

Buckley SFB, CO - RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) NEWSLETTER - December 2021

18401 East A-Basin Ave, Stop 95, Buckley AFB, CO 80011

Building 606, Room 104, phone **720-847-6693**, e-mail address: **460sw.rao.org@spaceforce.mil**

Normal Hrs: Mon 1000-1600, Wed 0900-1400, Thurs 0800-1500 & Fri 0900-1430

Director: Steve Young, Lt Col, USAF, Ret

RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) LOCATION: We are in Rm 104 of Bldg 606, close to the main building entrance. As you come in the main entrance, turn left, enter the first hallway on your right and Rm 104 is the first room on your left. Remember, we assist military retirees from **all** Services!

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON BUCKLEY AFB: As of 28 Jul 2021, the Secretary of Defense has mandated that masks will be worn indoors on military installations deemed a substantial or high risk for COVID transmission. Buckley SFB has been identified as a substantial risk location, based on the CDC data tracker website. For this reason, **masks are now required again inside all buildings on Buckley Space Force Base until further notice.** In addition, **on 27 Aug the based directed only 75% of non-mission essential personnel report to work on base.** For the most current info on base facilities and additional details on **days/hours**, etc. please check the Buckley AFB and 460 FSS FaceBook (FB) pages and Buckley AFB website.

<https://www.facebook.com/BuckleySpaceForceBase/>

<https://www.460fss.com/>

- The info below on **ID cards** is from the MPF in Building 606 on base (**this guidance doesn't necessarily apply to the 140th ANG or NOSC ID card facilities on base - call them for details.**)

MPF Bldg 606 ID card service hours are: Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri 0800 to 1500; Wed 0800-1200

MPF Call Center: Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri: 1200-1500; 720-847-4357, Option 2 (Questions or make appts)

Retiree & Dependent ID Cards (Appts Only)

- **For retirees and their dependents, ID cards that expired between 1 Jan 2020 and 31 Jul 2021 are valid until 31 Jan 2022.** (USD P&R memo dated 2 Jun 2021)
- Agent Letter (allows others to shop commissary, BX, etc for retirees not able to - **walk-ins OK!**)

To find the ID facility nearest you and make an appointment online please go to the RAPIDS Site Locator at the following link: <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/#/>

Once you get to the RAPIDS site, click on the "ID Card Office Locator & Appointments" Continue box. The page that comes up should default to the "Search for Site by Address" tab. Ensure "All" is selected under the "Search For" area, then enter your zip code in the "Enter Location" area, select an entry from the "Radius" drop-down menu, and click on the "Search" box. A list of sites will pop up and then you can select "More Info" for the site you want to use, and the "Schedule an Appointment" block. A calendar will come up for that site where you can scroll through the months on the calendar to see when appointments are available. During the pandemic some locations may not show any appointments available. When you pick a day with appointments you will see a list of the times available for that day below the calendar and you can pick the one you want and click on "Book This Appointment." Just FYI, you will typically find more online appointments available on the 140th ANG and NOSC sites - both on Buckley SFB - than at the MPF in Bldg 606.

OBSERVANCES IN DECEMBER: 1 Dec - Civil Air Patrol birthday; 7 Dec - Pearl Harbor Remembrance day; 13 Dec - US National Guard birthday; 18 Dec - National Wreaths Across America Day.

“FAMILY DAYS” ON FRIDAY, 23 & 30 DECEMBER: Please remember a “Family Day” is often implemented around a Federal Holiday, which results in some changes at base facilities. There will be two Family Days in Dec, on 23 Dec (for Veterans Day) and 30 Dec (for New Years). **You should expect the 6th Ave gate to base to be closed, the pharmacy to be closed,** the MPF may not be issuing ID cards, etc. You should call these facilities if you have any questions regarding hours for that Thursday, or check the base social media like the Buckley SFB Facebook page: [Buckley Space Force Base | Facebook](#)

STATE LEVEL MILITARY BENEFITS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES: Many surviving spouses receive federal survivor benefits from DoD and Veterans Affairs (VA) but aren't aware state-level benefits are available to those who meet specific criteria and there is no one-stop-shop website for military survivors. The number of benefits offered to veterans can vary from state to state with some offering as many as 60 and others as few as 22. The challenge is determining which of those benefits are passed on to the survivor after the veteran or servicemember dies. To determine what state benefits are available to survivors, begin by looking at the individual state benefits for veterans using the following link: [State Veteran Benefit Finder | Center for a New American Security \(en-US\) \(cnas.org\)](#) Once on the site, locate the state you are targeting and then search for the “Beneficiary” category. It is important to verify your eligibility since some of the webpages might be outdated.

