

# Gulf War Review

INFORMATION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN DESERT SHIELD/STORM AND THEIR FAMILIES

[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar)

## Secretary Shinseki Marks 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gulf War with Renewed Pledge to Improve Care and Services to Gulf War Veterans



August 2010 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Gulf War, launched with Operation Desert Shield and followed by Operation Desert Storm. VA honors this milestone with a renewed commitment to improving our responsiveness to the challenges facing Gulf War Veterans.

First and foremost, VA is an advocate for Veterans — we are committed to finding innovative solutions to long standing issues and to empowering our Veterans and other stakeholders to be a part of the solution.

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## VA Seeks to Cover New Illnesses for Gulf War Veterans

VA is streamlining the process by which Veterans may obtain disability compensation for certain diseases associated with service in the Gulf War and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In March 2010, VA published a proposed regulation in the Federal Register that will establish new presumptions of service-connection for nine specific infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War from 1990 to the present; and in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001.

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## Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force Releases Draft Report

In March 2010, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force (GWVI-TF) issued the final draft of a comprehensive report that will redefine how VA addresses the concerns of Veterans who deployed during the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991. Public comments on the report were solicited through early May 2010 both in formal written response and via the Internet. A record number of comments were received and are now being considered. A final report is expected later in 2010.

“Our mission at VA is to be advocates for Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki. “This report’s action plans provide a roadmap to transform the care and services we deliver to Gulf War Veterans. We must learn from the past and take the opportunity to anticipate the future needs of our Veterans.”

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#### ABOUT THE “REVIEW”

The Gulf War Review is produced by VA’s Environmental Agents Service (EAS) to provide information on long-term health issues and other concerns of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm Veterans, their families, and others. The Review provides updates on a wide range of VA programs and other Federal resources for Veterans.

This is the 41<sup>st</sup> issue of the Gulf War Review newsletter. This issue was completed in July 2010, and does not include developments that occurred after that time. For past issues of the newsletter and related information, see the Web site [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar).

Questions, comments, and suggestions for future issues are encouraged and can be sent to:

Editor, Gulf War Review  
Environmental Agents Service (131)  
Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

## Secretary Shinseki Marks 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gulf War with Renewed Pledge to Improve Care and Services to Gulf War Veterans

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VA recognizes and values the selfless service and sacrifice of Gulf War Veterans and their families, and continues our efforts to address the unique health needs of this Veteran community.

Today, more than 250,000 Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Veterans receive disability benefits from VA. Nearly 150,000 Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Veterans have been treated by VA for illnesses associated with their military service. We vow to reach more of these Veterans and have taken aggressive steps to do so. Earlier this year, VA proposed a new rule to make it easier for our Gulf War-era Veterans to obtain disability compensation and related health care. This rule, once it takes effect, will grant presumptive service-connection for nine infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia and Afghanistan.

In addition, VA’s ongoing Gulf War research and other efforts continue to examine multisymptom illnesses, and other conditions associated with service in this conflict. VA also participates in Federal research efforts on Gulf War illnesses, contributing more than \$158 million of the \$406 million in total Federal commitment.

VA is taking bold steps forward in how we consider and address the challenges facing our Gulf War Veterans as well as the challenges facing all Veterans. Our commitment to the Nation’s Veterans is unwavering.



Secretary Eric K. Shinseki

As your Secretary and a fellow Veteran, I pay tribute to all of you who so bravely served and thank all Gulf War Veterans for their heroic efforts. Our Nation owes you a debt of gratitude. We acknowledge and honor the contributions of your service. Thank you.

## NEWS BRIEFS | Benefits and Care for Gulf War Veterans

### Health

#### NEW VA ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

VA has updated regulations for Priority Group 8 Veterans. These regulations may allow certain Priority Group 8 Veterans to enroll in VA's health care system, even though they may have been denied in the past. VA's Priority Group 8 includes Veterans who either have no service-connected disability or a zero percent disability rating, with incomes above specific thresholds based on family size. The new regulations may also affect Veterans who applied for health care on or after January 1, 2009, but were denied because their household income was higher than VA's income limit.

