Get started with **Mental Health Services**

This guide will help you access mental health services, which may include treatment and support for mental health problems like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the effects of military sexual trauma (MST), depression, grief, substance use problems, and anxiety-related conditions.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Choose VA

I need help now.

Call, text, or chat online with our caring, qualified responders at the Veterans Crisis Line. Many of the responders are Veterans themselves. The confidential line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

- → **Call** 1-800-273-8255, press 1
- → **Text** a message to 838255
- → **Online** veteranscrisisline.net, click "chat"

For emergency mental health care, you can also **go directly to your local VA medical center**—regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.

I'm not in crisis, I'm just having problems sleeping, controlling my anger, or readjusting to civilian life.

You are not alone. Over 1.7 million Veterans received mental health care at VA last year. Mental health professionals at VA specialize in the mental health needs of Veterans. Services range from peer support with other Veterans to counseling with a mental health professional to medication. You may be eligible for these services from VA or VA may be able to connect you with mental health resources in your community.

Am I eligible for VA mental health care?

Most former Servicemembers can access VA mental health care services, but costs may vary. Here are some common scenarios:

I separated recently from uniformed service with an honorable discharge.

- All former Servicemembers can access emergency VA mental health care. Call or visit your local VA medical center to determine your eligibility for non-emergency VA mental health care. Many programs and services do not require a payment. When payment is required, cost depends on many factors.

I am a recently separated combat Veteran with an honorable discharge.

- You may be eligible to enroll in VA health care and receive care for conditions related to your combat service at no cost for 5 years after your date of discharge.

I separated from uniformed service many years ago.

- All former Servicemembers can access emergency VA mental health care. Call or visit your local VA medical center to determine your eligibility for non-emergency VA mental health care. Many programs and services do not require a payment. When payment is required, cost depends on many factors.

I am a current or former member of the National Guard or Reserves.

- You may be eligible for VA mental health care services.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE MY FIRST APPOINTMENT?

*If you are already signed up for VA health care, **call or visit your local VA medical center.***

→ *Find locations and phone numbers **online** va.gov/find-locations*

*Depending on what best meets your needs, you will receive a face-to-face visit with a clinician, or a phone or video call with a nurse, or a prescription filled the **same day**. If you are not already signed up for VA health care, **call** us or visit your local VA medical facility to find out what services may be available to you.*

→ *1-877-222-VETS (1-877-222-8387) Mon.–Fri., 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. (EST)*

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

*VA considers a combination of your **disability rating, service history, medical need**, and **income level** when determining how much you might have to pay for services.*

Please don't let the possibility of paying "out-of-pocket" stop you from getting mental health care.

If you have any questions, please give us a call at 1-877-222-VETS (1-877-222-8387).

What if I have an Other-than-Honorable (OTH) or "bad paper" discharge?

You may receive emergency VA mental health care. You may also be eligible for non-emergency VA mental health care. Call or visit your local VA medical facility to find out what services may be available to you.

Do I have to be enrolled in VA health care to access VA mental health services?

No. There are some VA mental health services you can access without being enrolled in VA health care. For example, regardless of disability claim or enrollment status, community-based Vet Centers offer free individual and group counseling for Veterans and their families, if the Veteran served in a combat zone or area of hostility, or served as part of a mortuary affairs or drone crew. Vet Centers also provide counseling for survivors of military sexual trauma (MST), and their families, regardless of when or where you served and may provide other services, such as:

- Readjustment counseling
- VA benefits assistance
- Bereavement (grief) counseling
- Employment counseling
- Substance abuse assessment and referral

→ **Call** 1-877 WAR VETS (1-877-927-8387), confidential and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

→ **Find** a Vet Center at va.gov/find-locations

If you do enroll in VA health care, you will have access to VA's full range of health care services. Even if you do not enroll, you may be eligible for other VA **benefits**, such as housing, employment, job training, and education—all of which can affect mental health. We encourage all former Servicemembers to contact us so we can determine how to best support you.

Will using mental health services at VA put my career at risk?

Medical records are protected by privacy laws. A mental health diagnosis or seeking mental health care does not automatically jeopardize work-related credentials such as security clearances. Generally, employers recognize that healthy employees who get the help they need are more productive and effective in their jobs.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

It can be difficult for me to visit VA facilities. Are there services I can access online?

VA's Telehealth is a program where you can talk to a mental health provider on a mobile device, a computer in your home, or at a local VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). VA can provide the necessary equipment if you don't already have it. Ask any of your VA health care providers for help connecting you with the Telehealth program.

What other options do I have?

Make the Connection is an online resource where you can hear stories from other Veterans who sought help with mental health challenges.

→ **Online** maketheconnection.net

Military OneSource provides many resources for active duty Servicemembers, Veterans (up to one year after separation), and their immediate family members.

→ **Call** 1-800-342-9647

→ **Online** militaryonesource.mil click to chat

What if I have lost my housing or I am in danger of losing it?

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans can help.

→ **Call** 1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

Are there VA mental health resources for family and caregivers of Veterans?

Caregiver Support Coordinators are social workers and nurses with extensive knowledge of VA benefits and services. They can help you connect with the resources you need.

→ **Call** the Caregiver Support Line 855-260-3274, Monday–Friday 8 a.m.–8 p.m. (EST)

→ **Online** www.caregiver.va.gov/help_landing.asp

→ **Find** a Caregiver Support Coordinator in person at a VA Medical Center