Some state benefits include (again, they vary by state):

- Academic scholarships
- Property tax exemption or reduction of property tax (For example: Military surviving spouses who receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation from the VA are eligible for up to a \$45,000 deduction in the assessed value of their home for property tax purposes.)
- Survivor Benefit Plan tax exemption for state tax
- Free admission to national parks
- Free fishing and hunting license

LONG-TERM CARE (LTC) INSURANCE: We sometimes get questions from retirees regarding Long-Term Care (LTC) insurance. You may not know that Medicare, TRICARE, and some other health insurance plans don't pay for what is often called “custodial” care (help with dressing, bathing, eating, etc.), which is the type of long term care many people need. Unfortunately, many people may find themselves in need of such services at some point. So, who does pay for long-term care? If you don't have long-term care insurance, you may be the one responsible for the bills. According to one study, the national average cost for a nursing home stay can exceed \$80,000 per year. You can find just one article (from the Insurance Information Institute) talking about LTC insurance at the following link: [Should I buy long-term care insurance? | III](#) Like with Medicare, there are **many** companies that provide LTC insurance if you decide you need it. One that offers such insurance to military retirees/surviving spouses is the Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP). You can visit their website for more information: [LTCFEDS | The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program \(FLTCIP\)](#)

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA - FT LOGAN: On December 18, 2021 at 10:00 am, Wreaths Across America will be at Fort Logan National Cemetery to Remember and Honor our veterans through the laying of Remembrance wreaths on the graves of our country's fallen heroes and the act of saying the name of each and every veteran aloud. Here is the FaceBook page for the Ft Logan effort: [www.facebook.com/groups/fortlogan2020wreathscrossamerica/](#) You can help with this effort by sponsoring wreaths (click the red "Sponsor" button) or volunteering to help to lay wreaths at the cemetery (click the “Volunteer” button next to the cemetery name). There is also an option available for you to designate a specific grave for any wreath you purchase. You can also click the "Invite" button to invite your friends and family to join you. These beautiful wreaths are all hand made of Balsam Fir in Columbia Falls, ME. I visited their location when I was back in New England in September. When I last looked at the website, they only had about 7400 wreaths purchased and needed over 102k more to have wreaths on every grave. More info at [Wreaths Across America](#)

AF JROTC INSTRUCTOR OPENINGS: Air Force Junior ROTC is a citizenship and character-building program for high school youth in grades 9-12. Recently some 8th graders are allowed to participate as well. The program is run by retired commissioned and enlisted Air Force personnel. This is a great second career for those

interested in teaching, education, and "giving back" to the youth in our country. Retired personnel continue to wear the uniform and practice customs and courtesies used during Active duty. Currently over 1,900 retired personnel are working at 870 schools around the nation and overseas. As an Air Force JROTC instructor you are employed by the local school district and become a member of the faculty. Pay and benefits, determined by the local school, closely mirror active duty pay upon retirement. Hours can be long and generally mirror the workload of the typical teacher. In JROTC before/after school and weekend work is also required. That being said, you receive the same holidays and summer off as the teaching staff. Currently there are two openings in Colorado, an officer position in Westminster Colorado, and an enlisted opening in Glenwood Springs Colorado. You can see all openings at the following website: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Holm-Center/AFJROTC/> If you would like additional information on this program please contact Lt Col Arrington, USAF, Ret, at arringt@airuniversity.af.mil.

