

# The Bay State Patriot



A Publication Of

## Massachusetts Department Of Veterans' Services

Volume 3, Issue 3



Deval L. Patrick  
Governor

Timothy P. Murray  
Lieutenant Governor

JudyAnn Bigby, M.D.  
Secretary, EOHHS

Coleman Nee  
Secretary, DVS



### Secretary's Welcome

I hope all of you enjoyed a safe and happy second half of 2011. As our newest veterans return home, they join many of their fellow Americans who have been negatively impacted by the downturn in the economy. However, it seems that the transition from military service to civilian employment has been significantly challenging to veterans. According to the White House:

- As of June, one million veterans were unemployed and the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans was 13.3 percent.
- These veterans tend to be younger and many worked in sectors that were among the hardest hit by the recession. Post-9/11 veterans were more likely to be employed in mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation and

#### Quick Links

[www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans)

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

Follow us on

Find us on Facebook

#### In This Issue

[Third Annual Conference for  
Woman Veterans](#)

[VA Updates Information Sharing  
Rule with DOD Federal Rule  
Change Enhances Collaboration  
and Preserves Patient Privacy](#)

utilities—all industries that experienced significant drops in employment during 2008-2009.

- As we end the war in Iraq and wind down the war in Afghanistan, over one million service members are projected to leave the military between 2011 and 2016.

In light of this, it was heartening to watch President Obama recently announce a plan to ensure that all of America's veterans have the support they need and deserve when they leave the military, look for a job and enter the civilian workforce. His commitment to service members and veterans includes a comprehensive plan to reduce veteran unemployment and ensure that service members leave the military prepared for new careers through hiring tax credits, private sector commitments, and reforms that improve the way we prepare, train and educate service members for life after the military.

Here in Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick declared November 2011 as "Hire a Veteran Month" and announced new initiatives and resources to support the hiring of Massachusetts veterans, while increasing access to health care, transportation, education and housing services.

The Governor also launched an Interagency Task Force on Hiring Veterans and directed all Executive Branch agencies to promote the benefits of hiring veterans. The announcement builds on existing partnerships and business collaborations initiated by Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray, who chairs the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services.

As part of the initiatives, the Administration is partnering with major trade associations to encourage them to hire veterans and circulate information on veterans benefits. The Massachusetts Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (MACCE), the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, the Mass High Tech Council, the Defense Technology Initiative, and the Retailers Association of Massachusetts are among the growing list of major trade associations committed to working with the Administration and the Massachusetts veteran community.

In the meantime, if you or anyone you know is looking to hire qualified veterans, please leave a message on our

[Rabies: Facts for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans](#)

[7th Annual Women Veteran Appreciation Day Event](#)

[2nd Year of Federal Grants Wrap-Up with Training and Jobs for Veterans](#)

[Veterans' Day Ceremony](#)

[Attention & Memory Training Program At VA Boston HCS](#)

[Goodrich foundation Donates to the Wounded Warrior Project](#)

[SAVE Team Helps Out at Storm Assistance Centers](#)

[Lieutenant Governor Murray Pays Respects at Puerto Rico National Cemetery](#)

[We've Moved](#)

[VA Creates Women Veterans Call Center](#)

[GI Bill Changes - Post 9/11](#)

#### **Quick Links**

[Register Now](#)

[News](#)

[More About Us](#)

[Our Sponsors](#)

employment line at 617-210-5970. You can also write to us at [veteransvoice@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:veteransvoice@massmail.state.ma.us) to post employment opportunities. To learn more about our employment training grants, visit our website at [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans).

To find the closest One Stop Career Center near you visit the MA, Department of Workforce Development website here.

Thank you!

Sincerely,



Secretary

### Third Annual Conference for Woman Veterans

Over 250 women veterans and advocates arrived Saturday morning, June 18th at Veterans' Memorial Hall, Salem State University for the Opening Ceremony of the Third Annual Conference for Women Veterans. Speakers included Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray, Salem State University President, Patricia Maguire-Meservey, Massachusetts Senator Thomas McGee, Health and Human Services Secretary, JudyAnn Bigby, and Department of Veterans' Services, Secretary Coleman Nee. Keynote Speaker Genevieve Chase, Executive Director of American Women Veterans, presented a moving address that included her combat experience and her post deployment experiences, which ultimately led her to the founding of American Women Veterans, an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy of servicewomen, veterans and their families.

