



Anoka County

MINNESOTA

Veteran Services

Government Center
2100 3rd Avenue, Suite 216
Anoka, MN 55303
(763) 324-4500

VETERANS ADVOCATE

Winter 2021-22

ANOKA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES OPEN FOR VISITS BY APPOINTMENT

The Anoka County Veteran Services Office reopened to the public on an appointment basis in June and the new process has been going extremely well. Previously, the office served clients on a walk-in basis, however, now by requiring appointments, we can speak with the client before the appointment to ensure they are aware of any supporting documentation or evidence they must bring to the appointment.

To schedule an appointment with a Veteran Services Officer, call (763) 324-4500.

2022 ESTIMATED COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS TO VA BENEFITS

Periodically, VA makes cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to VA compensation and pension benefits to ensure that the purchasing power of VA benefits is not eroded by inflation. Under federal law, the cost-of-living adjustments to VA's compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits. On October 13, Social Security determined a 5.9% COLA which is the largest since 1982.

COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER DOSES AVAILABLE AT VA

The VA currently provides Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster shots to:

- All individuals who received a Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine at least 2 months ago
- All individuals ages 18 years and older who received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine at least six months after their second dose

Veterans receiving care at VA who wish to get a booster shot and a flu shot can get both shots during the same visit.

Note: you are required to bring your CDC COVID-19 vaccine card to your booster appointment. Only the CDC COVID-19 vaccine card (or a photocopy or photograph of your CDC card) will be accepted at this time.

Veterans can also choose to receive a Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 booster dose in the community. Locations can be found at www.vaccines.gov, or by calling 1-800-232-0233, or by texting your zip code to 438829. Veterans wanting a Moderna booster dose may also call to schedule a dose at the Saint Cloud VA Medical Center at 320-252-1670.

UPCOMING CHANGES TO THE ANOKA COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

With the changing landscape of local Veteran Service Organizations, local support groups, and stakeholders, changes are being discussed for the Anoka County Veterans Advisory Board to ensure

the group can meet the needs of Veterans in our community for years to come.

The Veterans Advisory Board was created by the Anoka County Board of Commissioners in March of 1981, and much has changed since then. The Advisory Board was originally comprised of 7 appointed members from local Veterans groups to work closely to ensure the needs of Veterans were being met. Over the past 40 years, many more organizations and groups have formed with a common purpose of supporting Veterans, and it became clear that all should be welcomed into the meetings.

Recently, an effort to create an Anoka County Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Network started. In the process, we discussed how they can be integrated into the local support networks and we decided that a change to the description of the Veterans Advisory Board would be necessary to ensure that the group would be open to as many local stakeholders as possible, now, and in the future. The group would be renamed the Anoka County Veterans Support Network. Similar to the current Veterans Advisory Board, there will be quarterly meetings with stakeholders, and the Anoka County Veteran Services Office will serve as a facilitator for these meetings. This renamed group will allow for all local Veteran Service Organizations, support groups, and stakeholders to collaborate and ensure that the needs of our Veterans are met.

The next meeting will be held:

****Monday, December 13, 2021 - 2:00 PM****

**Anoka American Legion Post 102
400 W. Main Street
Anoka, MN 55303**

VA EXPANDS BENEFITS FOR DISABILITY CLAIMS FOR CONDITIONS RELATED TO CERTAIN TOXIC EXPOSURES

AGENT ORANGE

VA will begin implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law

116-283), adding three conditions to the list of those presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism.

VA will apply the provisions of court orders related to *Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, which may result in an earlier date for entitlement to benefits for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Vietnam War era Veterans and their survivors, who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of these three new presumptive conditions, will have their cases automatically reviewed without the need to refile a claim. VA has sent letters to impacted Veterans and survivors.

AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND BURN PIT EXPOSURE

VA added 3 presumptive conditions related to particulate matter exposure. The new presumptive conditions are asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis. To be eligible for benefits, you must have gotten one of these conditions within 10 years of your separation from active service.

This will expand benefits for Veterans who served in:

- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from September 19, 2001, to the present, or
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations from August 2, 1990, to the present.

If you have a pending claim for one or more of these conditions, you don't need to do anything. The VA will send you a decision notice when they complete their review. If you have not filed a claim, please call Anoka County Veteran Services at (763) 324-4500 to schedule an appointment with a Veteran Services Officer.

LOCAL VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION MEETING SCHEDULE

Anoka American Legion Post 102

Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM
400 West Main Street
Anoka, MN 55303

Coon Rapids American Legion and Auxiliary Post 334

Meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Anoka American Legion
400 West Main Street
Anoka, MN 55303

Lino Lakes American Legion Post 566

Meeting on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Lino Lakes American Legion
7731 Lake Drive
Lino Lakes, MN 55014

Coon Rapids VFW Post and Auxiliary Post 9625

Meeting on the second Monday of each month.
Auxiliary meets at 6:30 PM and VFW Post meets at 7:00 PM at the Coon Rapids VFW
1919 Coon Rapids Blvd NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Anoka DAV Chapter 39

Meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Coon Rapids VFW
1919 Coon Rapids Blvd NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

**If your organization's meeting information is not listed here, email the dates and times of your meetings to veterans@co.anoka.mn.us

2022 ANOKA COUNTY HOLIDAYS

The Anoka County Veteran Services Office will be closed on the following dates in observance of Federal Holidays:

January 17, 2022 (MLK Day)
February 21, 2022 (President's Day)
May, 30 2022 (Memorial Day)

July 4, 2022 (Independence Day)
September 5, 2022 (Labor Day)
November 11, 2022 (Veterans Day)
November 24-25, 2022 (Thanksgiving)
December 26, 2022 (Christmas Observed)

ABOUT ANOKA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

Anoka County Veteran Services provides professional, caring and quality assistance to veterans and their dependents in obtaining benefits through county, state and federal programs. As advocates, we work with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and nationally chartered Veteran Service Organizations to ensure that our veterans and their dependents receive the benefits they have earned through military service.

When visiting the Anoka County Veteran Services Office you will be referred to a service officer for assistance. Our County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO's) are highly trained, professional advocates that share an understanding of the challenges our veterans and their dependents face. Our CVSO's attend the most current training on the extent, the meaning and the application of laws that have been passed by the U.S. Congress in the interests of veterans and their dependents. They also know the rules and regulations adopted by the Department of Veterans Affairs to clarify and implement those laws. Our CVSO's will apply specialized knowledge in the best way suited to the needs of every individual veteran or other beneficiary who visit our office for assistance.

Our hours of operation are:

Monday - 8:00am - 4:00pm
Tuesday - 8:00am - 4:00pm
Wednesday - 8:00am - 4:00pm
Thursday - 8:00am - 4:00pm
Friday - 8:00am - 3:00pm
Closed on all Federal Holidays

Phone: (763) 324-4500
Fax: (763) 324-1040
Email: veterans@co.anoka.mn.us
Website: www.anokacounty.us/veterans

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available.



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