NEW VA PRESUMPTIVES: (I got this post from the Vance AFB newsletter) You may be eligible for newly enacted service-connected benefits. Over the course of the last six months, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun processing service-connected disability claims for **six new presumptive conditions related to environmental exposures during military service**. Veterans should be aware of these newly added presumptive conditions and Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) can help them file a claim and obtain any earned benefits. **In May 2021, VA started implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA), adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism to the list of medical conditions presumptively associated with exposure to Agent Orange. A few months later VA added asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis (to include rhinosinusitis) on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas.** Any Veteran who was previously denied service-connection for any of these six conditions but had symptoms manifest within 10 years of military service would need to file a supplemental claim. Be sure to use VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim* when filing. The claim form should include the name of the condition and specify that the condition is being claimed due to in-service exposure to environmental hazards. The VA is committed to assisting Veterans who may have been exposed to hazardous materials during their military service. www.va.gov has the most recent news on environmental exposures during military service, as VA is constantly conducting research and surveillance as well as reviewing scientific literature for conditions that may be related to exposure during military service.

PHARMACY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED & LINE RECOMMENDATIONS: The Buckley SFB Pharmacy is in dire need of volunteers, and they asked me to advertise that in our newsletter. Anyone interested will need to be fully vaccinated and may need to complete some training. Anyone interested in more information can **call and ask for AIC Malik Hardy at 720-847-6049**. In addition, for those who have trouble standing while waiting for a prescription pick-up in the lobby, they highly recommend you use the drive thru. Prior to COVID, the drive-thru was strictly pick-up only but that is no longer the case. Everything you need from the pharmacy can now be accomplished using the drive thru.

COVID AND FLU SHOTS AVAILABLE ON BASE: The 460 MDG continues to offer Pfizer only as initial, second, and booster doses to ages 12 and up as they are currently out of stock for Moderna, and Janssen by Johnson & Johnson (J&J). They also have the Flu vaccine available. **All vaccines are by appointment only - appointments can be made utilizing the link below.** Vaccines are open to all ID card holders (including Retirees and eligible Dependents/Beneficiaries). Retirees must bring their ID card and dependents without an ID card must have a parent/guardian present. If you have any questions, please contact the Med Group.

Pediatric Pfizer Vaccines: (ages 5-11)

Location: (Immunizations Clinic, MDG North Bldg 600) 275 S. Aspen Dr. Bldg 600 Aurora, CO 80017

Days & Times Offered: Every Monday & Friday between 1400-1600 (excluding holidays/family days)

Link: <https://informatics-stage.health.mil/COVAX/>

Adolescent & Adult Pfizer Vaccines: (ages 12 & up):

Location: (Immunizations Clinic, MDG North Bldg 600) 275 S. Aspen Dr. Bldg 600 Aurora, CO 80017

Days & Times Offered: Every Tuesday & Thursday between 1400-1600 (excluding holidays/family days)

Link: <https://informatics-stage.health.mil/COVAX/>

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE DENTAL & VISION INSURANCE PLAN (FEDVIP) OPEN SEASON IN 2021:

For the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), participants will see 12 dental and five vision options for next year. For the most part, your enrollment in FEDVIP will continue automatically with little to no interruptions. If you are thinking about making a change, **this year's open season runs from 9 Nov through 14 Dec**. It's generally the one opportunity a year you'll have to enroll or make changes to your health, dental and vision plans. For information on the rates for various dental and vision plans go to the following link: [Plan Premiums \(opm.gov\)](#) To compare plans you can use the tool at the following link: [Dental & Vision : Compare 2021 Plans - OPM.gov](#) You can also attend a **Virtual Benefits Fair on 1 or 8 Dec** to chat with FEDVIP carriers, review 2022 plan details, and get the information you need to help make the right decisions for you. Visit <https://www.benefeds.com/education-support> to sign up for a Virtual Benefits Fair.

