December 2014

Hangar Flying Newsletter

*A Publication of the JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors.* ***Department of the Air Force, 100 Joe Jackson Blvd, Customer Service Mall Rm 1001, McChord Field WA 98438-1114; Phone (253) 982-3214 (Voice Mail 24 hours a day) Fax 253-982-5234. Email –*** [***retaffairs@us.af.mil***](mailto:retaffairs@us.af.mil) ***Web Site*** [***www.mcchordrao.com***](http://www.geocities.com/MCCHORDRETIREE/)***Retiree Activities Office: Open 0900-1200 Monday - Friday***

**Tricare Beneficiaries' Access To Brand-Name Drugs Would Be Limited:** Tricare patients who take brand-name drugs for chronic conditions may be required to fill their prescriptions at a military pharmacy or by mail starting next October. Under the compromise 2015 defense authorization bill rolled out Tuesday by Congress and likely to be signed into law in the coming weeks, the Defense Department will require any Tricare beneficiary who uses non-generic prescriptions for long-term conditions to get them at a military treatment facility or through Tricare's home delivery program.

The new requirement is similar to a program introduced last February for military retirees and family members on Tricare For Life, requiring them to fill all their long-term prescriptions by mail or at an MTF. The regulation would not apply to prescriptions for acute illnesses or for generic brands. Beneficiaries still will be able to buy those at Tricare network retail pharmacies.

DoD pays roughly 17 percent less for maintenance medications filled by mail compared with those filled at retail stores. Savings in fiscal 2014 from DoD efforts to move retail prescriptions to mail or military treatment facilities, was $74.8 million, according to Pentagon data.

The new defense bill does not include any information on estimated cost savings as a result of the program's expansion to all Tricare beneficiaries. When asked about how Tricare would implement the new requirement, Defense Health Agency spokesman Kevin Dwyer said the Pentagon, as a matter of policy, does not comment on pending legislation.

Under the provision, Tricare beneficiaries would need to begin filling brand-name prescriptions for long-term conditions — for everything from heart medication and cholesterol lowering drugs to painkillers, anti-depressants and more — at a military hospital or clinic or by mail starting Oct. 1. Since the new law also will allow Tricare to raise pharmacy co-payments by $3 (with the exception of generics by mail), the new fee structure, as of Oct. 1, would be:

**For home delivery** (90-day prescriptions)

Generic: $0

Brand-name: $16

Nonformulary: $46

**For retail pharmacies** (30-day prescriptions for acute medications only)

Generic: $8

Brand-name: $20

Nonformulary: $47

While the law raises pharmacy co-payments, it does so to levels much lower than proposed by the Pentagon in its original fiscal 2015 budget request. DoD had asked Congress to consider doubling or, in some cases, tripling co-payments over the next several years. *(Continued on the next page)*

It also had proposed consolidating Tricare into a single plan with a fee structure adjusted to where beneficiaries get their medical care. That plan, which would have eliminated Tricare Prime, Standard and Extra, would have required retirees to pay for care at military treatment facilities and raised co-payments for active-duty family members who use civilian providers.

But senators and representatives hammering out the authorization bill compromise said any further changes to Tricare should wait until after the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission makes its recommendations on military pay and benefits, expected in February. *(SOURCE: Military Times article at http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/health-care/2014/12/03/tricare-home-delivery-brand-name-medications/19836273/)*

**TRICARE Plan Spotlight: The US Family Health Plan:** TRICARE offers several different health plans to its 9.5 million beneficiaries. Although many are familiar with the most popular Standard and Prime options, there are other less well known health plans, including the US Family Health Plan (USFHP).

USFHP is a TRICARE Prime option offered through networks of community-based, not-for-profit health care systems, available in six areas of the United States.  To enroll in USFHP, beneficiaries must be enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System and live within one of the designated USFHP service areas, ours is Pacific Medical Centers – serving the Puget Sound area of Washington State.

USFHP enrollment is open all year and re-enrollment is automatic at the beginning of each fiscal year.  Beneficiaries can enroll [online](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/bwe/indexAction.do), by calling 1-800-748-7347 or by mailing the enrollment form to the USFHP site.  The mailing address is listed on the enrollment form for each USFHP site.  This form along with the TRICARE Prime Enrollment, Disenrollment, and Primary Care Manager (PCM) Change Form (DD Form 2876), can be found at [www.tricare.mil/Plans/Enroll/USFHP](http://www.tricare.mil/Plans/Enroll/USFHP).

