As measures unfold across Allegheny County and the State of Pennsylvania to help prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus, the military and veterans community in the Greater Pittsburgh Region wanted to take a moment and provide an update on what is happening within our veterans and military communities.

This document is provided as a resource for the community, but does not speak on behalf of, or represent any agency listed hereinafter.

**Federal Updates:**

**Veterans Health Administration**

Several measures are being taken to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 at VA Hospital Systems, including but not limited to:
- Changing face to face outpatient appointments to phone or telehealth
- Postponing elective procedures
- Only one guest may accompany veterans to procedures or appointments
- Mandatory screening measures
- Visitation to community living centers are temporarily limited to family members or caregivers of gravely ill, or those in hospice or palliative care

**Veterans Benefits Administration**

- The VA Regional Office is closed to visitors and most staff members are working remotely. Additionally, the VA Regional Office has activated its Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
- VA Claims hearings will be conducting remotely or rescheduled
- Cancelation and postponement of compensation examinations. VA will not deny a claim solely for a failure to report for an exam at this time. Furthermore, the VBA is identifying claims where the record contains sufficient medical evidence necessary to render a decision or use the Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) process.
- GI Bill benefit payments will continue to students whose institution has moved to online courses or closed due to COVID-19 thanks to a recent bill passage.
- VA Home Loans

**National Cemeteries**

All VA national cemeteries are open and will continue to provide interments for Veterans and eligible individuals. However, effective March 23 — as part of the agency’s response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) — committal services and the rendering of military funeral honors will discontinue until further notice.

**Phone Numbers/Website:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veterans Health Administration</th>
<th>Veterans Benefits Administration</th>
<th>National Cemeteries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA PITT. (OAKLAND): 412.688.6000</td>
<td>VETERANS BENEFITS WEBSITE: <a href="https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/">https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/</a></td>
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<td>VA PHARMACY (OAKLAND): 412.360.6210</td>
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<td>VA PITT. PATIENT ADVOCATE: 412.360.3614</td>
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<td>VA HOMELESS HOTLINE: 412.328.0697</td>
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<td>VA SUICIDE HOTLINE: 1.800.273.8255</td>
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<td>VA PITT WEBSITE: <a href="https://www.va.gov/pittsburgh-health-care/">https://www.va.gov/pittsburgh-health-care/</a></td>
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**Vet Centers**
Vet Centers continue to remain open and prepared to assist veterans in these uncertain times.
- Can conduct counseling over the phone or through VA Video Teleconferencing which is secure and can be done with a home computer or smartphone – no additional equipment will be required on the part of the veteran.
- Adjusted hours to Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. and Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- All counseling groups in the Pittsburgh Vet Center and those we facilitate in the community have been postponed until further notice.

**Military Installations**
Allegheny County has multiple branches of the United States Military within its borders. Please check with each installation prior to going on base.

In general, HPCON Charlie measures have been in place on most bases which include the following actions:
- Continue essential missions with required manning. Installation operations will be commensurate with federal, state and local guidelines.
- Maximize telework.
- Limit access to installation for official business.
- Instruct military personnel and encourage civilian employees to limit off-base travel to movement to/from work, grocery, and hospital/medical needs.
- Adhere to strict hygiene (no hand-shaking, frequent hand-washing, clean common-use items).
- Continue to implement social distancing (limit in-person meetings, socials and mass gatherings).

As of April 6, 2020, both the Commissary and PX are open.

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**Notes:**

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State Updates:

**PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**

The PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs operates two major divisions including the:

**Military Affairs Division**

As of March 26, 2020, over 50 members of the PA National Guard have been activated in response to COVID-19.

**Pennsylvania National Guard Family Assistance Centers (FAC)**

Member and Family Support, open to ALL services members and families,

**Services:** FACs staff by FAC Specialists provide information and referral to resources and benefits available within the military network, within local community and at state and national level. Programs include: Family Readiness, State Child and Youth, Joint Family Support Assistance, Military Family Life Consultant, Personal Financial Counselor, Survivor Outreach Services, Transition Assistance Advisors, Resilience Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention, Behavioral Health, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. Yellow Ribbon and Employment Outreach are additional resources offered by State Family Programs Branch. Employment and career

**Veterans Affairs Division**

- Veterans Temporary Assistance/Military Family Relief Assistance Program - Applications are processed as they are received. Applications for VTA are initiated through the County Director of Veterans Affairs (CDVA). If the CDVA staff are not available due to county office closure the veteran may contact PADMVA directly.
- Disabled Veteran Real Estate Tax Exemption Program – These applications must be initiated by the local County Directors’ Office of Veteran Affairs.
- Educational Gratuity – PDMVA does not anticipate any delay in April payments.
- Discharge Records Request Programs - PDMVA does not anticipate an interruption of service related to Veterans Discharge Records Request Program. Requests are being processed as they are received. However, please note the State Archives is closed, we are working the requests we can from DMVA Archives. This effects requests for older Pennsylvania National Guard records.