The day's activities included panel discussions on benefits and services, women's health care options, alternative therapies for PTSD and MST, and discussions on experiences of reintegration from the perspective of the returning veteran, parents, and siblings. There were more than 40 exhibitors with information ranging from health care, housing, education, to women in the military history. Donating their time as well were practitioners who provided massage, acupuncture, Reiki (a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation) and crystal singing bowl therapy.

"I have frequently said that education is the greatest gift. However, having met with so many of our Veterans and active service men and women, I have come to understand that freedom is indeed the greatest gift. I thank all of you who have served and your families for the sacrifices that have protected our freedom and thereby allow us to pursue higher education." - President Patricia Maguire Meservey

Many thanks go out to all who made this event a success! Next year the conference will be located on the South Shore. Stay tuned!

### VA Updates Information Sharing Rule with DOD Federal Rule Change Enhances Collaboration and Preserves Patient Privacy

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it is amending an agency rule in the Code of Federal Register (C.F.R.) to remove an inappropriate restriction on

sharing of information about treatment for certain types of medical conditions with the Department of Defense (DOD). This update to the regulation removes the restrictive VA provision and enhances VA's collaboration with DOD so Veterans can receive better and more timely treatment, services and benefits.

"VA and DOD clinicians must have the most accurate and comprehensive data available to ensure they provide the highest quality care possible. We have discovered that, particularly in this age of electronic health records, this regulatory restriction created an impediment to maximizing this exchange of information," said Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

This interim final rule removes a restriction that is not required by the statute, 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 7332, and is inconsistent with the intent and purpose of that statute. This confidentiality statute was enacted before other privacy laws were in place to protect against the unauthorized disclosure of VA medical records relating to treatment for drug abuse, alcoholism or alcohol abuse, infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and sickle cell anemia. Because Congress never intended the protection of such records to interfere with the treatment of Veterans, the statute contains an exception that permits VA to share the protected records with DOD. 38 U.S.C. § 7332(e). However, when VA published the implementing regulation in 1995, 38 C.F.R. § 1.461, the rule further narrowed the exception to allow the interchange of only a subset of these records: those pertaining to a period when the individual was subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

A recent VA review of information sharing processes with DOD found that this restriction, which is narrower than the statutory exception, impedes VA's ability to share important medical information to coordinate the care and treatment of Veterans. The updated rule removes this extra restriction and makes the agency rule consistent with statute. It allows for the appropriate sharing of this treatment information and continues to preserve Veteran and patient privacy in accordance with § 7332 and other privacy statutes and regulations without obstructing the delivery of medical care to Veterans.

The interim final rule, which may be found at

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=VA-2011-VHA-0025-0001>, is effective the date posted to the Federal Register. Written comments may be submitted through

[www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)<<http://www.regulations.gov>>; by mail or hand-delivery to the Director, Regulations Management (02REG), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave., NW, Room 1068, Washington, DC 20240; or fax to (202) 273-9026. Comments should indicate that they are submitted in response to "RIN 2900-AN95-Sharing Information Between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense."

VA News Release

## **Rabies: Facts for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans**

What is rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that leads to a fatal brain infection. It is transmitted from infected animals to people through bites and exposure to saliva. Rabies is preventable if you are vaccinated before you get sick.

Why is this important for Veterans?

OEF/OIF/OND Veterans who were deployed in the previous 18 months, and were bitten or had contact with the saliva from a warm-blooded animal such as a dog, cat, bat, fox, skunk, raccoon, mongoose or jackal could be at risk for rabies. If you were deployed in the last 18 months (from the time you are reading this) and you had an animal bite or contact with wet animal saliva, or had a bat in your sleeping quarters, please talk to your VA provider about this as soon as possible.

Note: OEF/OIF/OND Veterans who have been bitten or otherwise exposed to the saliva of an animal while deployed in the last 18 months must be evaluated to determine if they need to be vaccinated against rabies.

