

THE LIGHTFIGHTER

Monterey County
Military & Veterans Affairs Office



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Director's Message: Welcome



Welcome to this issue of the LIGHTFIGHTER. The County Fiscal year ended on June 30th and it is with great pleasure that I can inform you that the County Board of Supervisors has approved an increase in our budget to hire an additional Veteran Services Representative (VSR). We were able to utilize our existing list of applicants to make a job offer to Adam Errahebi – Air Force Veteran. Although Adam is the newest employee on our team, he has been a CSUMB work-study for our office for several years. We now have 5 Veteran Services Representatives to serve our County.

This year we plan to focus on awareness and outreach. We will incorporate a new strategy with Hospice & Housebound Veterans, Homeless Veterans Outreach, as well as providing services to the Underserved Areas of the County. In addition, I have forged a partnership between CalVET and the Transition Assist Programs (TAPS) at both DLI and the Naval Post-Graduate School to provide veterans' benefits information to service members separating from active duty.

In February 2019, the VA implemented the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) streamlining the appeals process. In June 2019, the Mission Act (www.missionact.va.gov) took effect allowing more ways to access health care outside of the VA. The AMA and Mission Act are two steps in the right direction placing more power in our hands (ultimately your hands) regarding the appeal process and health care options. Remember that your Military and Veterans Affairs Office is the key to unlock your VA Benefits.

Thank you for your service to our country.

Very respectfully,

Jason Cameron

Cover Art by Luis D. Salcedo (USMC, Retired),
"HMH-764, CH-46 Pilot "

Meet Our Staff

Monterey County

VSR Appointment Line:
(831) 647-7613

Veteran VanRide Program
(831) 647-7614

Hours of Operation:
Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Monterey County Military & Veterans Affairs Office

Office: (831) 647-7613

Fax: (831) 647-7618

***Call to Schedule an Appointment
and for Walk-In Dates and Times**

San Benito County

VSR Appointment Line:
(831) 637-4846

Fax Number:
(831) 637-1609

Hours of Operation:
Mondays- Thursday
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.



Fernando Romo
Senior VSR
Monterey County



Douglas Chandler
VSR
Monterey County



Jorge Rojas
VSR
Monterey County



Anita Pascual
VSR
Monterey County



Shari Ann Stevenson
Senior VSR
San Benito County

Our Mission Statement:

The Monterey County Military & Veterans Affairs Office (MVAO) provides advocacy, assistance and services designed to enhance the lives of the County's veterans who served their country in the Armed Forces, their families, and their survivors.



Little Known VA Caregiver Program

Just passed into law is the PL 115-182, the VA MISSION Act of 2018. This new law improves and expands the **VA Family Caregiver Program**. It also requires implementation of Information Technology System and modifies the annual evaluation reporting in the Caregiving Program.

Currently, only caregivers of veterans who suffered a qualifying in the line of duty injury on or after Sept. 11, 2001 are eligible for this program. Due to recent changes in the law, caregivers of veterans who suffered a qualifying in the line of duty injury prior to May 7, 1975 will become eligible in late 2019. Caregivers of all other veterans will be eligible for the benefit by 2021.

To be eligible, caregivers must be providing in-home care for veterans who:

- Have a serious injury – including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma or other mental disorder.
- Are in need of personal care services because of an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living and/or need supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological impairment or injury.
- The veteran must be enrolled in the VA healthcare program, and the injury must be service-connected.

Services Available to Caregivers through this Program

Caregivers of eligible veterans can receive:

- Monthly stipend
- Travel expenses (including lodging and per diem while accompanying veterans undergoing care)
- Access to health care insurance (if the caregiver is not already entitled to care or services under a health care plan)
- Mental health services and counseling
- Comprehensive VA Caregiver training provided by Easter Seals
- Respite care (not less than 30 days per year)

By Late 2019, additional services and support:

- Financial Planning services
- Legal services, including legal advice and consultation

Visit VA's caregiver page for more information about this benefit at www.caregiver.va.gov.

VA Urgent Care

As part of implementing the VA MISSION Act of 2018, the VA is now offering an urgent care benefit that provides eligible Veterans with greater choice and access to timely, high-quality care. Urgent care providers treat injuries and illnesses that require immediate attention but are not life-threatening. The benefit supplements care Veterans may also have access to at a VA medical facility.

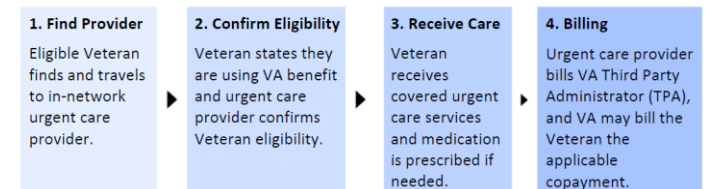
When using the urgent care benefit, Veterans must go to an urgent care provider in the VA's network. Upon arriving, Veterans must state they are using their VA urgent care benefit. The urgent care provider will verify the Veteran's eligibility before providing care.

To find an urgent care location in VA's contracted network, Veterans can use the [VA Urgent Care Locator](https://vaurgentcarelocator.triwest.com/). (<https://vaurgentcarelocator.triwest.com/>)

If a Veteran arrives at an urgent care network location and has any difficulty receiving care, they can call: **1-866-620-2071** to receive assistance.

Veterans may be billed by VA separately for a copayment when using the urgent care benefit, depending on their assigned priority group and the number of times they use the urgent care benefit in a calendar year.

Process Overview



Important: VA can only pay for urgent care if the provider is part of VA's contracted network. Veterans who go to an out-of-network urgent care provider, may be required to pay the full cost of care.

Eligibility:

Veterans will be eligible for the urgent care benefit if they are enrolled in VA health care and have received care through the VA within 24 months prior to receiving this care.

To check their eligibility, veterans should contact their local VA medical facility.



It is our great pleasure to share with you our office's Annual Activity Report.

Our office was able to contribute over \$12M in financial resources to Monterey County between July 2018 and June 2019.

Our office's contributions to local veterans include:

- VA Claims Support
- Tuition Fee Waivers for Dependents
- VA Van Ride Services
- Homeless Veterans Stand Down

We would like to take a moment to say **thank-you** to all the veterans and dependents for choosing our team to be your veteran service organization!

We are very excited for what the next year has in store for our team and the veterans we serve!



MONTEREY COUNTY

MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

July 1st, 2018 - June 30th, 2019

12,962 Veterans
and Dependents Served



4,961 Claims Filed



1,217 New Contacts Made at
62 Outreach Events



95% Customer
Satisfaction

Disability Compensation Retroactive Payments

\$3,383,811



Disability Compensation Monthly Payments Annualized

\$7,086,349

Palo Alto Van Ride Mileage Contribution

\$54,356

College Tuition Fees Waived

\$1,498,932



2018 Veterans Stand Down Contribution

\$68,540

Total Annual Contribution to Monterey County Veterans

\$12,091,988

www.mcvso.org

Proudly Serving those who served.

(831) 647-7613