

UPDATE FOR SPOUSES AND SURVIVING SPOUSES - JUNE 2017

1. Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) - Complementary and alternative medicine is now being used more and more to help Veterans cope with post-traumatic stress. This includes acupuncture, art therapy, meditation, yoga breathing, etc. Such activities have been found to be effective, in part because they encourage both physical and social involvement. We already knew from experts at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center that the incorporation of a full team of disciplines into a patient's treatment plan has proven helpful. Further, it has been proven that trained dogs also can become most helpful to patients in dealing with post-traumatic stress.

2. The Reintegration Battle - I thought you would be interested in a recent article by Corie Weathers, which appeared on-line on military.com. It has to do with a spouse's recognition of the problems of once again becoming a part of a family unit following a prolonged absence (such as a deployment). The significant point is that the military spouse in this instance is a psychologist, she had been on an extended business trip, and came to realize (from her professional training coupled with her personal situation) that "reintegration" problems can be experienced by both spouses. One brief quote from the non-military spouse, Corie: "By paying attention only to my perspective [following an unexpectedly long business trip], I missed that Minecraft was more than a strange digital world of building blocks--it was an opportunity for my husband [to] build something with his sons. Through Minecraft, he was rebuilding relationships that had endured separations and plenty of previous missed opportunities." It wasn't simply a "video game problem that needed balance." This matter of reintegration is a complicated one. I commend the entire article to you; you can find it at: <http://www.military.com/spouse/relationships/military-marriage/military-reintegration-battle-problem.html#.WVHP7aWOqHs.email> .

3. Fisher House - The Perry Point VA Medical Center has been put on the Fisher House Foundation list for the construction of a new Fisher House. It will be available for use by family members of patients at all three Maryland VA inpatient facilities--Loch Raven, Perry Point, and Baltimore. The new Fisher House is planned for opening in Perryville, Maryland (in Cecil County, on the Susquehanna River across from Havre de Grace) within two years.

4. Commissary Reform - Commissaries and exchanges at military installations are part of the resale system which provide savings on products to patrons, employs many military family members and veterans, and augments appropriations to Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs. Programs also offer scholarships to military children at installations across the United States. Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) and Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) introduced H.R. 2850, the Military Patron Protection Act (MPPA) to safeguard commissary benefits. The MPPA, if made into law, would create a Military Resale Patron Advisory Commission to help ensure that the views of patrons of commissaries are given full consideration in the process of implementing major changes to the exchanges and commissaries. Required reporting on the use of user-fee funds would include more about what appropriations are needed to support the defense resale system so that families are not negatively affected. MOAA is supporting those reforms that preserve the longevity of the related benefits. We all are cautious about the possibility that some of the reforms proposed up to this time may look and sound good, but actually may be harmful to the commissary system and its beneficiaries. To be continued.

5. Federal Impact Act (for public educational programs) - President Trump's budget proposal is likely to eliminate funding for payments for Federal Property. (It is noted that the Obama Administration also did not want to continue these payments to local governments). [Note: Federal Property is one of five categories of Impact Aid, but is significant to us since Federal lands are exempt from property taxes by the states/local governments. The other four categories are not especially relevant to this discussion. DoD Supplemental Impact Aid is not affected, and is paid by the Department of Defense, not the Department of Education.] This would equate to an elimination of \$68 million to assist 200 school districts in 29 states. This loss of funding would also affect all children in those school districts. The Impact Aid represents a critical supplement for districts with federally connected revenue challenges. MOAA and the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools are requesting that Congress continue to fully fund school districts such as those around national parks, laboratories, Army

Corps of Engineers projects, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and many others. MOAA does not believe these districts should be disadvantaged because of a large Federal presence--high acreages of real property not taxed + larger numbers of federally-connected citizens. Harvey and I already have sent a letter to our senators asking them to maintain full funding for the Impact Aid (Title VII), Section 7002 (Federal Properties) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

6. 7th Annual MOAA Maryland Congressional Luncheon - Put Wednesday, the 13th of September, on your calendars. That's the day we'll host our Maryland Delegation on Capitol Hill (8 House Members + 2 U.S. Senators) in the Rayburn House Office Building. Please join us with your spouses, other members of your Chapters, and other Veterans and spouses you wish to invite to hear from these members of Congress from the State of Maryland. From verbal expressions of interest, we are expecting a majority of them to join and speak with us that day, including (we hope) both of our United States Senators. Please make reservations through your Chapters. I look forward to seeing more of our spouses and surviving spouses at this year's Luncheon.

7. Veterans On-Line Shopping Benefit to Commence on Veterans Day, 11 November. More than 18,000 Veterans already have been verified (as of the second week of June) for online access for ordering from the military exchanges (AAFES, NEX, and Coast Guard). The Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) does not have an on-line ordering capability. Veterans no longer have to be active service/family members or Armed Forces Retirees/family members to purchase from the exchanges on-line. The Reserve Components are included in the program. The new authorization commences for these Vets on 11 November 2017. You can verify your access by checking in now via VetVerify.com . At present the benefit is only for the Veterans themselves (not spouses). Also, it applies to the five Armed Forces, the USPHS Commissioned Corps, and the NOAA Commissioned Corps. Spouses cannot register directly, so encourage your Vets to register. Most of the questions on this new program are answered on VetVerify.com . The site also provides FAQ's [Frequently Asked Questions], and answers to them. There also is a phone number for unanswered questions. Veterans are advised to register at the website under the Service (or one of the Services) in which they served. USPHS and NOAA personnel should identify themselves as "Other." NOAA has a toll-free number for former NOAA officers who wish to enroll and experience difficulty in registering: [800-224-6622](tel:800-224-6622). Mr. Alex Potter is the point of contact for former USPHS officers who run into problems; he can be reached at alex.potter@hhs.gov .

8. Identity Theft. USAA (an affiliate of MOAA) defines identity theft as having occurred when "someone uses your personal identifiable information to commit fraudulent acts such as filing tax returns or applying for loans. This can be detected by being denied credit unexpectedly, getting information about services you didn't buy or receiving credit cards you didn't apply for." For our spouses, one of the highlights in the USAA "Intel Update" for June 2017 concerns children's accounts. Quote: "Child identity fraud is a growing trend, and it's more difficult to detect and resolve than adult identity theft. Cyberthieves steal children's Social Security numbers and use [them] to illegally obtain credit, apply for jobs or even obtain government benefits." The suggestion is to closely monitor your children's accounts (as well as your own, of course). More information is available at <https://www.usaa.com/accountsecurity> . You do not have to be a USAA member (i.e., customer) to use this site.

I hope that you and your families enjoy a bright and happy summer. Please let me know if you have any relevant information to add to my next Update or if anyone else in Maryland MOAA needs to be added to my distribution list. Thanks!

Sincerely,

Naomi

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