Enrollment forms must include an initial three-month payment. There is no enrollment fee for active duty family members and beneficiaries with Medicare Part B coverage. For all others, the annual enrollment fee mirrors the TRICARE Prime enrollment fee and is payable by check or electronic funds transfer (EFT). Subsequent payments must be made by EFT, recurring credit/debit charges or monthly allotment. Current USFHP fees are listed at [www.tricare.mil/costs](http://www.tricare.mil/costs).

Beneficiaries who enroll in a USFHP agree not to use TRICARE Standard and Extra, TRICARE For Life or other TRICARE programs. They also agree not to use Medicare Part A or Part B except for services that are not routinely covered by the USFHP, like chiropractic care.

If you live in one of the six designated areas, you may want to consider the US Family Health Plan. It's a comprehensive Prime option that even offers enhanced coverage at each location. Visit [www.usfhp.com](http://www.usfhp.com/) for more information.

All TRICARE health plans exceed the Affordable Care Act mandate that health coverage must offer a level of minimal essential coverage.  If you are looking for other health insurance, you're encouraged to explore your options through the Health Insurance Marketplace at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov/). Open season begins November 15 and runs through February 15, 2015. *(Source: Tricare.mil)*

**Veterans Choice Program:** Connecting you to timely and convenient access to health care in your community. Many Veterans will now have the option to receive non-VA health care rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility.

Beginning November 5, 2014, the new Choice Program will begin to cover non-VA care for eligible Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. Veterans are eligible if any of these situations apply:

* You have been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician
* Your current residence is more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility
* You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home
* You face a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, which presents a significant travel hardship.

Every Veteran will receive a letter and a Choice Card in the mail with details about the program. Veterans will be eligible for the program and receive cards in three phases:

* Veterans who may live more than 40 miles from a VA facility.
* Veterans who are currently waiting for an appointment longer than 30 days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.
* All remaining Veterans enrolled for VA healthcare who may be eligible for the Choice Program in the future.

To set up an appointment with a non-VA provider, call the VA at 866-606-8198 and they will work with you to ensure you are approved for care in your community. How to Get Started <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/how\_to\_get\_started.asp>

**Additional Program Information**

* The Choice Program does not impact your existing VA health care or any other VA benefit.
* If you are satisfied with your wait time at a VA facility and wish to continue waiting for VA care, there is nothing you need to do at this time.
* Non-VA care is only covered by VA for medical needs which have been approved by your VA physician. We can happily schedule an appointment for other medical needs, but the we can only cover the cost of care related to your VA-approved health needs.
* The Veteran Choice Program is part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA).

Check Your Eligibility <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apps/choice/>

**How to Get Started**

To get started, you’ll need to pick a non-VA provider, gather some info and give us a call in order to set up an appointment. We will work with you to ensure you are approved for care in your community and schedule you with a local care provider of your choosing.

**Steps to Getting an Appointment**

1. Decide which non-VA health care provider you would like to use.
   1. Search the list of approved care providers in your community.
2. Make sure you have information on hand about any other health insurance coverage you may have.
3. Call 1-866-606-8198 to make sure you qualify + schedule an appointment.

*(Continued on the next page)*

When you call, they will walk you through the following steps:

* You will be asked to enter your ZIP code, and first and last name.
* They will check to make sure you are eligible for this program.
* They will check which of your needs are covered by the VA.
* You will be asked for your address and the name of your preferred non-VA provider. Unfortunately, not all providers will be covered so if your preferred provider is not available, we will recommend other providers in your area.
* They will then work with you to schedule an appointment.

This hotline is exclusively for making sure you are eligible for the Choice Program and setting up a non-VA care appointment. If you have questions about other aspects of your VA medical care or want to learn more about enrolling in VA health services, please call 1-877-222-VETS or visit www.va.gov/health. (Source VA Media Relations)

**Tactical Veteran: Smart tools for job searches:** A veteran has his picture taken for use on his LinkedIn profile at a Military Officers Association of America career fair.

Employers turn to social media sites such as LinkedIn when looking to fill jobs. Social media are an inextricable aspect of our lives these days, helping us to stay connected with friends and family across the world — and also giving us a chance to get recognized by an employer looking to hire. Companies see the potential of social media because of its capacity to instantaneously deliver information about employment opportunities. For transitioning veterans, knowing what social media can offer, and how to use that information, is an increasingly crucial pathway to finding good employment opportunities.

