to students using VA education benefits at the on campus rate, if the school converted to online education due to COVID-19.