



# ACROSS THE ISLANDS

## VETERANS HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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### KOA 2026 Challenge Adaptive Sports Competition

Registration is now open for the KOA 2026 Challenge, taking place November 5-12, 2026. Participants can pick up registration packets at the Spark Matsunaga Lobby and Akaka Atrium.

The final day to register is May 29, 2026. Don't miss your opportunity to take part in this exciting event and join the challenge.

16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WALK & ROLL



**SAVE THE DATE**

**May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026**  
**Guam CBOC**  
**Veterans & Staff walk**  
**or roll for Health!**



## VA2K WALK & ROLL - GUAM

The annual VA2K encourages healthy, active living while supporting homeless Veterans through voluntary donations of food and clothing. VA medical centers nationwide host free two-kilometer (1.24-mile) events to bring Veterans, staff, and communities together for wellness and outreach.

The VA Pacific Islands Health Care System will hold its VA2K on May 19, 2026, at the Guam CBOC, themed "Veterans & Staff Walk or Roll for Health!" All Veterans, staff, and partners are invited to join the walk or roll and, if able, bring optional donations that will directly benefit homeless Veterans in the region. This event is a great opportunity to promote camaraderie and raise awareness about the needs of our local Veteran community. Everyone is welcome to participate and help make a positive impact.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Pacific Islands Health Care System

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
ON VA HEALTH CARE, CALL  
1-800-214-1306

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“The acupuncture service is amazing, I love going to each of my sessions. Very helpful with my pain management

Veteran at the  
Daniel K. Akaka VA Clinic



## SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH VA SUPPORTS MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA SURVIVORS IN FINDING THEIR PATH TO HEALING

About 1 in 3 women and 1 in 40 men respond “yes” when asked by their U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care provider whether they experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault during military service. As the nation again observes Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month this April, these numbers serve as a stark reminder of the need for resources that can help Veterans heal from military sexual trauma (MST).

MST refers to sexual assault or threatening sexual harassment during military service. People of all ages, races, sexes, and sexual orientations have experienced MST. For some survivors, the experience affects their physical and mental health, work, relationships, and everyday life, even many years later.

To ensure Veterans receive the care they deserve, VA provides free services for MST survivors whenever they are ready, at any time of year, and tailored to their individual preferences and needs. Eligibility for MST-related care is broad, and survivors may be eligible for MST-related care even if they are not eligible for other VA services. Veterans and other former service members can receive VA’s free MST-related services no matter how long ago the MST occurred. Individuals do not need to have reported their MST experiences when they happened or have documentation that they occurred to receive care.

“Of course, it’s our hope that no service member would ever experience military sexual trauma. But when they do, we need to be ready to respond with the care and support they need whenever they are ready,” said VA National Director of MST Dr. Amy Street. “We owe that to our Veterans. We also need to make sure every MST survivor is aware of VA’s free MST-related resources.”

For more information, Veterans can speak with their existing VA healthcare provider, contact the MST Coordinator at their nearest VA medical center, or contact their local Vet Center. More information about MST and VA services is available at <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mst> and in VA’s Beyond MST mobile app.



## National SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

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“ I am very pleased with the  
VA Home Health Care  
Program. ”

Veteran at  
Spark M. Matsunaga  
Ambulatory Care Clinic

## BENEFICIARY TRAVEL TRAVELING FOR CARE



No matter which island you call home, your health care matters—and so does the journey to get there. The VA's Beneficiary Travel program is here to help lighten that load.

For many Veterans who live across the Pacific—whether on the Big Island of Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa—getting to a medical appointment isn't as simple as driving across town. Travel can mean inter-island flights, and shuttles from the airport or even a cab ride, and that's why the Beneficiary Travel program exists.

The program helps eligible Veterans and caregivers get reimbursed for the cost of traveling to and from approved health care appointments.

When you travel for VA care, those miles add up. Some Veterans live hours away from the nearest VA clinic. Others travel by air because there's simply no road that connects their home island to VA services. The Beneficiary Travel program helps lessen that burden. It's VA's way of making sure distance doesn't stand between you and your health.

If you qualify, you can submit a claim for things like:

- Mileage if you drive
- Parking or tolls
- Bus or taxi fares
- Airfare, when it's pre-approved
- Lodging and meals, in certain situations

[TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR  
ELIGIBILITY  
SCAN BELOW](#)



An Army Veteran living in American Samoa, knows all too well how distance can complicate health care. When her doctor recommended a specialty care appointment at the VA clinic on O'ahu, she was worried about how she would manage the travel costs. A round-trip flight wasn't cheap, and she needed a place to stay overnight.

At the American Samoa CBOC, a staff member told her about the Beneficiary Travel program. With their help, she checked her eligibility and learned that because the appointment was VA-approved and related to a service-connected condition, she could receive reimbursement for the airfare and other travel expenses.

She set up her online account in the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS). When she returned home from O'ahu, she logged in, selected the appointment, entered the trip information, uploaded receipts, and submitted the claim. A few days later, the reimbursement was deposited directly into her bank account.

