

VETERANS BENEFITS & BEYOND



VA Launches Hepatitis C–Advanced Liver Disease Disparities Dashboard.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is stepping up its efforts to accelerate treatment for Veterans with hepatitis C and advanced liver disease (ALD) through the creation of a Hepatitis C–ALD dashboard. The dashboard works by using a set of criteria, including age, gender, geography, service era along with race and ethnicity, to distinguish Veteran groups at highest risk for ALD as a result of hepatitis C.

“The dashboard is a powerful data tool to help VA identify Veteran groups disproportionately affected by Advanced Liver Disease and to ensure they receive the appropriate health care,” said Dr. David Shulkin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. “VA will provide data directly to facilities for any of the vulnerable groups identified by the dashboard and support outreach efforts to Veteran populations disparately impacted and not currently served by VA health care. This is an important step in assuring all Veterans with ALD receive timely, appropriate care.”

VA’s Veterans Health Administration’s Office of Health Equity developed the dashboard as part of its efforts to target and accelerate

care of Veterans with this serious disease. The new resource promotes equitable diagnosis and treatment of underserved Veterans with hepatitis C and ALD nationally and compliments existing clinical hepatitis and liver disease dashboards available in some Veterans Integrated Service Networks or VISNs.

“The dashboard is a powerful data tool to help VA identify Veteran groups disproportionately affected by Advanced Liver Disease and to ensure they receive the appropriate health care”

Dr. David Shulkin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health

Chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is the most common blood-borne infection in the world. Complications that result from untreated HCV infection include progressive liver damage leading to cirrhosis, primary cancer of the liver, liver failure and death. Although many of these complications are treatable or even preventable, three-quarters of the individuals with HCV infection in the U.S. are unaware they are infected. VA leads the country in hepatitis screening, testing, treatment, research and prevention.

The Hepatitis C-ALD dashboard further advances the vision for quality care and improved access to care identified in VA’s Blueprint for Excellence. For more information on the dashboard, visit www.hsrd.research.va.gov/news/video/heap.cfm.

Source: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2736

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JAN'S LETTER

Welcome to our first VA newsletter of 2016! We are so excited to start a brand new year by bringing you some good news about benefits for Veterans and improvements that VA is making to bring better, more timely services to those who have served our nation. Being proactive is a big part of that improvement. For instance, although many complications of Hepatitis C are treatable or even preventable, three-quarters of the individuals with HCV infection in the U.S. are unaware they are infected. VA leads the country in hepatitis screening, testing, treatment, research and prevention, and we have included an article here about how they are going even further to test and treat Veterans who may have HCV.

Additionally, we have another article outlining a new agreement that will make it easier for Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities

to work with local YMCAs to ensure that Veterans are connected to needed resources and opportunities in their communities. Also, you'll find an overview of how the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America (BPO Elks) recently announced that it has committed \$4 million over a 4-year period to help end Veteran homelessness.

As you can see, it looks like 2016 is already off to a good start for Veterans. And our team at Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, is as committed as ever to continuing to do all we can to make a difference in the lives of our Veterans, and to continue fighting for the benefits you deserve. We look forward to serving you in the coming months—here's to a happy, healthy new year!

Sincerely,
Jan Dils



JAN DILS brings her expertise to issues that affect you and millions of other Americans every day. While her knowledge spans the critical areas pertaining to Veterans' benefits, disability benefits and related appeals and claims, her practice remains focused on people, making sure you get the right answers and, above all, results.

VA partners with YMCA of the USA to support Veterans.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) have refreshed and expanded their partnership to promote and enhance the health and wellbeing of Veterans and their families. A new agreement will make it easier for Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities to work with local YMCAs to ensure that Veterans are connected to needed resources and opportunities in their communities.

"Since the Civil War, the Y has been a friend to Servicemembers and Veterans—the YMCA's education scholarships were forerunners of the GI Bill," said Secretary Bob McDonald. "I'm pleased to announce that VA and Y-USA have agreed to continue that legacy by further expanding our partnership." In communities where VA and the Y choose to work together, the partnership connects Veterans to VA services and benefits in the areas of employment, homelessness, healthy lifestyle programming, and reintegration into the local community.

