



**Anoka County**

MINNESOTA

Veteran Services

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

# VETERANS ADVOCATE

Spring 2022

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ANOKA COUNTY VETERANS SUPPORT NETWORK

On February 8, the Anoka County Board of Commissioners voted in favor of establishing the Anoka County Veterans Support Network. This action is a restructuring and expansion of the previous Veterans Advisory Board and is structured to welcome many more organizations and groups that have formed with a common purpose of supporting Veterans.

Similar to how the Veterans Advisory Board operated, 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 local Veterans are met.

Please help us spread the word to ensure that any interested groups or individuals can attend.

The next meeting will be held:  
**\*\*Monday, March 7, 2022 - 2:00 PM\*\***  
**Anoka American Legion Post 102**  
**400 W. Main Street**  
**Anoka, MN 55303**

We look forward to seeing you there.

## ANOKA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES TO ATTEND 2022 NACVSO TRAINING CONFERENCE

The Anoka County Veteran Services Office will not be scheduling appointments for the week of June 6-10 while our Veteran Service Officers attend the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers Training Conference.

This training ensures that our Veteran Service Officers have the most up-to-date information to best serve our Veterans, Survivors and Dependents.

Our office will return to normal operations and scheduling appointments beginning on Monday, June 13. We appreciate your patience during this time.

## VA PROPOSES UPDATES TO RATING SCHEDULE FOR RESPIRATORY, AUDITORY AND MENTAL DISORDERS

The Department of Veterans Affairs is proposing changes to the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities specifically pertaining to the respiratory, auditory and mental disorders body systems.

According to the VA, the proposed updates to the rating schedule for these conditions will enable VA to incorporate modern medical data and terminology to provide Veterans with more accurate and consistent decisions.

A VA spokesperson stated that “Veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition in these body systems will not have their disability rating impacted when the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities is updated.” Proposed updates include:

- Modernizing the evaluative rating criteria for sleep apnea, using developments in medical knowledge to evaluate it based on its responsiveness to treatment, bringing the rating criteria for sleep apnea more closely in line with the stated purpose of the rating schedule.
- Evaluating tinnitus (ringing in the ears) as a symptom of the underlying disease which causes it, rather than as a stand-alone disability.
- Evaluating mental health conditions based on a more robust and holistic approach that assesses how impactful the disability is to cognition, interpersonal relationships, task completion, life activities and self-care. Additionally, the proposed evaluation criteria include a 10% minimum evaluation for having one or more service-connected mental health conditions and will no longer require “total occupational and social impairment” to attain a 100% evaluation.

No change to a Veteran’s current rating would occur due to these proposed changes. If the proposed changes are finalized, Veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition can apply for increased compensation, but no reductions shall be made unless an improvement in the Veteran’s disability is shown to have occurred.

The public has 60 days to provide comments to VA regarding the two proposed updates via the Federal Register notices located on the Federal Register webpage.

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

The following information was included in the previous edition of our newsletter, but it is important enough to keep in this edition, too.

### **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](mailto: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:

**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](mailto:veterans@co.anoka.mn.us)**

**Website: [www.anokacounty.us/veterans](http://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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