

NVTAC Monthly Newsletter: June 2024

Monthly Newsletter

June 2024



JUNE SPOTLIGHT



Fourth Annual U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Virtual Pride Campaign

Throughout June, the VA's Office of Resolution Management, Diversity, and Inclusion will host the annual VA National Virtual Pride 2024. This event invites employees, military-connected community partners, and veterans to celebrate Pride month.

It aims to educate attendees about the LGBTQ+ community, medical advancements, VA services and benefits, legal issues, and more. This year's theme, "Limitless. Overcome. Visible. Empowered.," emphasizes LGBTQ+ diversity, adversity, and the community's fight for equality.

The event will feature online presentations accessible nationwide, fostering a supportive and safe environment for all participants.

[View Events](#)

RESOURCES



National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) Podcasts Highlight Unique Needs of Women Veterans and Justice-Involved Veterans

NVTI recently launched two new insightful podcasts focusing on underserved veteran communities. The first podcast, [Episode 22 - Continuing Conversations: Serving Women Veterans](#), addresses the distinct experiences and needs of women veterans, discussing topics such as pay equity, translating military skills to civilian roles, employment, mentorship, and community support. The second podcast, [Episode 23 - Continuing Conversations: Serving Justice-Involved Veterans](#), examines the unique challenges and support systems for veterans involved with the justice system, highlighting benefits information, successful reintegration strategies, and resources. Both podcasts educate and inform on effective approaches to better serve these veteran populations, promoting understanding and enhanced support for their unique journeys. Visit [NVTI Podcasts](#) to listen to these podcasts as well as others in NVTI's podcast series.



Metallica Veteran Suicide Prevention Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Metallica, in collaboration with the VA's "Don't Wait. Reach Out." campaign and the Ad Council, created a [PSA promoting the Veterans Crisis Line](#). This PSA, featuring

Metallica's James Hetfield and Rob Trujillo, debuted in September and is being shared during their tour, spreading awareness and support for veterans in crisis.



Resources for Older Veterans

The VA has provided [five digital resources for older veterans](#) to help them stay active, track goals, support mental health, and manage nutrition.



Innovations in Serving Unsheltered Veterans: The First Year of ALL INside

In the [latest Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episode](#), Jeff Olivet, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, provides an update on ALL INside, a first-of-its-kind initiative to address unsheltered homelessness across the country.



American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Resources for Veterans

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a prevalent mental health issue among veterans, often more debilitating than physical injuries. Challenges like reintegration into civilian life, homelessness, and unemployment exacerbate veteran trauma. Many veterans delay seeking mental health treatment, often due to stereotypes about mental illness, which negatively impacts their well-being and their families. AARP has provided a list of [free programs and resources](#) for veterans who are struggling with PTSD and other mental health challenges.



Veterans Helping Veterans Podcast

Designed to connect and inform veterans as they navigate the VA's complex system of claims and regulations, this [podcast series](#) features guest speakers from veteran service organizations, the private sector, and the VA itself. Through shared examples and insights, these experts will explain how the system works and discuss potential improvements, providing valuable guidance for veterans seeking assistance.

NEWS UPDATES



The image shows the letters 'LGBTQ+' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is a different color: L (red), G (orange), B (yellow), T (green), Q (blue), and + (purple). The letters are set against a white background with colorful geometric shapes in the background.

LGBTQ+ Veterans Advocating For Their Peers

Andrea Norton, Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator at the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center and guest speaker at NVTAC's upcoming [June Community of Practice](#), challenges stereotypes by [asking what a veteran looks like](#). She emphasizes the military's diversity and advocates for the recognition and respect of LGBTQ+ veterans. Norton, who served in the Air Force during the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" era, highlights the difficulties LGBTQ+ service members faced and the ongoing need for inclusive support. Both Norton and Jacqueline Parrish, another LGBTQ+ veteran care coordinator, stress that LGBTQ+ veterans share the same dedication and deserve access to VA resources and healthcare. They work to ensure all veterans, including those dishonorably discharged under outdated policies, are aware of their eligibility for benefits and services, aiming to create inclusive spaces that honor the diverse identities within the veteran community.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Record High Veteran Trust in VA Driven by Enhanced Services and Outreach Efforts

The VA announced that veteran trust in the agency has [reached an all-time high of 80.4 percent](#), a significant increase from 55 percent in 2016. This finding is based on a survey of over 38,000 veterans who used various VA services from January to March 2024. The survey also reported record highs in ease, effectiveness, and emotional resonance scores. Veteran trust in VA outpatient care similarly hit a record 91.8 percent. The rise in trust coincides with the implementation of the Promise to Address

Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, which expanded VA health care and benefits and a vigorous outreach campaign.

