



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Choose **VA**

Getting Started with Vet Center Services

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers located in easily accessible neighborhoods near Service members, Veterans, survivors and their families. Vet Centers are located separate from VA organizational sites to ensure confidential counseling and reduce barriers to care.

What are Vet Centers?

There are 300 Vet Centers, 80+ Mobile Vet Centers (MVCs) and nearly 1,000 community access points across the country that provide a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services. Vet Centers are also located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam and American Samoa. Vet Centers help you and your family build meaningful connections and develop tools for achieving success in both your military and civilian lives.

What services do Vet Centers offer?

Vet Centers offer counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible Service members, Veterans and their families. Services include:

- Individual and group counseling for Service members, Veterans and their families
- Couple and family counseling for military-related readjustment issues
- Bereavement (grief) counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Post-Deployment Health Reassessment assistance
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Employment assessment and referral
- VA benefits explanation and referral
- Screening and referral for medical issues, including traumatic brain injury, depression, etc.

Who is eligible to receive services at Vet Centers?

If you are a Service member or Veteran, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, you can access Vet Center services if you:

- Served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility
- Experienced military sexual trauma
- Provided mortuary services or direct emergent medical care to treat casualties of war while serving on active military duty
- Served as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat zone or area of hostility
- Accessed care at a Vet Center prior to January 2, 2013, as a Vietnam-era Veteran
- Served on active military duty in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the President, or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in that state
- Are a current or former member of the Coast Guard who participated in a drug interdiction operation, regardless of the location
- Are a current member of the Reserve Components assigned to a military command in a drilling status, including active Reserves, who has a behavioral health condition or psychological trauma related to military service that adversely affects quality of life or adjustment

WHAT ARE THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH USING VET CENTERS?

Services are provided at no cost, without time limitation, to eligible individuals.

DO I HAVE TO BE ENROLLED IN VA HEALTH CARE TO RECEIVE VET CENTER SERVICES?

You do not have to be enrolled in VA health care or have a service-connected disability.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO BE SEEN?

Anyone who visits a Vet Center will be seen that day, and a plan to obtain further services will be discussed. You may also call to schedule an appointment at a time that works for you, including non-traditional hours.

Do I need to bring any documentation?

A Vet Center team member will look for one or more of the following: discharge documents (such as a DD214), receipt of certain awards, deployment orders or other documents that show qualifying military service. If these documents are not readily available before you visit, someone will help you obtain these when you arrive.

What is Bereavement Counseling?

Bereavement counseling is assistance and support to eligible individuals with emotional and psychological stress after the death of a loved one. Bereavement counseling includes a broad range of transition services, including outreach, counseling and referral services to family members.

What is Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Counseling?

MST counseling may include individual or group counseling, couples and family counseling, referral for benefits assistance, liaison with community agencies or substance abuse assessment and referral to help you deal with the emotions of MST and regain confidence in your everyday life. Any eligible Veteran who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military can receive counseling. Onsite counseling, assessment and referral for MST is available at all Vet Centers.

Will Vet Centers share my information with VA or the Department of Defense (DoD)?

Confidentiality is very important. Vet Centers are safe places to discuss feelings or emotions that may arise after transitioning out of the military, experiences endured while serving in combat, or from sexual assault or trauma that occurred while serving. Vet Center records are not linked to any mental or behavioral health records and will not be shared with other VA offices, DoD, military units or other community networks and providers without a signed release of information from the Service member or Veteran.

Contact a Vet Center:

You can visit your local Vet Center to find out what is available to you or call the Vet Center Call Center at 877-927-8387 and talk to a counselor 24/7 about any questions or concerns.

Where are Vet Centers Located?

Vet Centers are community based to be more accessible in areas where you live. To locate a Vet Center near you, visit <http://www.va.gov/find-locations>.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Will staff provide assistance outside of the Vet Centers?

In addition to the 300 Vet Centers, staff provide counseling, outreach and referral services at several outstations and community access points. This assistance can range from a few times a week to a couple times per month. Services may be offered in universities, community centers, churches and other locations.

Are any additional services or activities offered?

In addition to the services mentioned, Vet Centers also offer opportunities to build community and connect with others who have shared similar experiences. They are designed and created to meet the unique needs of those in the community they serve. Some common group activities offered at Vet Centers across the country or through their community partners include:

- Gardening
- Music groups
- Creative writing classes
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Mindful Meditation
- Potluck dinners and holiday gatherings
- Painting
- Photography
- Outdoor activities
- Community service projects
- Guest speakers and other educational opportunities