Veterans who fall within Priority Group 8 may qualify if their income does not go over VA's income limit by more than 10 percent. This regulation went into effect on June 15, 2009. For more information about enrollment and to access a calculator to see if you qualify, visit: [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility) or [www4.va.gov/healtheligibility/eligibility/PG8Relaxation.asp](http://www4.va.gov/healtheligibility/eligibility/PG8Relaxation.asp). If you have any questions, please call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

### Work and Home

#### FEDERAL JOBS FOR VETERANS

Information about employment opportunities for Veterans in the Federal government is available from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. The [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov) Web site offers resources including: information on Veterans' preference policies, how Federal jobs are filled, special hiring authorities for Veterans, education/training opportunities, and contact information for Veteran Employment Program Offices at various Federal agencies for openings across the country.

For more information, go to [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov). For questions not answered on the Web site, Veterans may call 202-606-5090.

#### SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION'S (SBA) PATRIOT EXPRESS LOANS

Patriot Express is open to Veterans, Reserve and National Guard members, current spouses of eligible

personnel, the surviving spouses of Servicemembers who died on active duty, and spouses of Veterans who die from a service-connected disability. The program can help those wanting to establish or expand a small business.

More information about the SBA program is available online at [www.sba.gov/patriotexpress](http://www.sba.gov/patriotexpress) or by phone through the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA (1-800-827-5722). Inquiries may also be sent via e-mail to [answerdesk@sba.gov](mailto:answerdesk@sba.gov).

#### VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY

A VA-guaranteed home loan offers Veterans a number of safeguards and advantages that may not be available to them in other home loans. For example, the interest rate is competitive with conventional rates with little or no down payment required. VA-guaranteed loans are made by private lenders, such as banks, savings and loan associations, and mortgage companies, but guaranteed by VA.



As with any loan, applications must be made directly to the lender. A real estate broker can assist in finding a lender. To apply, ask your lender to obtain a certificate for you through VA's secure Web site. For more information, including eligibility requirements, go to [www.homeloans.va.gov](http://www.homeloans.va.gov) or call 1-888-244-6711.

### Education

#### VA EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR VETERANS

VA's Education Service administers education assistance programs that provide benefits to qualified Veterans, Servicemembers, Reservists, and dependents.

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## News Briefs (continued from page 3)

Current programs include:

- Montgomery GI Bill—Active Duty (MGIB-AD)
- Montgomery GI Bill—Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR)
- Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA); and
- Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)

Information about educational programs and the application process is available on the Internet at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp> or [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) or via telephone at **1-888-GIBILL1 (1-888-442-4551)**.

### FUNDING YOUR COLLEGE EDUCATION—HELP FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Veterans who wish to begin or continue their education can find an excellent overview of Federal Student Aid Programs on the Department of Education's Web site at [www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov](http://www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov). This site covers Federal student aid eligibility, applying for assistance, Montgomery GI Bill benefits, and other important topics. For questions not addressed on the Web site, Veterans

may call **1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)** or TTY **1-800-730-8913**.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step in the financial aid process. Use it to apply for Federal student financial aid, such as Pell grants, student loans, and college work-study. Most states and schools use FAFSA information to award financial aid. For online instructions on how to complete the FAFSA, visit the Web site <http://studentaid.ed.gov/completofafsa> and go to "Completing the FAFSA." Application requirements for your state or schools may involve additional forms or paperwork.

If questions, issues, or problems arise that cannot be answered or resolved through traditional sources of Federal Student Aid customer service then Veterans may contact the Federal Student Aid Office of the Ombudsman. To contact the Ombudsman, visit [www.ombudsman.ed.gov](http://www.ombudsman.ed.gov). The Web site provides information on many student loan topics, such as bankruptcy, default, disability, and more. Those without Internet access may call **1-877-557-2575** or **202-377-3800** to speak with the Ombudsman office in Washington, DC.

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## New Hotline for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-4AID VET

### HELPS VETERANS FIND FOOD, SHELTER, AND ASSISTANCE

VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans launched a telephone hotline to provide support and resources to homeless Veterans in March 2010.

Well-trained expert responders staff the **1-877-4AID VET** hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Family members, workers at community agencies, and non-VA providers also may call the hotline to find out about the many programs and services available to assist homeless Veterans.