#### Key facts:

A high percent of dogs are infected with rabies in Afghanistan and Iraq. These dogs or other mammals may appear very normal and you would not know by looking that the animal has rabies. Recently a U.S. soldier who had served in Afghanistan died of rabies.

Rabies is found in more than 150 countries and territories.

Worldwide, about 55,000 people die of rabies every year.

Dogs are the source of nearly all human rabies deaths in non-developed countries.

All mammals (warm-blooded animals) can get infected by rabies (e.g. dog, cat, bat, fox, skunk, raccoon, mongoose, jackal).

Bats and raccoons are the primary animals spreading rabies in the U.S.

Cases of rabies in humans in the U.S. are extremely rare.

How is rabies spread to humans?

Rabies is spread by direct exposure to a rabid animal. The exposure is nearly always through a bite, but it can also be transmitted if a rabid animal scratches a person or if its

Rabies: Facts for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans - October 2011 Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Office of Public Health 1 Rabies: Facts for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans - October 2011 Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Office of Public Health 2

saliva comes into contact with broken skin. In less developed countries, dogs are the main source of the rabies virus, however in the U.S. and other developed nations, bats and wild animals become the major concern. There are active vaccination programs in the U.S. to prevent rabies in pets.

What are the symptoms of rabies?

If you were exposed to rabies, you may not have any symptoms. By the time any symptoms appear, rabies often cannot be successfully treated. As the disease progresses, the person may experience delirium, hallucinations, slight or partial paralysis, anxiety, confusion, increase in saliva, difficulty swallowing, and insomnia. Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms.

What is the treatment for an animal bite or scratch?

Good wound care can help to prevent rabies, but medical evaluation for vaccination is critical. A wound should be gently washed with soap and flushed thoroughly with large amounts of water.

Avoid further damage to the tissues and seek medical evaluation immediately.

How can I tell if an animal has rabies?

Often you cannot. Despite common belief that rabid animals are easily identified by foaming at the mouth and aggressive behavior, infected animals may not have any apparent symptoms or behave in an unusual manner.

What should I do if I was bitten or exposed while I was deployed?

Get evaluated today! Discuss what happened and what, if any, treatment you received, with your VA provider. It is frequently impossible to know if the animal you had contact with had rabies.

Because rabies is a very serious disease, we want to understand your specific case and discuss treatment options with you. Your VA provider will help you do this.

What is the treatment for rabies?

If your health care provider thinks that you may have been exposed to rabies, he/she will arrange for vaccination against rabies and any wound care if needed. Vaccination to prevent rabies can be given 18 months or more after possible exposure.

For More Information:

Contact your health care provider. You can also visit these Web sites:

Veterans Health Administration, Office of Public Health

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/rabies>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/transmission/index.html>

World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs099/en>

US Army Public Health Command  
http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/discond/aid/Pages/Rabies.aspx  
VA News Release

## **Massachusetts 7th Annual "WOMEN VETERAN APPRECIATION DAY" An Event Honoring Women Veterans**

The Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services Women Veterans' Network held its 7th Annual "Women Veteran Appreciation Day" ceremony at the State House on November 3, 2011. In addition to celebrating women's service in the military, the "Outstanding Woman Veteran of the Year" award is presented to a woman veteran who is a Massachusetts resident whose military and community service is extraordinary. This year, Lieutenant Colonel Andrea Gayle Bennett, Pediatric Physician Assistant, United States Army National Guard of Lynn, MA was the recipient of the 2011 award.

The event's keynote speaker was Sergeant Jaquelynn Palazola, a Veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan War. Jaquelynn served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Jaquelynn trained as an Air Force firefighter at the Louis F. Garland Fire Academy (joint forces fire school) at Goodfellow AFB, TX.

## **2nd Year of Federal Grants Wrap-Up with Training and Jobs for Veterans**

The Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) just finished a second successful year of employment initiatives with grant support from the U.S. Department of Labor. DVS partnered with Father Bills' Mainspring and Veterans Incorporated on the Commonwealth's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, which provides training, job placement, housing assistance and other services for eligible Veterans. For the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, which focused on "green" jobs, DVS teamed up with Veterans' Northeast Outreach Center in Haverhill. Through the efforts of these providers - who coordinate training, supportive services and placement assistance with the help of the Division of Career Services One Stop Career Centers, 330 veterans were placed in employment through these grants. To find out more about employment services for Veterans, please visit [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans) and look under "Employment."