"This enhanced agreement makes it easier for local VA facilities and YMCAs to collaborate on helping transitioning Servicemembers and Veterans connect to the resources and opportunities that they need," said McDonald.

"Our nation's Veterans, and their families, have dedicated so much in service to our country. The Y is honored to have the opportunity to

show our appreciation by doing what we do best – improving the lives of individuals in the communities we serve," said Kevin Washington, President and CEO of Y-USA. "There are many YMCAs across the nation that are already working with VA and providing services directly to Veterans, this formal acknowledgement between the Y and VA will make it easier for that work to continue, expand and flourish."

VA is committed to working closely with nongovernmental organizations, such as Y-USA to identify new and innovative ways to support VA's commitment to care for those who "have borne the battle" and their families. Strengthening collaborations within communities and with community-based organizations helps to achieve VA's goal of improving the lives of Veterans, servicemembers, their

families, caregivers, and survivors. While the collaboration might look different in each participating community, the mutual goals of improving the lives of Veterans and their families will remain consistent nationwide.

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SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE

Kris Fluharty

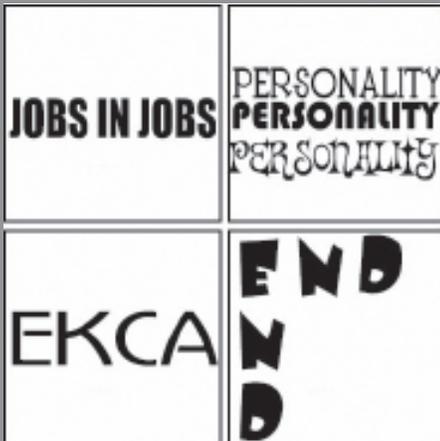
Attention to details is a critical part of every position on the Jan Dils team, and even more so for VA C-File Reviewer Kris Fluharty. "When we get Veterans' C-Files in, I am responsible for sorting the files and then reviewing over every page to determine where each claim is at in the adjudication process and recommending what the next plan of action is for each claim," he explains. It takes a practiced eye and dedication to making sure every base is covered, but Kris is always up to the task of making sure each claim gets the attention it deserves.

"There is nothing else I would rather be doing than helping Veterans and their family members get the benefits they deserve for serving our country," says Kris. "Every case is different and I love doing research and constantly finding new ways to get positive results for the Veterans."

When he's not helping Veterans, Kris spends time on small building projects, plus running, skiing in the winter and kayaking in the summer. And he always enjoys spending time with friends and family, including his wife, 3-year old son, their dog Lucy and cat Pacey. Please join us in thanking Kris for all of his hard work each day, and helping to make sure that every Veteran's file gets the attention it deserves!

BRAIN GAME

A wuzzle is a saying/phrase that is made up of a display of words, in an interesting way. The object is to try to figure out the well-known saying, person, place, or thing that each wuzzle is meant to represent.



ANSWERS: 1. In Between Jobs 2. Multiple Personalities 3. Cake Mix 4. End to End

OFFICE INBOX

STAY PLUGGED INTO THE PRACTICE

Want the scoop on what's new with our business and the team? You can find it right here, so stay plugged into the practice.

Join the entire Jan Dils team in congratulating Leads/Intake Team Leader **Nikki Biehl**, who married her fiancé Travis Coy on December 12th. We wish them a lifetime of happiness together!

Jan Dils team member Cheryl Wingrove has been very busy handing out Golden Apple Awards this school year to teachers who have made a difference in the lives of our students, our schools and our communities! Cheryl was on hand to surprise October's winner, **Virginia Dyar**, who has spent the last 43 years enriching the lives of her students at St. John Central School. Described as a pillar of the community and a mentor to other teachers, Virginia is known for being loved by all students, past and present.