"It is unacceptable for a single Veteran to spend the night on the streets of America," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki. "The hotline will provide homeless Veterans with caring, timely assistance, and coordinated access to VA and community services."

VA recognizes that homeless Veterans are in need of food and shelter, clothing, financial assistance, and treatment for medical conditions. Many also require access to permanent housing, Veterans benefits, and vocational resources.

In addition, assistance is available for homeless Veterans who may have substance abuse, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues.

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans is part of a series of initiatives to help homeless Veterans. In 2009, VA launched a campaign to eliminate homelessness among Veterans within five years. VA supports this initiative with approximately 4,000 agreements with community partners to help homeless Veterans. In 2009, more than 92,000 homeless Veterans were served by VA's specialized homeless programs.

*For additional information about VA's efforts to help homeless Veterans, go to [www1.va.gov/homeless](http://www1.va.gov/homeless).*

## IOM Releases Report on Gulf War and Health

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), an independent scientific review organization, released *Gulf War and Health: Volume 8* in April 2010.



The IOM report recommends that VA continue to monitor the health of both deployed and non-deployed Gulf War Veterans. In addition, it advises that VA should continue to conduct research to identify multisymptom illnesses among these Veterans and develop appropriate treatments.

As is required by law, VA has formed a task force to address the IOM report and make recommendations to the Secretary with respect to presumptions of service-connection. Upon completion of Secretary Shinseki's review, VA will announce any new regulations based on the findings. The Secretary's decision will also be announced at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar).

This report builds on an earlier IOM report published in 2006. In 2008, IOM was asked to update the 2006 report by reviewing the literature for those conditions that appeared to occur at a higher rate in Veterans deployed to the Gulf War than non-deployed Gulf War-era Veterans. In addition, IOM reviewed studies on cause-specific mortality in Gulf War Veterans and examined the literature to identify any emerging health outcomes.

*The recent report is available online at [www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Gulf-War-and-Health-Volume-8-Health-Effects-of-Serving-in-the-Gulf-War.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Gulf-War-and-Health-Volume-8-Health-Effects-of-Serving-in-the-Gulf-War.aspx).*

## VA Seeks to Cover New Illnesses for Gulf War Veterans (continued from page 1)

With the proposed rule, a Veteran will have to show service in Southwest Asia or Afghanistan, and that they were diagnosed with the particular disease within the presumptive period to obtain service-connection for any one of the nine diseases. Most of these diseases would be diagnosed within one year of return from Southwest Asia, though some conditions may manifest at a later time.

“We recognize the frustrations that many Gulf War and Afghanistan Veterans and their families experience on a daily basis as they look for answers to health questions, and seek benefits from VA,” said Secretary Shinseki.

The proposed rule includes information about the long-term health effects potentially associated with nine infectious diseases: Brucellosis, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Coxiella burnetii* (Q fever), malaria, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, Nontyphoid Salmonella, *Shigella*, Visceral leishmaniasis, and West Nile virus.

Presently under the law, a Veteran is required to establish through medical evidence an actual connection between military service in Southwest Asia or in Afghanistan, and any one of these diseases.

“By setting up scientifically based presumptive service-connection, we give these deserving Veterans an easier way to get the benefits they have earned in service to our country,” said Secretary Shinseki.

After the required comment and review period, a final regulation will be published. An announcement of the final regulation is expected in fall 2010.

*For more information about health problems associated with military service during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, as well information about disability compensation and other VA benefits, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar).*



## Comprehensive Health Care for Women Veterans

YOU SERVED, YOU DESERVE THE BEST CARE ANYWHERE

As the frontlines of battle and the rules of warfare have changed dramatically in the last 50 years, so has the face of the U.S. military and Veterans. Today's women soldiers are tomorrow's women Veterans.

VA now treats more women Veterans than ever, while getting ready for even more in the coming years. The number of women Veterans using VA care is expected to double over the next two to five years.

VA is committed to providing a comprehensive approach to women Veterans, to include primary care, preventive care screenings for breast and cervical cancer, gender-specific mental health care, and beyond. In addition, VA strives for excellence in meeting the unique needs of women Veterans who are over age 55, and is prepared to address health issues such as high risk for heart disease, cancers, and obesity-related issues such as diabetes.

