

CORONAVIRUS FAQs FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS

HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Access to Veterans Clinics and Healthcare Facilities

- **Are Connecticut VA clinics still open?**
 - All Connecticut outpatient VA clinics (Danbury, New London, Stamford, Waterbury, Willimantic and Winsted) are currently **closed to in-person** visits due to coronavirus.
 - Patients who have not been contacted by clinic staff prior to your scheduled appointment should call the clinic directly for instructions or the Call Center at 888-808-7921. **Always call in advance before visiting a clinic.**
- **What should you do if you have an appointment or want to ask about visiting a clinic?**
 - Call 866-808-7921 before visiting the clinic—even if you already have an appointment. Or you can sign in to [My HealtheVet](#) and send a secure message.
- **What should you expect if you are instructed to visit a healthcare facility?**
 - Due to coronavirus, facilities are now conducting health screening tests for those who need to visit. Visitors are met at the entrance by a staff member, who will greet you and ask you some screening questions. Depending on your answers, a VA health care professional will assist you on the next steps of your visit.
- **What are the alternatives to visiting a healthcare facility in person?**
 - Instead of visiting a healthcare facility, you can speak with your care provider to determine if Telehealth (healthcare by phone) and/or VA Video Connect (healthcare app on your computer or mobile device) would work for you.
 - **Telehealth:**
 - To inquire about telehealth options for scheduled or future appointments you can call 203-937-4767 or 860-667-6838. You can schedule an appointment:
 - **By phone (recommended):** This is the fastest way to secure a telehealth appointment. Call your local VA health facility to schedule or change an appointment time. You can also call 203-937-4767 or 860-667-6838, and an operator will be able to transfer you.
 - **Online:** You can request an appointment online and a scheduler will get back to you. Due to coronavirus, you can't directly schedule an appointment for yourself online.
 - **VA Video Connect:**
 - VA Video Connect is a mobile application that allows you to be seen by a medical provider via your mobile phone or computer. To use VA Video Connect, you must: (1) be enrolled in VA health care, (2) have access to a working email account, (3) if using an iOS device, install the iOS VA Video Connect App from iTunes.

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What to Do If You Are Experiencing Symptoms of Coronavirus

- **What are the symptoms of coronavirus?**
 - According to the CDC, the symptoms of coronavirus include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- **What should you do if you think you are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus?**
 - If you have symptoms of coronavirus, call the VA medical center or message your doctor through MyHealtheVet prior visiting a medical center. The staff at the center and/or your doctor may recommend a telehealth consult prior to an in-person visit, saving you time and protecting you from the virus.
 - To find out if and when your local centers are open, visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>, which has information about hours and the availability of mobile clinics.
 - If you experience emergency warning signs of coronavirus, seek medical attention immediately. According to the CDC, these signs include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face. This list is not all inclusive, and you should consult your medical provider for any other severe or concerning symptoms.

Telephone Numbers for Veterans HealthCare in Connecticut

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|---|---|
| 24 Hour Nurse & Telephone Care | West Haven Campus: 203-937-4767 Newington Campus: 860-667-6838 |
| Change Your Appointment | West Haven Campus: 203-937-4767 or 203-937-3874 Newington Campus: 860-666-6951 |
| Veterans Crisis Line | 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1) |
| National Veterans Helpline | 1-800-507-4571 |
| Patient Locator | 203-932-5711 x7246 or x7248 |
| Pharmacy Refill | 1-888-440-6580 |
| Staff Locator | 203-932-5711 x4211 |

VA BENEFITS

Veterans Benefits Claims and Appeals

- **Is the VA still processing veterans benefits claims?**
 - Yes, the VA is still processing veterans benefits claims. However, there are some disruptions due to coronavirus, and some processes like in-person claim exams have been postponed. As a result, there may be delays in processing.
- **What if you have a claim exam scheduled?**
 - The VA is still conducting compensation and pension (C&P), exams, but the VA is now doing many exams virtually by phone, videoconference, or online.
- **What if your claim requires an in-person exam?**

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- The VA is not conducting in-person exams right now and will contact you to reschedule the exam for a later date.
- If you have questions or would like to proactively reschedule your exam, contact your VA medical center or health facility, or send a secure message to your health care provider through MyHealtheVet as soon as possible.
- **Can you get an extension on filing deadlines?**
 - Yes. As of April 3, 2020, the VA is providing extensions for any claim or paperwork deadlines. For more information, you can call the VA at 800-827-1000 from Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Hearings

- **Is the Board of Veterans' Appeals still holding hearings?**
 - The Board has temporarily suspended all in-person hearings, including travel board and Central Office hearings. However, virtual hearings remain available.
- **Can you change your hearing to a virtual hearing or postpone your hearing?**
 - Yes. If you already have a hearing scheduled and want to change to a virtual hearing or postpone the hearing, you can reach out to your Hartford Regional Office hearing coordinator, Maria Jackson, at Maria.Jackson@va.gov. You can also call the general VA Appeals information line at 1-800-827-1000.