## **Annual Veterans' Day Ceremony at the State House, Boston, MA**

BOSTON - Friday, November 11, 2011 - Governor Deval Patrick, Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray and Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Secretary Coleman Nee today honored Massachusetts service members past and present at the Commonwealth's annual Veterans' Day ceremony at the State House. Earlier today, Governor Patrick signed a supplemental budget which includes more than \$1 million in funding for Welcome Home Bonus payments and additional veterans benefits.

"Today is a day to express our gratitude, pride and enduring support to the Massachusetts military personnel protecting our interests abroad, and to all of our veterans and their families," said Governor Patrick. "Here in the Commonwealth, our commitment to our returning servicemen and women has never wavered. To truly honor our heroes, we must focus on expanding access to jobs and services for veterans -- and that's what we are striving to accomplish every day."

"As citizens of this Commonwealth and this country, we have an obligation to ensure all veterans

have access to the range of services they have rightfully earned," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray, chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services. "Our Administration is committed to working with municipalities, businesses, educational institutions and other organizations as we continue to build partnerships to enhance and deliver services to the brave men and women who have proudly served our country."

"On Veterans Day, we come together collectively to honor the brave men and women who have served in our armed forces" said Secretary Nee. "We honor the men and women of generations past and those who are currently serving overseas helping our nation stay safe. To all of our veterans, we say thank you for your service."

The program also included a special tribute to women veterans, led by Captain Mary Jo Majors, who has been an officer in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps for more than 42 years; Captain Majors was Massachusetts' 2010 Outstanding Woman Veteran of the Year. Tim Sullivan, Commander in the United States Navy (Ret.), a former POW, and Maureen Dunn, of the National League of Families of POW/MIA, led a candle lighting ceremony for those who have been held prisoner or are missing. Gold Star Families were paid tribute with a rose presentation.

## **ATTENTION & MEMORY TRAINING PROGRAM AT VA BOSTON HCS**

The Department of Veteran Affairs - Rehabilitation Research & Development

### **Cognitive rehabilitation program for OEF/OIF soldiers and Veterans with blast-related Traumatic Brain Injuries.**

Concussion or mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) is the most common form of combat-related injury. In military conflicts, a majority of concussions are caused by blast injury. Common consequences of mild TBI include difficulties with some aspects of cognitive functioning, headaches, irritability, increased anxiety, and difficulty sleeping.

This program evaluates a cognitive rehabilitation treatment for blast-related cognitive difficulties in OEF/OIF soldiers and Veterans. The program consists of a 10-week group training specifically designed to improve function in some aspects of cognitive functioning and memory.

#### **This study treatment program involves:**

- \* 10 treatment sessions (2 hours each) once a week for 10 weeks.
- \* 4 testing sessions: before, during, immediately after, and 3 months after the study intervention. Testing includes paper and pencil tests, mood and symptoms questionnaires.
- \* Participants will be compensated at the rate of \$10/hour for participation and \$5 for transportation for each study visit.

#### **Who can participate?**

OEF/OIF soldiers or veterans who:

- \* Are 45 years of age or younger
- \* Were exposed to a blast during deployment
- \* Suffered a TBI as a result of a blast or any other cause
- \* Experience problems with attention, concentration, organization, or memory.

For more information, please call or email: [Dr. Yelena Bogdanova](#) at 857-364-2249 or [Sarah Kark](#) at 857-364-4001

## Goodrich Foundation Donates to the Wounded Warrior Project



The Goodrich Foundation has made a \$50,000 donation to the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) to support programs and services for WWP clients in Massachusetts. Linda Perry was on hand to accept this generous donation on behalf of the Wounded Warrior Project.

