

THE LIGHTFIGHTER

Monterey and San Benito County
Military & Veterans Affairs Office



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More at: www.mvao.org

Cover Art- 11th Armored Cavalry ACAVs by Jody Harmon

<https://vladimirarts.com/products/11th-armored-cavalry-acavs-by-jody-harmon>



Director’s Message: Jason Cameron, County Military and Veterans Affairs Officer



Happy New Year – 2022 got here quickly and hope that you and your families had a wonderful holiday season! The new year brings the Military and Veterans Affairs Office some great new opportunities for us to work on.

We remain on track to move our main office from Monterey to Marina this April. The new building is much larger and will allow us to provide office space to other Veteran-serving organizations- effectively making a Veterans Service Center! We also look forward to continuing the fiscal sponsorship for the biennial Homeless Veterans Stand Down- currently scheduled for June 17-19, 2022, at the Monterey County Fairgrounds. If you are a Veteran in need or willing to volunteer, please contact our Office for more information. Monterey County Supervisors Alejo and Root-Askew jointly asked for our help exploring the feasibility of establishing a California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) – Veterans Home here in Monterey County, most likely on or near former Fort Ord. CalVet Homes include Independent Living, Assisted Living, Intermediate Nursing Care, Skilled Nursing and Memory Care for eligible Veterans. The effort to add what will be a 9th CalVet home is supported by Congressman Panetta, CA Senators Caballero and Laird, CA Assembly Members Stone and Rivas, as well as our County Supervisors. Lastly, we continue to remain in close conversation with Congressman Panetta’s staff about establishing a pharmacy at the Major General William H. Gourley VA-DoD Outpatient Clinic.

Lots of great things are on the horizon for Central Coast Veterans and all of us here at the Military & Veterans Affairs Office are proud to be part of it! Thank you for service to our great Nation!

Our Mission Statement:

The Monterey County Military & Veterans Affairs Office (MVAO) provides advocacy, assistance, and services designed to enhance the lives of the County’s Veterans who served their country in the Armed Forces, their families, and their survivors. We assist in obtaining entitlements and services from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA), and local programs for eligible Veterans and their families.

Office Locations and Hours

<p>Monterey Monterey County Superior Courthouse 1200 Aguajito Rd, Suite 003 Monterey, CA 93940 (831) 647-7613</p> <p>Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Appointments Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday</p> <p>Walk-In Services on Tuesday</p> <p>Closed on Fridays</p>	<p>Salinas Life Foundation Bldg 1000 S. Main St, Suite 209A Salinas, CA 93901 (831) 647-7613</p> <p>Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Appointments Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday</p> <p>Walk-In Services on Wednesday</p> <p>Closed on Fridays</p>	<p>Marina VA Outpatient Clinic 201 9th St Marina, CA 93933 (831) 647-7613</p> <p>Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Appointments Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday</p> <p>Walk-In Services on Thursday</p> <p>Closed on Fridays</p>	<p>Hollister San Benito County Veterans Memorial Bldg 649 San Benito St Hollister, CA 95023 (831) 637-4846</p> <p>Monday - Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Please Call for an Appointment</p> <p>Closed on Fridays</p>
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VA won't mail out COVID kits but Veterans can get free tests at clinics



Veterans Affairs officials won't be mailing out at-home [coronavirus](#) kits as demand for testing skyrockets across America, but they are reminding Veterans that VA medical facilities can offer free in-person tests in many circumstances.

VA leaders on acknowledged that requests for COVID-19 tests have risen significantly in recent weeks as the [Omicron variant of the virus](#) has swept across the globe.

Diagnostic testing is available for Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care and meet criteria from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which includes individuals who are showing symptoms of infection or have been in close contact with others who have tested positive.

To limit wait time when at the medical facilities, VA recommends Veterans call ahead for testing or vaccination appointments. Veterans in need of emergency care can visit any medical center for aid.

COVID tests and vaccination appointments are available at the MG Gourley VA Clinic in Marina by calling 650-496-2535 or 831-884-1000

Vaccines available: Moderna and Janssen (available by appointment only)

Monday - Thursday; 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Janssen)
Friday; 9:00 a.m. – noon (Moderna)

Location: First floor lobby, MG Gourley VA Clinic

VA Expands Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) Program

Veterans and transitioning service-members who want to gain computer experience to start or advance a career in the high-technology industry may now be eligible for the VA's Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) program that matches Veterans with a leading training provider to help them develop high-tech skills.

Veterans with at least one day of remaining GI Bill entitlement are eligible to enroll in the VET TEC program and gain high-tech skills within a matter of months. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates information technology occupations will increase by 13 percent over the next decade, and the VET TEC paves the way for student Veterans to join this growing industry. Upon completion of the program, VET TEC graduates typically find employment in 67 days with an average salary above \$59,000.



VET TEC provides tuition for a full-time high-tech training program, a housing allowance during training, industry networking and resume workshops towards a new career in IT.

Interested Veterans or transitioning service-members can [apply here](#) or by calling 888-442-4551. Contact our office at 831-647-7613 or www.mvao.org for assistance accessing Veteran Educational benefits!



WHAT IS "PRESUMPTIVE" SERVICE CONNECTION?

VA disability compensation benefits are a monthly, tax-free payment to Veterans who were injured, sustained a long-term illness or experienced a worsening medical condition during their military service.

In addition to compensating Veterans whose disabilities incurred while serving in the military, Veterans may also be granted compensation for specific post-service medical conditions that arose because of their military service. Known as **presumptive disabilities**, these conditions may not have arisen in service but may be granted as service-connected because the occurrence can be **directly linked** to military service.

