

VA VET CENTERS PROGRAM

Who We Are

We are the people in VA who welcome home war veterans with honor by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.

VET CENTER HISTORY

The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are community based and part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In April 1991, in response to the Persian Gulf War, Congress extended the eligibility to veterans who served during other periods of armed hostilities after the Vietnam era. Those other periods are identified as Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, and Kosovo/Bosnia. In October 1996, Congress extended the eligibility to include WWII and Korean Combat Veterans. The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life. On April 1, 2003 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs extended eligibility for Vet Center services to veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and on June 25, 2003 Vet Center eligibility was extended to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and subsequent operations within the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The family members of all veterans listed above are eligible for Vet Center services as well. On August 5, 2003 VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi authorized Vet Centers to furnish bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, to include federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel. We understand, and most of all, we care.

Vet Centers - Today

Life isn't always easy after a deployment. That's where Vet Centers can help. Vet Centers across the country provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to combat Veterans and their families. Vet Centers guide Veterans and their families through many of the major adjustments in lifestyle that often occur after a Veteran returns from combat. Services for a Veteran may include individual and group counseling in areas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), alcohol and drug assessment, and suicide prevention referrals. All services are free of cost and are strictly confidential.

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ELIGIBILITY

Any Veterans and active duty Service members, to include members of the National Guard and Reserve components, who:

- * Have served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility*
- * Experienced a military sexual trauma;
- * Provided direct emergent medical care or mortuary services, while serving on active military duty, to the casualties of war, or;
- * Served as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat zone or area of hostility.
- * Vietnam Era veterans who have accessed care at a Vet Center prior to January 1, 2004

Vet Center services are also provided to family members of Veterans and Service members for military related issues when it is found aid in the readjustment of those that have served. This includes bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death.

Service in combat theater or area of hostility to include but not limited to:

World War II (including American Merchant Marines)
Korean War
Vietnam War
Lebanon
Grenada
Desert Storm/ Desert Shield
Bosnia
Kosovo
Operations in the former Yugoslavia area
Global War on Terrorism
Operation Enduring Freedom
Operation Freedom's Sentinel
Operation Iraqi Freedom
Operation New Dawn

Services

What is readjustment counseling?

Readjustment counseling is a wide range of psycho social services offered to eligible Veterans and their families in the effort to make a successful transition from military to civilian life. They include:

- * Individual and group counseling for Veterans and their families
- * Family counseling for military related issues
- * Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- * Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- * Outreach and education including PDHRA, community events, etc.
- * Substance abuse assessment and referral

- * Employment assessment & referral
- * VBA benefits explanation and referral
- * Screening & referral for medical issues including TBI, depression, etc.

Does VA have readjustment counseling for family members?

Family members of combat veterans have been eligible for Vet Center readjustment counseling services for military related issues since 1979.

Am I eligible for Vet Center readjustment counseling?

If you, or a family member, served in any combat zone and received a military campaign ribbon (Vietnam, Southwest Asia, OEF, OIF, etc.) then your family is eligible for Vet Center services.

Where is counseling offered?

VA's readjustment counseling is provided at community-based Vet Centers located near veterans and their families. All Vet Center services are prepaid through military service. Contact your nearest Vet Center through information provided in the Vet Center Directory or listings in your local blue pages. Vet Center staff are available toll free and around the clock at 877-WAR-VETS FREE (927-8387).

Are Vet Centers open during non-traditional hours?

Yes, all Vet Centers maintain non-traditional appointment schedules, after normal business hours, to accommodate the schedules of Veterans and their family members. Bereavement Counseling

What is Bereavement Counseling?

Bereavement counseling is assistance and support to people with emotional and psychological stress after the death of a loved one. Bereavement counseling includes a broad range of transition services, including outreach, counseling, and referral services to family members.

Does VA Have Bereavement Counseling for Surviving Family Members?

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) offers bereavement counseling to parents, spouses and children of Armed Forces personnel who died in the service of their country. Also eligible are family members of reservists and National Guardsmen who die while on duty.

Where Is Counseling Offered?

VA's bereavement counseling is provided at community-based Vet Centers located near the families. There is no cost for VA bereavement counseling.

How Can You Obtain These Services?

Services are obtained by contacting Readjustment Counseling Service at 202-461-6530 or via electronic mail at vetcenter.bereavement@va.gov both of which are specific to this specialized service. RCS staff will assist families in contacting the nearest Vet Center. Often counseling can be made available in the family's home or where the family feels most comfortable.

Military Sexual Trauma Counseling

What is military sexual trauma counseling?

Military sexual trauma counseling may include individual or group counseling, marital and family counseling, referral for benefits assistance, liaison with community agencies or substance abuse information and referral to help you deal with the emotions of military sexual trauma and regain confidence in your everyday life.

Am I eligible for military sexual trauma counseling?

Any veteran who was sexually traumatized while serving in the military is eligible to receive counseling regardless of gender or era of service.

Where are services available?

Medical services are available at your local VA Medical Center and can be accessed by contacting the Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator (or Women Veterans Program Manager). Assessment and referral for sexual trauma counseling are available at all Vet Centers. On site counseling is available at selected Vet Centers across the country.