

VVA CHAPTER 1069 MEETING HANDOUT, 2/13/2019 (pg 1 of 2)

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ITEM #1: HOW DIFFERENT VA HEALTH CARE PRIORITY GROUPS AFFECT COPAYMENTS (COPAYS)

- The number of veterans who can be enrolled in the health care program is determined by the amount of money Congress gives VA each year. Since funds are limited, VA set up Priority Groups to make sure that certain groups of Veterans are able to be enrolled before others.
- Veterans whose income exceed VA income limits as well as those who choose not to complete the financial assessment at the time of enrollment, must agree to pay required copayments (a.k.a. “copays”) for health care services to become eligible for VA healthcare services. As a result, Some Veterans are required to make copayments in order to receive VA health care and/or medications.
- Once you apply for enrollment, your eligibility will be verified. Based on your specific eligibility status, you will be assigned a Priority Group. The Priority Groups range from 1-8 with 1 being the highest priority for enrollment. Based on eligibility and income, some Veterans may have to agree to pay copay to be placed in certain Priority Groups and some Veterans may not be eligible for enrollment.
- The priority groups are as follows, ranging from 1-8 with 1 being the highest priority for enrollment. Under the Medical Benefits Package, the same services are generally available to all enrolled veterans.
 - **Priority Group 1 (highest priority):** Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 50% or more disabling, or Veterans determined by VA to be unemployable due to service-connected conditions.
 - **Priority Group 2:** Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 30% or 40% disabling.
 - **Priority Group 3:** Veterans who: Are Former Prisoners of War (POWs), awarded a Purple Heart medal, discharged for a disability that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, have VA-rated service-connected disabilities 10% or 20% disabling, awarded special eligibility classification under Title 38, U.S.C., § 1151, “benefits for individuals disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation”, awarded the Medal Of Honor (MOH).
 - **Priority Group 4:** Veterans who are receiving aid and attendance or housebound benefits or who have been determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled.
 - **Priority Group 5:** Non-service-connected Veterans and noncompensable service-connected Veterans rated 0% disabled by VA with annual income below the VA’s and geographically (based on your resident zip code) adjusted income limits, or receiving VA pension benefits, or eligible for Medicaid programs.
 - **Priority Group 6:** Compensable 0% service-connected Veterans (plus many more eligibility requirements – please visit website link below for details)
 - **Priority Group 7:** Veterans with gross household income below the geographically-adjusted income limits (GMT) for their resident location and who agree to pay copays.
 - **Priority Group 8 (lowest priority):** Veterans with gross household income above the VA and the geographically-adjusted income limits for their resident location and who agrees to pay copays.
- How can a Veteran who is receiving VA benefits determine his/her assigned Priority Group?

Use the link below to visit the Military.com website for details about Inpatient & Outpatient Copay requirements:
<https://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/va-medical-services-and-medication-copayments.html>

Use the link below to visit the Military.com website for detailed explanations of the various Priority Groups:
<https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost/copays.asp>

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ITEM #2: VA RELEASES PLAN TO IMPLEMENT NEW COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM – JAN 2019

- The VA MISSION Act of 2018, became law this past summer and established six ways veterans can access **private-sector care**, known as **VA Community Care**. The law granted VA broad authority to determine two of the six eligibility standards for the new VA Community Care Program, (1) **ACCESS** standards and (2) **QUALITY** standards. VA worked closely with Congress and veterans organizations to draft the law, but chose to ignore its strategic partners when drafting the regulations to implement it.
- In two public statements recently released by VA Secretary Wilkie at the end of January 2019, VA publicly announced its plans to implement the **ACCESS** standards. The proposal is expected to be published in the Federal Register in Feb of 2019. VA proposes to give veterans the ability to use **private sector care** if it takes a veteran more than 30 minutes to drive to his/her VA primary or mental health care appointments or if their wait times for such care are more than 20 days. Veterans who require specialty care appointments would be eligible for private sector care if they drive more than 60 minutes or if their wait time is more than 28 days.
- Please note that the new **VA Community Care Program**, will replace the **Veterans Choice Program**, and is expected to launch in June of 2019. Also note that VA plans to expand ACCESS to private sector urgent care clinics around the country, as described in both of Wilkie's released statements (see below).
- **WASHINGTON NEWS RELEASE - 1/28/2019:** Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie released the following statement. The past two years have been an exciting time for Veterans and for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under President Trump's leadership, VA has enacted more reforms across the organization than at any other time since the 1990s, with key advances in the areas of transparency, accountability and customer service. VA will soon build on this progress by rolling out a plan that will revolutionize VA health care as we know it. Use the link below to read the rest of VA Secretary Wilkie's entire news release statement. <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5186>
- **WASHINGTON NEWS RELEASE - 1/30/2019:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced its proposed ACCESS standards for community care and urgent care provisions that will take effect in June and guide when Veterans can seek care to meet their needs under the MISSION Act, be it with VA or with community providers. Use the link below to read the rest of VA Secretary Wilkie's entire news release statement. <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5187>

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