The Wounded Warrior Project offers programs and services for injured service members and their families. Their simple, yet vital mission is to honor and empower wounded warriors. They work toward this goal by raising awareness and enlisting the public's support to meet the needs of injured service members; helping injured service members aid and assist one another; and by offering unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. Their programs include: Benefit Services, Family Support Services, Peer Mentoring, WWP Backpacks, Combat Stress Support, Soldier Ride, TRACK, Warriors to Work, Transition Training Academy and Campus Services.

WWP's programs are uniquely designed to fulfill the vision, to nurture the mind and body, and encourage economic empowerment. WWP focuses on these goals by operating under the ASSURE3 model of service, representing a commitment to Advocate, Serve, Support, Unite, Rehabilitate, Educate, Employ and Empower wounded warriors to heal and grow in mind, body and spirit.

The Goodrich Foundation also made a donation of \$50,000 to the WWP earmarked for Massachusetts Veterans in November 2010.

## SAVE Team Helps Out at Storm Assistance Centers

On June 1st, several communities in Western Massachusetts were struck by devastating tornadoes. As the Commonwealth responded rapidly by coordinating storm assistance centers in Springfield,

Monson and Southbridge, the Department of Veterans' Services responded to the devastated areas storm centers as well. Knowing that there were likely Veterans in those communities in need of assistance, DVS sent members of the SAVE Team to ensure that the emergency centers were stocked with information about Veterans' benefits and services. SAVE Team staff coordinated with other agencies at the centers and connected veterans with their local Veterans' Services Officers for emergency assistance.

Our Operations staff, Veterans' Services Officers and housing providers stepped up quickly to assist Veterans and their families. Once the FEMA sites were established, SAVE members still continued to make sure that all the federal locations had our information at those sites. We are thankful to all who pitched in to help their fellow citizens at this difficult time.

## Lieutenant Governor Murray Pays Respects at Puerto Rico National Cemetery



Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Murray pays respects at Puerto Rico National Cemetery (Photo Credit Lauren Jones / Lt. Governor's office)

On July 28, 2011, Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray visited the Puerto Rico National Cemetery in Bayamon to pay respects to fallen service members. During his visit, Lieutenant Governor Murray presented the cemetery with a Massachusetts flag previously flown over the State House in honor of Massachusetts-born service members and former residents, who are buried in the cemetery, or listed as missing.

Lieutenant Governor Murray, who serves as Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services, also visited the grave site of Manuel Ocasio-Morales, a U.S. Army Korean War

Veteran and native of Puerto Rico. Ocasio-Morales worked at the U.S. Naval Base at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, and later lived in Worcester, Massachusetts before his death in 1994.

The Puerto Rico National Cemetery became a national cemetery on July 12, 1948. Situated on 108.2 acres and managed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the cemetery serves as the final resting place for over 150,000 veterans in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Caribbean Region, and Central and South America, with more than 1,600 burials conducted each year, or about six per weekday. The cemetery is the only national cemetery outside of the continental United States and Hawaii.

Lieutenant Governor Murray visited Puerto Rico to participate in the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) annual meeting. Lieutenant Governor Murray currently serves as Treasurer of the NLGA. During the conference, Lieutenant Governor Murray participated in a series of panels and discussions, highlighting unique and successful initiatives that continue to support Massachusetts' economic growth and recovery. Lieutenant Governor Murray also visited MassMutual's San Juan office.

## We've moved!

DVS has moved to the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor of 600 Washington Street in Boston. We now share the floor with several other agencies. Visitors will find a new consolidated reception area right outside the elevators as you come up to the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor. Please be sure to check in at the Reception Desk first.

Our office building is located diagonally across from the Orange Line Chinatown T-stop, and the Silver Line stops right in front of the building. So when you come for a meeting with us, just remember that we are in the same building on a different floor.

## VA CREATES WOMEN VETERANS CALL CENTER

### *Major Outreach Effort Launched*

WASHINGTON- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has embarked on a major initiative to reach out to women Veterans in order to solicit their input on ways to enhance the health care services VA provides to women Veterans.

"We are taking a proactive approach to enhancing VA health care for women Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are seeking the input of women Veterans so that VA can continue to provide high quality health care to the growing numbers of women Veterans." Representatives at VA's Health Resource Center (HRC) are placing calls to women Veterans nationwide, asking them to share their experiences with VA and suggest potential enhancements that will further VA's mission to provide the best care anywhere.

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living Veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total Veteran population and 6 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services. VA estimates by 2020 women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population and 9.5 percent of VA patients. The HRC, which started placing calls on June 1, is contacting women Veterans who have enrolled, but have not begun using VA services.

"Through this contact center, we are placing friendly, conversational calls to women Veterans," said Patricia Hayes, chief consultant of the VA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. "We want these Veterans and their caregivers to talk candidly about why they are not using VA, whether they are aware of the gender-specific services we offer, and what additional services they would like to see VA offer." The HRC representatives making the calls are also informing women Veterans about the services VA offers and quickly connecting them with appropriate departments if they are interested in trying VA health care. Veterans who have complaints about VA are connected to a patient advocate who helps resolve issues.

VA has trained professionals in all aspects of women's health, including general primary care, osteoporosis management, heart disease, mental health care, menopausal services and obesity-related issues, such as diabetes. Preventive screenings for breast and cervical cancer are also areas in which VA excels. Soon, all VA facilities will offer comprehensive primary care for women from a single provider.

The Women Veterans Health Care program has made significant changes in the last few years

to enhance the health care offered to eligible women Veterans. This progress includes:

- Adopting key policies to improve access and enhance services for women Veterans;
- Implementing comprehensive primary care for women Veterans;
  
- Conducting cutting-edge research on the effects of military service on women's lives;
  
- Improving communication and outreach to women Veterans;
  
- Providing mental health, homelessness and other services designed to meet the unique needs of women Veterans.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans:  
[www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet) and [www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth)

### GI BILL CHANGES - Post 9/11

Upcoming changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill effective August 1, 2011 include paying the actual net cost of all public in-state tuition and fees, rather than basing payments upon the highest in-state tuition and fee rates for every state; capping private and foreign tuition at \$17,500 per academic year; and ending payments during certain school breaks, to preserve Veterans' entitlement for future academic semesters. Also, certain students attending private schools in select states can now continue to receive benefits at the same rate payable during the previous academic year.

Beginning October 1, 2011, eligible individuals will be able to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for programs such as non-college degrees, on-the-job training, and correspondence courses, and they will be eligible to receive a portion of the national monthly housing allowance rate when enrolled only in distance learning courses.

The VA is implementing the latest round of changes to the Post 9/11 GI Bill and has already begun processing fall 2011 enrollment certifications. Outreach by VA has helped to increase participation by colleges and universities in the Yellow Ribbon program, which helps students avoid out-of-pocket costs that may exceed the benefit. Today, more than 2,600 schools are participating in the Yellow Ribbon program.

Complete information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill is available at:

<https://ui.constantcontact.com/rnavmap/em/ecampaign/www.gibill.va.gov>. VA's education information phone number is: 1-888-GIBILL-1. For ongoing benefit information, Veterans and Service members can log into the VA eBenefits website:  
<https://ui.constantcontact.com/rnavmap/em/ecampaign/www.eBenefits.va.gov>.

# Season's Greetings



*The Department of Veterans' Services wishes you and yours a Happy Holiday Season and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.*

The Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) advocates on behalf of the nearly half-million veterans in Massachusetts, their families, and survivors. DVS works to secure federal compensation and other benefits for which veterans may be eligible. The Department also administers needs-based benefits program through Veterans' Service Officers throughout Massachusetts and provides state funding to organizations offering homeless shelter, transitional housing and outreach services to veterans.

Department of Veterans' Services  
600 Washington St.  
Boston, Ma, 02111  
Phone # 617-210-5480

S.A.V.E.

Phone # 617 336 9522

Fax # 617-210-5755

[savemassveterans@gmail.com](mailto:savemassveterans@gmail.com)

Fax

#

617-210-5755

[www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans)

[Forward email](#)



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to [heidi.kruckenberg@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:heidi.kruckenberg@massmail.state.ma.us) by [mdvs@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:mdvs@massmail.state.ma.us) | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).  
Dept. of Veterans Services | 600 Washington | Boston | MA | 02111