



Supplemental Information on Resources for Ohio's Veterans

VA Healthcare in Ohio

Ohio is fortunate to have significant access to VA healthcare services through five Medical Centers, 33 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, and eight Vet Centers. Vet Centers are VA behavioral health care centers set apart in a non-institutional setting and operate largely independently of the local VA healthcare infrastructure.

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) is supportive of efforts to broaden access to healthcare services for veterans. VA initiatives in this arena are closely monitored including the Choice replacement, titled the Veterans Coordinated Access and Rewarding Experiences Program. As changes are made to VA procedures, this information is shared with stakeholders and county veterans service offices.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Resources

Left untreated, mental illnesses and addictions shorten lives and take an emotional and economic toll on families and communities. ODVS, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio National Guard and several other collaborators have established the Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP) certification that is a training, dissemination and referral system aimed at expanding access to trained behavioral health providers for service members, veterans and their families.

According to a recently released VA veteran suicide study, in Ohio 17 percent of suicides are veterans although only seven percent of the population are veterans. This type of dramatic imbalance holds true in all states across the nation. ODVS promotes resources from the VA for mental health providers including VA and community mental health providers and a confidential Veterans Crisis Line available through toll-free hotline, online chat or text.

Ending Veteran Homelessness in Ohio

Ohio has been proud to partner with the VA in ensuring that veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Through collaboration between the VA, ODVS, county veterans services offices, public housing agencies and a myriad of community support organizations, the number of homeless veterans in Ohio has dropped from 1,244 in 2012 to 903 in 2016 according to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) statistics.

Of the nine homeless Continuums of Care Programs across Ohio, two locations, Dayton and Akron, have already been certified by HUD and the VA as reaching "functional zero" for veterans homelessness (when the number of veterans who are homeless, whether sheltered or unsheltered, is no greater than the monthly housing placement



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rate for veterans). Two others have submitted data to HUD to support certification of “functional zero,” and three will submit data for certification in the near future. ODVS and the VA also have partnered with the Ohio Housing and Homelessness Collaborative to provide insights on how the processes implemented to eliminate veteran homelessness in Ohio can be applied toward ending all chronic homelessness throughout the state.

Filing Veterans Benefits Claims

ODVS maintains a strong collaborative relationship with the VA Regional Office in Cleveland through the ODVS Liaison Office that facilitates communication between Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) staff and all county veterans service offices.

Along these lines, ODVS collaborated with the Cleveland VA Regional Office and Ohio’s 88 county veterans services offices to established a “Fully-Developed Claim Checklist” that allows for claims filed under that program to be adjudicated within 140 days. In coordination with the Department of Defense, ODVS proposed and hosted the pilot system that resulting in making Defense Personnel Record Information System files (military personnel records) accessible to state veteran agencies and certain county veterans services offices. In recognition of these efforts, ODVS received a 2015 Pillars of Excellence Award from the VA Secretary for Elimination of the Disability Claims Backlog.

Higher Education Opportunities for Ohio’s Veterans

Ohio’s public colleges and universities are committed to the acceptance and awarding of college credit for military training, experience, and coursework. In 2014, Governor John Kasich signed two pieces of legislation (HB98, 2013 and HB488, 2014) that created the most expansive opportunities in the country for veterans to leverage their military experience, education and training in gaining access to college credit and professional licensing and certification.

In accordance with this legislation, the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education signed a directive providing a baseline set of standards and procedures for the application of military credit. Having one set of standards and procedures serves to provide consistency to the process, makes it easier to communicate with a wider audience, and highlights the priority the higher education community places on assisting veterans and active duty service members with their educational and career goals.

This includes translating training, experience and coursework from serving in the U.S. Armed Forces Guard into college credit. All training, experience, and coursework first must be recognized by the American Council on Education or a regional accrediting



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body, such as the Higher Learning Commission, in order to be eligible to earn college credit.

In addition, University System of Ohio schools provide priority registration to veterans of all eras and service components regardless of GI Bill® eligibility as directed by HB488 (2014). All of Ohio's public institutions have established a point of contact to support veteran students on their campus. A list of each institution's point of contact is available online. Campus Veterans Affairs offices supplement the recruitment and retention of veterans to the campuses across the state.

ODVS and the Ohio Department of Higher Education also promote scholarship opportunities such as the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship, Ohio Safety Officers Memorial Fund and Ohio National Guard Scholarship. They also connect students with financial aid resources through the GI Bill or state-based initiatives like the Ohio College Opportunity Grant.

Members of the military also are eligible for Ohio's GI Promise whereby upon moving to Ohio, active duty, National Guard, reserve service members, and their spouse and dependents are eligible for in-state residency for the purposes of tuition, state educational subsidies and potential financial aid.

The state higher education policy has been to hold veteran students harmless for errors in GI Bill processing. Instead, these occurrences are resolved between the federal GI Bill administrators and the school that received the GI Bill payment. Ohio's State Approving Agency staff members are closely monitoring the recently passed Forever GI Bill and how this bill will affect Ohio veterans.