To better serve women Veterans' needs, VA is launching a number of programs to address provider education and has increased access through clinic enhancements and home tele-health, the development and improvement of diagnostic services including laboratory and mammography, and created a system-wide focus on continuity of care.

Meeting women's health care needs starts at the nearest VA Medical Center (VAMC). VA knows women's health issues and each VA hospital has a Women Veterans Program Manager, who is there to help provide the quality care women Veterans need and deserve.

Contact the Women Veterans Program Manager at any VAMC or call **1-877-222-VETS (8387)** to find the nearest VA facility. Learn more about Women Veterans Health Care online at [www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth).

## Free Gulf War Health Registry Evaluation

VA maintains a health registry evaluation program to track the health of Veterans exposed to environmental hazards during military service. Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) exposures may include pesticides; infectious diseases; chemical and biological warfare agents; oil well fires; and depleted uranium.

If you think you have been exposed to environmental hazards during military service and would like an evaluation, contact an Environmental Health (EH) Coordinator at your local VA Medical Center. A listing of EH Coordinators is available online at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/eh\\_coordinators.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/eh_coordinators.asp). Information is also available through the VA special health issues helpline at **1-800-749-8387**.

The health registry evaluation is available free of charge to all eligible Veterans. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to be eligible. The evaluation provides Veterans with:

- A free specialized health evaluation
- Answers to questions about environmental exposures
- Information on health care and other VA benefits
- Test results shared and maintained in VA medical records

*Note: A health registry evaluation or exam is not a claim for VA benefits.*

### GULF WAR HEALTH REGISTRY STATISTICS (as of March 2010)\*

INITIAL EXAMINATIONS:	<b>116,628</b>
FOLLOW-UP EXAMINATIONS:	<b>6,896</b>
TOTAL (INITIAL & FOLLOW-UP):	<b>123,524</b>

*\*These numbers reflect examinations of Veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War and of Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans are not eligible for the Gulf War Registry health examination.)*

## Health Conditions Recognized for Presumptive Service-Connection

*The information below has been updated as of July 2010. For additional updates, visit [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar).*

Presumptive service-connection means that VA acknowledges that a condition is service-connected even without direct evidence showing that it was incurred during military service. However, claims must still be filed by these Veterans to be considered for disability compensation. VA encourages Veterans with these conditions to apply for VA disability compensation.

### LIST OF PROPOSED\* CONDITIONS RECOGNIZED FOR PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE-CONNECTION FOR GULF WAR VETERANS

\*In March 2010, VA proposed new regulations stating that Veterans who served in the Gulf War and have one or more of these conditions are presumed service-connected. When the final regulations are published later in 2010, VA will process filed claims and pay compensation at the appropriate level.

*Note: With three exceptions, the condition must have become manifest to a degree of 10% or more within 1 year from the date of military separation.*

- *Malaria must have become manifest to a degree of 10% or more within 1 year from the date of separation or at a time when standard or accepted treatises indicate that the incubation period commenced during a qualifying period of service.*
- *There is no time limit for visceral leishmaniasis to have become manifest to a degree of 10% or more.*
- *There is no time limit for mycobacterium tuberculosis to have become manifest to a degree of 10% or more.*

**Brucellosis\*:** A bacterial disease with symptoms such as profuse sweating and joint and muscle pain. The illness may be chronic and persist for years.

**Campylobacter jejuni\*:** A disease with symptom such as abdominal pain, diarrhea, and fever.

**Coxiella burnetii (Q fever)\*:** A bacterial disease with symptoms such as fever, severe headache, and gas intestinal problems such as nausea and diarrhea. In chronic cases, the illness may cause inflammation of the heart.

**Malaria\*:** An infectious disease caused by a parasite. Symptoms include chills, fever, and sweats.

**Mycobacterium tuberculosis\*:** An illness that primarily affects the lungs and causes symptoms such as chest pain, persistent cough (sometimes bloody), weight loss and fever.

**Nontyphoid Salmonella\*:** A condition characterized by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

**Shigella\*:** A condition characterized by symptoms such as fever, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

**Visceral leishmaniasis\*:** A parasitic disease characterized by symptoms such as fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anemia. The condition may be fatal if left untreated.