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) Proceedings

- For information on changes to CAVC operations visit:
http://www.uscourts.cavc.gov/special.php?ann_id=131.

GI Benefits

- **If you are a student veteran, can you still receive GI Bill benefits even though your classes have now moved online?**
 - Yes. The VA will continue providing the same level of education benefits to GI Bill students who now have to take courses online due to the coronavirus outbreak.
 - GI Bill students will continue receiving the same monthly housing allowance (MHA) payments they received for resident training until Dec. 21, or until the school resumes in-person classes.

RECORDS CORRECTIONS AND DISCHARGE UPGRADES

- **Are there any changes to operations by the DoD Boards for records corrections or discharge upgrades?**
 - All federal records centers are closed for routine action. This closure may affect the timeliness of new applications received. All current requests continue to process to the maximum extent possible during the crisis.
 - If an application is affected by this process, the application will be closed until further notice. Once federal records centers' operations resume, the application will be reopened automatically and you will be contacted.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- **What mental health resources are still available during this time?**

Veterans Centers

- All Connecticut-based Veterans Centers are still open, but are urging individuals to call before taking any other action.
 - In an emergency, the New Haven and Danbury centers will still see individuals in person, but ask that anyone who may be in an emergency situation call prior to coming in. The pre-screening call will determine when you can be seen.
 - In an emergency, the Hartford and Norwich Vets Centers are recommending that individuals go to their nearest VA health center.
- All Connecticut-based Veterans Centers are offering their counseling options over the phone and internet for individuals who meet their eligibility criteria (for example, combat veterans or individuals with experience of military sexual trauma).
 - Intake is being conducted over the phone.
 - One-on-one counseling takes place either over the phone or on the VA's Video Connect platform or other VA approved platforms (such as Zoom) at the convenience of the Veteran.
 - Group counseling continues via conference calls for the convenience of Veterans without access to the internet.
 - Veterans with Other Than Honorable discharges are still able to access these resources, provided they meet the combat veteran or MST eligibility criteria.
 - DAV transportation is no longer available to these facilities.
- **Location and Call-in Information**
 - Danbury Vet Center, The Atrium Building, 457 North Main Street, 1st floor
 - Phone: (203) 790-4000 or (877) 927-8387
 - Norwich Vet Center, 2 Cliff Street
 - Phone: (860) 887-1755
 - New Haven Vet Center, 291 South Lambert Road (in Orange)
 - Phone: (203) 795-00148
 - Hartford Vet Center, 25 Elm Street, Suite A (in Rocky Hill)
 - Phone: (860) 563-8800

Online and Call-in Resources

- **War Vet Call Center**
 - The War Vet Call Center is a confidential call center where combat Veterans and their families can call to talk about their military experience or any other issue they are facing in their readjustment to civilian life.
 - Call 1-877-WAR-VETS (1-877-927-8387), 24/7.

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- **Women Veterans Call Center**
 - The Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) provides VA services and resources to women Veterans, their families, and caregivers. You can also chat online anonymously with a WVCC representative.
 - Call 1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636) 8 a.m.–10 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday; 8 a.m.–6:30 p.m. ET, Saturday.
 - Chat 8 a.m.–10 p.m. ET Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–6:30 p.m. ET, Saturday: <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>
- **Real Warriors**
 - Real Warriors, a program through the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), provides information and resources about psychological health, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury.
 - Call 1-866-966-1020, available 24/7.
 - Chat online 24/7: <https://www.realwarriors.net/livechat>

Acute Care

- If you have thoughts of suicide or harming yourself or otherwise need to speak with a someone urgently due to mental health concerns you can:
 - **Call the Veterans Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
 - You can also chat online at their website: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
 - **Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline:** 1-800-273-8255
 - Text with someone at crisistextline.org (text HOME to 741741)

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