This increased trust has led to higher enrollment and application rates for VA services, with 2023 seeing record levels of care and benefits delivered. The VA continues to engage veterans through numerous events and outreach initiatives, maintaining a higher-than-average survey response rate.



Culturally Competent Support to Combat Rising Suicide Rates Among Indigenous Veterans

Cyrus Norcross, a member of the Navajo Nation and Army Ranger veteran, struggled with suicidal thoughts after his military service but found help through a peer support group. However, many Indigenous veterans face similar struggles without adequate support, as highlighted by a rise in suicide rates among American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. The [Hero's Story](#) initiative uses culturally competent peer support, including talking circles and virtual meetings, to address this crisis. The VA is also working to improve suicide prevention efforts for Native veterans by increasing access to mental health resources and community-based care tailored to their cultural needs.

[Learn More about Efforts to Combat Indigenous Veteran Suicide Rates](#)



Veterans Face Health Crisis Amid Evidence of Agent Orange Use at Fort Ord

Former soldiers stationed at Fort Ord, California, have faced [significant health issues](#), including cancer, due to exposure to contaminated water and soil, linked to the military's

use of Agent Orange and other harmful chemicals. Environmental activists and veterans argue that the military must recognize the contamination and offer compensation. A recent VA proposal for compensation for veterans who were exposed to the herbicides at 17 U.S. bases excludes Fort Ord, sparking frustration among affected veterans who continue to battle for acknowledgment and benefits.



Study Highlights Health Care Disparities Faced by LGBTQ+ Veterans

A [new study](#) from the Rand Epstein Family Veterans Policy Research Institute reveals that LGBTQ+ veterans face greater difficulties accessing healthcare, suffer from higher rates of depression, and encounter more serious medical issues compared to their heterosexual peers.

The research, which analyzed data from over two million American citizens, highlights significant disparities in health services usage and outcomes for LGBTQ+ veterans, such as fewer medical checkups and higher rates of unaffordable medical care. The study emphasizes the need for improved outreach and LGBTQ+-affirming services within the Veterans Health Administration to ensure these veterans receive the benefits and care they need. Researchers also found that states with LGBTQ+-friendly policies showed fewer disparities, suggesting that broader social policies impact health outcomes.



Nebraska's (NE) New Law Offers Judicial Diversion Program to Support Veterans Facing Legal Issues

Facing his fifth Driving Under the Influence (DUI) conviction in 25 years, Robert Jackson of Olathe, Kansas, opted for a diversion program for veterans instead of a possible jail

sentence. This program, designed to keep veterans out of jail, involves court supervision and treatment for issues like PTSD and mental health challenges. NE's new law, the first of its kind, expands this judicial diversion model statewide, allowing all district judges to offer treatment instead of prosecution for eligible veterans. This initiative aims to address the high incarceration rates among veterans.

Jackson's experience with the program, which included support from fellow veterans, proved transformative, motivating him to continue attending treatment meetings even after completing the program. NE's success is inspiring other states to consider similar legislation.

[NE Court Diversion Program for Veterans](#)

SUCCESS STORY



Do you have a success story you would like to share? If you are a grantee who helped a veteran who is struggling with housing or employment, we would love to hear from you at contact@nvtac.org

OUTREACH AT NVTAC

The NVTAC Outreach Coach is available to provide information, answer questions, and guide interested organizations through the process of getting involved with HVRP. If you know of organizations that could benefit from learning more about HVRP, you can refer them to NVTAC Outreach Coach Miranda Moffat at:

Moffat.Miranda.M@dol.gov

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