**West Nile virus\*:** A disease spread by mosquitoes characterized by symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle pain or weakness, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms may range from mild to severe.

### LIST OF CURRENT CONDITIONS RECOGNIZED FOR PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE-CONNECTION FOR GULF WAR VETERANS

**Chronic fatigue syndrome:** A condition of prolonged and severe tiredness that is not relieved by rest and is not directly caused by other conditions.

**Fibromyalgia:** A common condition characterized by long-term, body-wide pain, and tender points in joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues.

**Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS):** A common disorder that affects the intestines (colon) and causes cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and constipation.



## Disability Compensation from VA

Like other Veterans, Gulf War Veterans with service-connected illnesses or injuries may be eligible for monthly payments called disability compensation. The disability must have been incurred or aggravated during active military service. Furthermore, the military service of the Veteran must have been terminated through separation or discharge under conditions that were other than dishonorable.

Disability compensation varies according to the degree of disability and the number of dependents. Benefits are not subject to Federal or state income tax. Receipt of military retirement pay, disability severance pay, and separation incentive payments, known as SSB and VSI (Special Separation Benefits and Voluntary Separation Incentives), may affect the amount of VA compensation paid.

Disability ratings range from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). For example, in 2010, a Veteran with a disability rating of 10 percent receives \$123 per month; a Veteran with disability rating of 50 percent gets \$770 per month; and a Veteran with no dependents who is totally disabled and evaluated at 100 percent receives \$2,673 monthly.

Veterans with disability ratings between 30 and 100 percent also may be eligible for monthly allowances for eligible dependents. (The amount depends on the disability rating).

A Veteran who is in need of regular aid and attendance of another person (including the Veteran's spouse), or who is permanently housebound may be entitled to additional benefits. VA must make that determination before the Veteran can receive these benefits.

Veterans can apply for VA disability benefits by completing and submitting VA Form 21-256, Veterans Application for Compensation and Pension. If you have any of the following materials, please attach them to the application:

- Discharge or separation papers (DD-214 or equivalent).
- Dependency records (marriage and children's birth certificates).
- Medical evidence (doctor and hospital reports).

You can also apply online through VA's Web site at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>.

Other Benefits: In addition to the disability compensation program, individual Veterans may be eligible for the full range of other benefits offered by VA, including education and training, vocational rehabilitation, home loan guaranties, life insurance, pension, burial benefits, and more. To learn more go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or call **1-800-827-1000**.



### MONTHLY DISABILITY COMPENSATION RATES FOR 2010:

Percent Disabled	No Dependents	Veteran & Spouse
10%	\$123	—
20%	\$243	—
30%	\$376	\$421
40%	\$541	\$601
50%	\$770	\$845
60%	\$974	\$1,064
70%	\$1,228	\$1,333
80%	\$1,427	\$1,547
90%	\$1,604	\$1,739
100%	\$2,673	\$2,823

## Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force Releases Draft Report *(continued from page 1)*

Of the almost 700,000 total Servicemembers who deployed to Operation Desert Shield in 1990 and Operation Desert Storm in 1991, more than 300,000 have filed disability claims, over 85 percent of which have been granted service-connection for at least one condition.

The mission of the GWVI-TF is to identify gaps in services as well as opportunities to better serve Veterans of the Gulf War. Some of the Task Force recommendations include:

- Improve the delivery of benefits to Veterans with Gulf War-related disabilities
- Expand training for VA benefit examiners on how to administer disability claims with multiple known toxin exposure incidents
- Find new treatments for Gulf War Veterans through new research
- Enhance outreach to provide information and guidance to Veterans about benefits and services available to them for injuries/illnesses associated with Gulf War service
- Improve VA health care for Veterans through a new model of interdisciplinary health education and training (*see story below*)

- Increase number of long-term, Veteran-focused studies of Veterans to enhance the quality of care VA provides
- Transition from reactive to proactive medical surveillance to help better manage Veterans' potential hazardous exposures.

The Chairman of the GWVI-TF, John R. Gingrich, Chief of Staff at VA and a Gulf War Veteran, states "Reaching out to Gulf War Veterans is not only essential to our transformation of VA, for many of us it is also personal. Having commanded troops in the Gulf War, and then knowing that some of these brave men and women have fallen to mysterious illnesses has been both a frustrating and saddening experience. We now have an opportunity to do something about this situation — with this Task Force, I know that we will improve the care and services these Veterans have earned."