Employers have flocked to social media because of the number of people connected to these sites. Employers are not only finding a great way to advertise to thousands of potential customers, but are also finding a great opportunity to reach out to possible future employees. Instead of just looking for employment opportunities on a company's website, or through a job board, you can find postings on a company's Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn accounts. So how do you use these sites for job hunting?

**A few things to consider:**

**1. Follow companies you're interested in, and what they're up to** When you go into a job interview, it's highly likely you'll be asked: "So, what do you know about our company?" If you're armed with background knowledge about the new projects the company is working on, an interviewer cannot help but be impressed. Social media is an easy way to stockpile that kind of background knowledge. Following a company also can bring you firsthand employment postings, as companies are increasingly turning to social media to quickly reach out to large numbers of job candidates.

**2. Follow the job boards** Although USAJOBS is one of many job boards, it's one you may want to follow, especially if you're interested in federal employment. Every day, even a few times a day, USAJOBS Twitter is posting employment opportunities throughout the country. *(Continued on the next page)*

You might see something like this: Seeking FT #Fish #Biologist in Miles City, @BLM\_MTDKs! Apply @USAJOBS http://1.usa.gov/1xIUNvl #BLMcareers #STEM. Translation: The Bureau of Land Management is seeking a fish biologist for a full time position in Miles City, Montana; apply at this link through USAJOBS.

*(Continued on the next page)*

**3. Make a professional profile and keep it professional** Employers are combing these websites searching for possible candidates to fill current and future openings. Being professional and doing due diligence in showing the knowledge and passion you have for your chosen field to any visitors who come across your social media page could put you on the radar of a future employer. *(Continued on the next page)*

**4. Follow hashtags** Twitter was the first to use hashtags, but today pretty much everyone is into them. Some hashtags of particular interest to job seekers: #Hiring, #Employment, #HR, #Jobopening, #JobFair.

Simply plug the hashtag into Google's search bar if you don't have a social media account.

In terms of job hunting, social media are about marketing yourself and connecting to the right people. A résumé is not necessarily the only factor in landing a job any more; today it can be about being at the right place at the right time — and social media can put you there. It's a powerful tool in your employment toolkit*. (Source: Military Times)*

**VA National Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative, Empowering Veterans to Personalize their Diabetes Care:** As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing effort to improve Veterans' access to healthcare, VA is announcing the launch of a national Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative (HSI) to encourage diabetic Veterans receiving VA care to seek support to lower the risk of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). The new initiative will enable Veterans living with diabetes to work more closely with their VA clinicians to personalize health care goals and improve self-management of the disease.  
  
"The Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative is designed to enable Veterans and their families, partners and caregivers to create a personal plan for blood sugar management based upon the Veteran's unique health goals," said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Interim Under Secretary for Health. "Our objective is to change how diabetes is managed in VA and the United States, and to help patients improve their personal well-being, not just manage their numbers."   
  
Diabetes is one of the most prevalent diseases among older Americans, with one in four Veterans suffering from the disease. Recent clinical studies indicate that when diet, exercise and stress reduction are not successful, the benefits of achieving intensive blood sugar control with medication are less effective.  This is especially true for hypoglycemic agents (pills or insulin) used for those patients who have had diabetes for many years and those who have additional serious health conditions.  
  
HSI's key elements emphasize shared decision-making and universal health literacy to ensure Veterans understand the health information provided by their VA health care team. This includes the "teach back method" where Veterans and their caregivers are asked questions to be certain they understand and can act on key elements of self-management, including diet, exercise, glucose monitoring, managing medications, and insulin injections. The focus of the HSI is to help raise awareness among patients who may be at risk.   
  
"Hypoglycemia has only recently been prioritized as a national public health issue, but Federal agencies are taking a leadership role in addressing the problem. We are proud to note the collaboration of VA with Department of Health and Human Services in aggressively addressing this problem," Dr. Clancy added. (Source VA.gov) For more information about VA health care, please visit <http://www.va.gov/health/><<http://www.va.gov/health/>> .

**VA Releases 2015 Compensation Rates:** This year the Veterans Disability Compensation and Veterans Pension payments will increase by 1.7%. The increase is based on the 2014 rate of inflation (consumer price index). Take a look at the VA's rate tables to see what your 2015 Disability and Compensation payments will be at the [2015 Disability Compensation Rates](http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/va-disability-compensation-rates.html) page. *(Source: Military.com)*