Cheryl Wingrove also had the honor of presenting **Ron Lathey** with November's Golden Apple Award. Mr. Lathey has taught math at Williamstown High School for the past 43 years, and has touched the lives of countless students in that time. Described as always going above and beyond for his students, they say that, while his classes are challenging, he is always able to explain in ways each student understands and that, to Mr. Lathey, there's no such thing as a silly question.

He says seeing a student succeed is the reason teachers are here. When asked what it takes to be a good teacher, he explained, "First of all, passion for kids. Passion to leave a mark on the world. Realizing that the impact you have on the world isn't going to stop with just one class."

Please join us in thanking these incredible educators for their dedication, hard work, and for the difference they make in the lives of our young people every day!



Social Security Work-up Specialist
Jeremy Bungard provides the perfect side dish for any main course with this month's recipe for Cheesy Potato Casserole!



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (30 oz.) bag frozen hash brown potatoes
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 (10.75 oz.) can cream of chicken soup

- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cups bread crumbs (I like to use Panko)
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted

Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine sour cream, cream of chicken soup, onion, cheese, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Stir in hash brown potatoes. Pour and evenly spread into a greased 9x13 baking dish. In a medium bowl, melt butter and stir in breadcrumbs. Evenly top casserole with buttered breadcrumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-45 minutes. Enjoy!

IT'S TIME TO...

- ... Start your resolutions. **January 1st is New Year's Day.**
- ... Celebrate a birthday fit for a king. **January 8th is Elvis' birthday.**
- ... Work on that slice. **January 17th is Golf Day.**
- ... Hug your better half. **January 26th is Spouse's Day.**
- ... Enjoy it while you can. **February 9th is Fat Tuesday.**
- ... Be someone's secret admirer. **February 14th is Valentine's Day.**
- ... Give Fido a bone. **February 20th is Love Your Pet Day.**
- ... Improve your backhand. **February 23rd is Tennis Day.**

IMPORTANT VETERANS BENEFITS NEWS FOR EVERYONE

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Elks Pledge Four Million Dollars to End Veteran Homelessness.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is strengthening community and non-profit partnerships to better serve Veterans. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America (BPO Elks) recently announced that it has committed \$4 million over a 4-year period to help end Veteran homelessness.

This partnership and pledge embodies the mission of MyVA, launched last year to transform VA by putting Veterans in control of how, when and where they wish to be served. In order to achieve transformation, the Department has been reaching out to community partners working to meet the needs of Veterans.

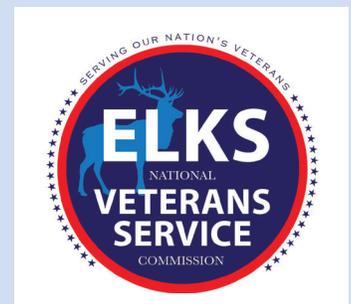
“As we move closer to our goal of ending Veteran homelessness, partnerships like these will be critical to ensuring that all Veterans have access to safe and affordable housing.”

As a part of this partnership, the Elks will work with VHA staff on pilot programs in the cities of Washington, Chicago and New York City. In addition, the organization is calling on the group’s 800,000 members across the country to support efforts to support homeless Veterans in their communities. The Elks have a strong tradition of service to VA. In this fiscal year alone, ap-

proximately 1,300 Elks members volunteered more than 117,000 hours of service at VA facilities nationwide.

“We’re so excited about partnering with the Elks on this important issue impacting far too many Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “As we move closer to our goal of ending Veteran homelessness, partnerships like these will be critical to ensuring that all Veterans have access to safe and affordable housing.”

“Our goal is to provide the tools and support necessary for homeless Veterans to transition successfully into healthier and more stable lives,” said Mary Morgan, Director of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission. “Most Americans agree that Veteran homelessness should not exist, but few people know how they can help.”



For more information about VA’s homeless initiatives, visit www.va.gov/homeless/

For more information about the Elks’ service to Veterans, visit www.elks.org/vets/