The GWVI-TF recommendations build on the excellent work and findings of The Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Advisory Committee, VA Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illnesses, the interagency Deployment Health Working Group, and other related sources.

*The report is available on VA's Web site at [www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/gwvi\\_draft\\_report.pdf](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/gwvi_draft_report.pdf).*

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## VA Begins to Implement Task Force Recommendations — New Veterans Health Initiative on Gulf War

A part of the Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force report included a recommendation to improve VA's training of clinicians in illnesses and conditions particular to Gulf War Veterans.

To this end, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has taken two major initiatives to support this piece of the Task Force recommendations.

The first is the complete overhaul of the Veterans Health Initiative training program, starting with the volume on Gulf War. The new clinical training program was completely redesigned with a new volume called "Caring for Gulf War Veterans."

The program is composed of nine sections that VA clinicians can take; these sections include: The Gulf War from a Veteran's Perspective; Exposures of

Concern to Gulf War Veterans; Undiagnosed and Unexplained Illness; Disability Compensation for Gulf War Veterans; Gender-specific Issues; and How to Take a Good Exposure History; among others.

It is anticipated that this new training program will be accessible to clinicians by fall of 2010.

The second initiative is the presentation of several seminars around the country on various exposure incidents and concerns of Gulf War and Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) Veterans, as these conflicts have several exposure-related concerns in common. These seminars will begin in 2010 and are intended to improve VA staff's understanding of these issues in order to help them provide optimal care for Gulf War and OIF/OEF Veterans.

## Where to Get Help and Information

 Gulf War Information Helpline	1-800-749-8387	 VA Benefits Information	1-800-827-1000
 Gulf War Veterans Web Site	<a href="http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar">www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar</a>	 Nearest VA Medical Center	<a href="http://www.va.gov/directory">www.va.gov/directory</a>

General information resources for Gulf War Veterans include:

- The VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**
- The Web site [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar) for information on Gulf War Veteran health care and other benefits

Veterans with health concerns may reach the nearest VA Medical Center (VAMC) in any of the following ways:

- Go to [www.va.gov/directory](http://www.va.gov/directory) to locate the nearest VAMC
- Call the VAMC number listed in any local telephone directory under Department of Veterans Affairs in the “U.S. Government” listings

The VAMCs offer medical care and may provide a Gulf War registry examination for Operation Desert Shield/Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans upon request.

Gulf War Veterans seeking disability compensation for illnesses incurred in or aggravated by military service can use any of the following resources:

- Contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA Regional Office or health care facility at **1-800-827-1000**
- Submit claims online at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>
- Call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**

Gulf War Veterans interested in learning about the wide range of benefit programs administered by VA may:

- Contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility at **1-800-827-1000**
- Call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**

Representatives of Veterans Service Organizations, including the American Legion (**1-800-433-3318**), Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (**1-800-VFW-1899 or 1-800-839-1899**), Disabled American Veterans (**1-877-426-2838**), and others have been very helpful to Gulf War Veterans. The organizations mentioned here are examples; there are many other excellent organizations and VA does not endorse or recommend any one group over another. For a full list, visit [www.va.gov/vso](http://www.va.gov/vso). State and County Veterans Service Officers can also be of great help to Veterans.

For additional Federal benefit information, see VA’s “Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors” booklet. This booklet, updated annually to reflect changes in law and policies, is available at [www.va.gov/opa/Is1](http://www.va.gov/opa/Is1). It also may be purchased from the U.S. Government Printing Office at the Web site <http://bookstore.gpo.gov> or by mail:

U.S. Government Printing Office  
Superintendent of Documents  
Washington, DC 20402

Visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) for the most current information on compensation and pension benefits, health care benefits and services, burial and memorial benefits, and other areas.



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BE THE FIRST TO READ THE LATEST EDITION OF THE NEWSLETTER!

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Please use this form to help us keep our mailing list up to date.

Send corrections to:

**Gulf War Review**  
**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**AITC-ATTN: Mailing list update (32B)**  
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