This experience is one many Pacific Island Veterans share. Travel is part of life here—sometimes challenging, but always doable with the right support.

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“*The VA Clinic in Kaneohe is a pleasure to visit. A breath of fresh air!*”

*Veteran at  
Windward VA Clinic*

## FREEDOM 250: HONORING THE GENERATIONS WHO BUILT OUR NATION

As the United States marks its 250th anniversary, we reflect on a simple but powerful idea at the heart of our founding: that freedom is worth defending. For two and a half centuries, Americans have stepped forward to protect that principle. From the early battles of the Revolution to modern deployments around the world, Veterans have shaped our nation's history and safeguarded its future.

Every generation has faced its own defining moments—Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Normandy, and the challenges of recent conflicts. These moments aren't just chapters in history books; they represent the courage and sacrifice of real people whose service built the country we know today.

Our commitment to supporting those who served began even before independence, with early laws to care for wounded soldiers and evolving systems of pensions and medical support. Over time, that promise grew into a national responsibility—to honor service not only with gratitude, but with meaningful care and support for Veterans and their families.

As we celebrate America's 250th year, we recognize the generations of service members who carried the burden of defending freedom. Their dedication continues to shape our nation's character, reminding us that America's story is still being written—and that it endures because of those willing to stand up and serve.

### Maui Community Based Outpatient Clinic Celebrates Installation of New Audiology Sound Booth

Maui CBOC is proud to announce the installation of its new audiology sound booth, marking an important advancement in the services we offer to our Veterans. “This will greatly benefit our Veterans by allowing our clinic to provide the gold standard of care for hearing tests,” said Dr. Amanda Seeley, Audiologist.

The booth provides the quiet, controlled environment needed for accurate hearing assessments, leading to more precise diagnoses, improved treatment planning, and a more comfortable experience overall. “Our audio team is thrilled to introduce our newest tool, and we strive to provide an awesome experience for our Veterans,” added Donielle Winslow, Audiologist technician.





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“*Very nice and pleasant conversation with my MD. He listened well and put me at ease as it related to PTSD.*”

*Veteran at the Lanai VA Clinic*

## PX 20 WEEK 26



## Your Experience Matters

As Patient Experience Week approaches, we want to take a moment to recognize the most important part of VA health care: you, the Veteran. Over the past decade, the VA has transformed how we listen and respond to your needs.

Through tools like real-time surveys, the VAPIHCS Veterans Experience Office, and staff training focused on respectful, compassionate care, your feedback now drives improvements across every clinic and service.

Today, more Veterans than ever say they trust VA health care, and many facilities nationwide are earning top marks for communication, access, and overall experience—thanks to the voices and experiences you share.

## Your Voices Matters!

Completing the SHEP survey gives you the opportunity to provide feedback to help VA better understand your patient journey and see experiences **through YOUR eyes.**

## Patient Advocates

Here at the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System, we believe every staff member is a patient advocate and responsible for treating you with dignity and respect.

Health care can bring questions or unexpected challenges, and VA Patient Advocates are here to ensure every Veteran's voice is heard. They listen, clarify concerns, address feedback, and help guide Veterans through the VA system so issues are acknowledged and handled appropriately.

Patient Advocates focus on communication and resolution, working with care teams and leadership to review concerns, improve services, and help Veterans better understand processes, policies, and available options.

While Patient Advocates are a valuable support resource, they work alongside—not in place of—your health care team. For medical care, treatment decisions, or ongoing care coordination, your provider and care team remain your primary point of contact.

If you need help navigating your care or have a concern about your experience, reaching out to a Patient Advocate can be a helpful first step. They are an important part of VA's commitment to care that is respectful, responsive, and centered on you. Connect with a Patient Advocates at [VHAHONPAO@va.gov](mailto:VHAHONPAO@va.gov)

Let's work together to make the patient experience a better one for you and for all Veterans and their families across VA.

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“ I feel that the entire staff has my wellness and health in mind. ”

Veteran at Kailua-Kona VA Clinic



**Thomas A. Steinbrunner, FACHE**  
**Interim Executive Director**

As our nation celebrates 250 years of independence, we also reflect on 80 years of the Veterans Health Administration and the generations of Veterans who helped shape America. From the earliest soldiers of the Revolution to those who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and other conflicts, their dedication built and protected the nation we know today.

America’s commitment to those who served stretches back to colonial times, when early laws supported wounded soldiers. President Lincoln later defined this responsibility as caring for those who “have borne the battle,” a principle that still guides our nation. Since VHA’s creation in 1946, it has grown into the country’s largest integrated health care system and a leader in medical innovation. VA clinicians pioneered the first liver transplant, the first cardiac pacemaker, the nicotine patch, advancements in prosthetics, and groundbreaking PTSD research. Today, this work continues through new therapies, emerging technologies, and expanded access to care.

As we mark these anniversaries, we honor all who served and the families and caregivers who supported them. These milestones remind us that while we look back with gratitude, we also renew our commitment to supporting Veterans—today and in the years ahead.