**PA 2-1-1 Southwest**

PA 211 connect individuals to services that help for transportation assistance, financial assistance, utility assistance, housing, legal aid, other programs for veterans.

**PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP: 717.861.2000
PADMVA WEBSITE:
https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx

**Pennsylvania National Guard Family Assistance Centers (FAC)**

PHONE: 412.203.1002, ext. 208;
CELL: 717.821.4668

**PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**

Phone: 800.547.2838
PADMVA WEBSITE:
https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx

PADMVA TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE EMAIL: Ra-vta@pa.gov

**PA 2-1-1 Southwest**

PHONE: Dial 2-1-1 or (888) 553.5778
WEBSITE: pa211sw.org
County Updates:
**Allegheny County Veterans Services**
Temporarily relocated from Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall to 202 County Courthouse (436 Grant Street) Please note that despite the move, they remain open, but by appointment only.
- Veterans Temporary Assistance/Military Family Relief Assistance Program - Applications are initiated with Allegheny County Veterans Services
- Please call for resource and assistance referral
- Please call for any military or veteran benefit related questions

**Allegheny County Health Department**
The Health Department is the lead agency providing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They provide information on the virus, its impact in Allegheny County, information and guidance from the department and its partners, and resources for residents and specific groups.

**Veteran’s Court Allegheny Court:**
As of 4/7/2020 Veterans Court is closed until 5/8/2020. Veterans Court re-opening is subject to change.

**Allegheny County Department of Human Services**
Allegheny County’s Department of Human Services (DHS) mission is to create an accessible, culturally competent, integrated and comprehensive human services system that ensures individually tailored, seamless and holistic services to Allegheny County residents, in particular, the county’s vulnerable populations. They run a number of programs and services that could assist our regions veterans during this pandemic.

Senior line
Allegheny Link

**Veterans Non-Profits/Service Organizations**

**PAServes**
PAServes is a program designed for military veterans, service members and their families to aid them in connecting with resources in the greater Pittsburgh area. PAServes keeps a list of community partners and their operating capacity. If you don’t know where to start or are overwhelmed by all the resources call PAServes first.

**Veterans Place of Washington Blvd.**
Veterans Place remains open, but with enhanced cleaning measures and health checks upon entrance.
- On site food bank is open
- On site showers are open
- On site computer usage is open
- Breakfast and lunch operations are open
- Face to face case management is open
**Veterans Leadership Program**
VLP has implemented their contingent remote operations plans as of 3/16/2020. Although face to face meetings are suspended VLP will continue to serve veterans during this pandemic.
- Request for assistance can still be made online or via phone
- Veterans can also arrange for pre-bagged food, toiletries, and other sundry items via curb side pick-up
- HUDVASH and case management operations are open via phone
- VLP has a military and veteran food share program

**Wounded Warrior Project**
The Wounded Warrior Project is closed to the public, but they are still available via phone and video. They run several programs including some mental health programs via telemedicine that are still active.

**Veterans of Foreign Wars**
Many VFW’s in Allegheny County are offering food assistance at the moment, as well as providing some other community information and resources for veterans.

**Operation Troop Appreciation**
OTA is currently closed to the public but have boxes of non-perishable food items and toiletries available.
- OTA’s transportation service is running as normal so veterans can get to critical doctor appointments and other essential services.
- OTA’s active-duty program is up and running.

**Shepard’s Heart Fellowship & Veterans Home**
Veterans Place remains open, but with enhanced cleaning measures and health checks upon entrance.

**Veterans’ Breakfast Club:**
Veterans’ Breakfast Club has suspended in person events until further notice. However, they are now offering live virtual events twice a week.

**Mission Continues:**
The Mission Continues is an organization made of veterans who do volunteer work in support of the community projects.

**Team Red, White and Blue:**
Team Red, White, and Blue enriches the lives of America’s veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity.