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# Proposal could lower stress-disorder rules

01:00 AM EDT on Monday, August 31, 2009

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced last week that the VA is taking steps to assist veterans seeking compensation for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

That assistance is in the form of a proposed regulation published on Aug. 24 in the Federal Register to make it easier for a veteran to claim service connection for PTSD by reducing the evidence needed if the stressor claimed by a veteran is related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 60 days. A final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

Under the new rule, the VA would not require corroboration of a stressor related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity if a VA psychiatrist or psychologist confirms that the stressful experience recalled by a veteran adequately supports a diagnosis of PTSD and the veteran's symptoms are related to the claimed stressor.

Previously, claims adjudicators were required to corroborate that a noncombat veteran actually experienced a stressor related to hostile military activity. This rule would simplify the development that is required for these cases.

PTSD is a recognized anxiety disorder that can result from seeing or experiencing an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to which a person responds with intense fear, helplessness or horror. It is not uncommon for soldiers to experience this in wartime. Feelings of fear, confusion or anger often subside, but if the feelings do not go away or they get worse, a veteran may have PTSD.

The VA is bolstering its mental-health capacity to serve combat veterans, adding thousands of new professionals to its rolls in the last four years. Also, the department has established a suicide prevention help line (800-273-TALK) and Web site available for online chat in the evenings at [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans).

Reports question millions in VA employee bonuses

Outside the Veterans Affairs Department, severely wounded veterans have faced financial hardship waiting for their first disability payment. Inside, money has been flowing in the form of \$24 million in

bonuses.

In scathing reports this past week, the VA's inspector general said thousands of technology office employees at the VA received the bonuses over a two-year period, some under questionable circumstances. It also detailed abuses ranging from nepotism to an inappropriate relationship between two VA employees.

To learn more, read the full article on Military.com at <http://www.military.com/news/article/August-2009/millions-in-va-bonuses-questioned.html>.

#### VA Medical Center plans next urology seminar

The VA Medical Center at 830 Chalkstone Ave., in Providence, will have its next educational urological seminar program on Sept. 23, from 1 to 2 p.m., as part of Prostate Awareness Month. Eileen Kirshenbaum, a certified urology registered nurse will lead the session in classroom 3 at the VA Medical Center. For more information call (401) 273-7100, ext. 2926.

Reunion: the annual local reunion of the 102d Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron Association will be held on Sept. 20, in North Smithfield, at the group's former headquarters off Pound Hill Road, from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Lunch, which costs \$7, will be served at noon, and supper, which costs \$13, is at 5 p.m. Any veteran who served with the group from 1948 to 1998 is welcome to attend along with family members. Reservations must be made and paid by Sept. 13. Call Hank Connors at (401) 437-1482 or send e-mail to [hank.connors@cox.net](mailto:hank.connors@cox.net).

- Governor's Veterans' Affairs Advisory Council will meet Tuesday at 1 p.m., at the Rhode Island Veterans Home, south building conference room, 480 Metacom Ave., Bristol.
- Disabled American Veterans Chapter 17 Pion Post will meet Tuesday at Crompton Vets Club, 37 Hepburn St., West Warwick, at 7:30 p.m.
- NUSC/NUWC will meet Wednesday at McGovern's restaurant, 310 Shove St., in Fall River, at noon; lunch costs \$17 and door prizes will be awarded.
- American Legion and Auxiliary: Post 39 will meet Wednesday at 7 p.m., at 1958 Kingstown Rd., Peace Dale; Armstrong-Gladding Post and Auxiliary Unit 69, 2 Salem St., Providence, will meet Wednesday at 8 p.m.
- Marine Corps League Kent County Detachment will meet Wednesday at VFW Post 449, Providence St., West Warwick, starting at 7 p.m.
- The United Veterans Council of Rhode Island will meet Thursday at 7 p.m., in the second-floor conference room at 1 Capitol Hill, Providence.
- Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 325 will meet Thursday at 7:30 p.m., at The Neighborhood Guild, 325 Columbia St., Peace Dale.
- Pawtucket Veterans Council will meet on Friday at Gatchell VFW Post 306, 171 Fountain St.,

Pawtucket, at 2 p.m.

Send veterans' meeting and news items to George W. Reilly at [VeteransColumn@verizon.net](mailto:VeteransColumn@verizon.net) or write to The Veterans Journal Column at The Providence Journal, 75 Fountain St., Providence, R.I. 02902. Veterans' meeting and feature items can be read and posted for free at <http://projothebeat.com/>.