VA recently added new medical conditions to a growing [list of presumptive disabilities](#)- conditions which can be presumed to have occurred because of an exposure to Agent Orange, ionizing radiation, and service in the Gulf War.

If you need assistance filing a claim for a presumptive condition, please contact our office at (831) 647-7613 or www.mvao.org

Former Prisoners of War	Vietnam Veterans (Exposed to Agent Orange)	Atomic Veterans (Exposed to Ionizing Radiation)	Gulf War Veterans (Undiagnosed Illness)
<p>1) Imprisoned for any period, and at least 10% disabling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosis • Any of the anxiety states • Dysthymic disorder • Organic residuals of frostbite • Post-traumatic osteoarthritis • Heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease and their complications • Stroke and its residuals <p>2) Imprisoned for at least 30 days, and disability at least 10% disabling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avitaminosis beriberi • Chronic dysentery • Helminthiasis • Malnutrition (including optic atrophy) • Pellagra • Any other nutritional deficiency • Irritable bowel syndrome • Peptic ulcer disease • Peripheral neuropathy • Cirrhosis of the liver 	<p><i>Served in the Republic of Vietnam between 1/9/62 and 5/7/75:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute or subacute peripheral neuropathy* • AL amyloidosis • B-cell leukemias • Chloracne or other acneform disease like chloracne* • Chronic lymphocytic Leukemia • Diabetes type 2 • Hodgkin's disease • Ischemic heart disease • Multiple myeloma • Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma • Parkinson's disease • Porphyria cutanea tarda* • Prostate cancer • Respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx, trachea) • Soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma) <p>*Must be at least 10% disabling</p>	<p>Participated in atmospheric nuclear testing; occupied or was a POW in Hiroshima or Nagasaki; service before 2/1/92 at a diffusion plant in Paducah, KY, Portsmouth, OH, or Oak Ridge, TN; or service before 1/1/74 at Amchitka Island, AK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of leukemia (except for chronic lymphocytic leukemia) • Cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract (kidneys, renal pelves, ureters, urinary bladder and urethra), brain, bone, lung, colon, ovary • Bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma • Multiple myeloma • Lymphomas (other than Hodgkin's disease) • Primary liver cancer (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated) 	<p>Served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War with condition at least 10 percent disabling by 12/31/11. Included are medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses (MUCMI) defined by a cluster of signs or symptoms that have existed for six months or more, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic fatigue syndrome • Fibromyalgia • Irritable bowel syndrome • Any diagnosed or undiagnosed illness that the VA determines warrants a presumption of service connection <p>Signs or symptoms of MUCMI include: fatigue, skin symptoms, headaches, muscle pain, joint pain, neurological symptoms, respiratory symptoms, sleep disturbance, GI symptoms, cardiovascular symptoms, weight loss, menstrual disorders</p>



Employment for Vets

Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists Inc. (VRSI) is Ready to Help!

[Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists Inc. \(VRSI\)](https://vrspecialists.com) offers a wide range of **free services** including vocational counseling, vocational evaluation, employment and training services to eligible Veterans.

If you are a Veteran seeking to get back into the workforce or getting vocational training towards a new career, VRSI's office in Marina is waiting to help

Their office is in Marina at 215 Reservation Rd, Unit R

<https://vrspecialists.com> or (831) 224-5943



Did You Know?...

You can have your veteran status identified on your California Driver's License or State ID



Eligible Veterans can add the word **"VETERAN"** to the front of their driver's license or ID card to indicate that they have served in the U.S. Military. It can also play a critical role in enabling access to certain privileges and benefits associated with being a Veteran without having to carry and produce a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. Interested Veterans need to present a valid DD-214 form to their local County Veteran Services Office to receive a Veteran Status Verification form (VSD-001). Then, the Veteran takes the signed verification form to a DMV field office for processing. DMV charges an additional \$5, plus the standard cost of a new, renewal, or duplicate license fee for this enhancement. **Contact our office at 831-647-7613 or www.mvao.org for assistance with your Veteran benefits!**

Meet our New Office Assistant!



We are proud to introduce Nancy Hood as MVAO's new Office Assistant! Nancy is the daughter of a career Army Non-Commissioned Officer, and spent most of her formative years stationed across Germany, and ultimately Ft Ord. A dedicated and experienced professional, Nancy brings decades of administrative, office management, and customer-service experience to our office. Her enthusiasm and passion to helping Veterans, service-members, and their families is evident as soon as she greets you, and we welcome her to our Team!

Welcome, Nancy!



Our Staff and Veteran Service Representatives are proud to share last Quarter's Activity Report showing the number and value of claims, benefits, and services provided to Monterey and San Benito County Veterans and Families!

Monterey and San Benito County



Quarterly Activity Report



October – December 2021

1,855



Incoming
Calls / Email
Requests

871

Vet Rep Appointments



28 College
Fee Waivers

\$112,530

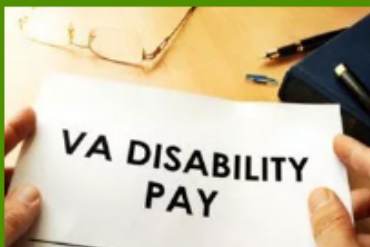
598 Unique Veterans

1,367 Claims Actions

406 Compensation Awards



**New VA Disability Compensation
Awards Earned in 4th Quarter 2021**



\$741,531

Retroactive Payments

\$178,560

Recurring Monthly Payments