MY AIR FORCE BENEFITS WEBSITE: While attending the virtual AF RAO Directors meeting on 21 Oct I became of this website, which I had not visited before. While the site is mainly focused on active-duty folks, there is a **lot** of information on there of interest to retirees/surviving spouses as well. The site has about 180 fact sheets on various benefits and a section for "Transition and Retirement Planning." If you look under the "Benefit Library" tab (top left of the page), and click on the "Resource Locator" link, you can then click on CO (or any other state) to see a wealth of information on resources in your state (with base specific resources as well). I strongly encourage you to check out this website. [Home | An Official Air Force Benefits Website \(af.mil\)](#)

TRICARE PHARMACY NETWORK CHANGES: Express Scripts officials recently announced that, **as of 15 Dec, CVS will rejoin the TRICARE pharmacy network, while Walmart/Sam's Club will leave the network at the same time**. This means military families will have access to the two largest chain drugstores in the U.S. - Walgreens and CVS - along with many smaller chains and independent pharmacies. The change is part of the next generation TRICARE pharmacy contract.

Beneficiaries who get prescriptions filled at Walmart or Sam's Club should receive a letter notifying them of the change. The letter will include three local TRICARE network pharmacies they might consider using instead, together with suggestions on how to transfer prescriptions most easily to another retail pharmacy, home delivery, or a military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacy. These beneficiaries will need to move their prescriptions to another TRICARE network pharmacy location by 15 Dec.

Beneficiaries who fill specialty medications at Walmart or Sam's Club should receive a letter and phone call from Express Scripts to assist in moving the prescription to another network specialty pharmacy. Due to the complexity of specialty medications, beneficiaries will have a 30-day grace period to move their specialty medication. The grace period is for specialty medications *only*; non-specialty prescriptions must be transferred by Dec. 15.

TRICARE PHARMACY RATES CHANGING 1 JANUARY 2022: Do you get your prescription drugs through TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery or at a TRICARE retail network pharmacy? If so, you'll pay anywhere from \$1 to \$8 more in copayments starting Jan. 1. These costs changes won't affect all beneficiaries. Read the article at the following link to learn more. [TRICARE Pharmacy Copayments to Increase in 2022 > TRICARE Newsroom > Articles](#)

NEW MYPAY ACCOUNT AVAILABLE FOR GRAY AREA RETIREES: Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Air Force Reserve Gray Area Retirees now have a new way to stay connected and informed between the time they stop drilling and the time they start receiving retired pay - a new type of myPay account especially for Gray Area Retirees. Gray Area Retirees who use the new myPay account to keep their contact information updated can benefit by receiving important information from DFAS and their Branch of Service, such as news about changes in laws or policies that impact your retirement benefits, reminders about applying for retired pay, and your Services' Retiree Newsletter. **Another major benefit, with current contact information in your myPay account, when you apply for retired pay, DFAS will email you status notifications: when your application was received, when it is being worked, and when it is complete.** With the new myPay account you can confirm or update your email/ mailing address and, when you apply for retired pay, you can use it to make sure your direct deposit information is current. For more info on this

capability, and now to create an account, refer to the September DFAS Retiree Newsletter (see link in previous article). There is also an entire DFAS page for Gray Area Retirees: [Gray Area Retirees \(dfas.mil\)](http://dfas.mil)

MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD IN 2021: If you are currently enrolled in a Medicare plan you should get your “Annual Notice of Change” document in the mail soon. This document will list any changes in your plan coverage, service area or cost that will go into effect in 2022. You can use this to help decide if you want to change plans. **Open enrollment is 15 Oct - 7 Dec 2021 and changes will be effective Jan 2022.** During this time, you can: switch from Original Medicare to Medicare Advantage; switch from Medicare Advantage to Original Medicare; or switch from one Medicare Advantage plan to another. If you are already in a Medicare Advantage plan you can also change to another Medicare Advantage plan or to Original Medicare plus a Part D plan from 1 Jan - 31 Mar 2022. Remember, some Medicare Advantage plans from commercial providers (Blue Cross, Kaiser, Humana, GEHA, etc) offer “0 Premium” plans that will cost you no more out of pocket than your current Medicare Part B premium - **some of these plans may actually give some of your Part B premium back. Some Advantage plans offer benefits Original Medicare does not (free gym membership, dental/vision benefits, hearing aids, transportation to medical appointments, etc).** As always, you have to do your research to see which plans your current doctors take, where the plans are accepted (different states, etc), what the co-pays are, etc in order to determine what plan best meets your needs. **Tricare for Life (TFL) functions as your “Medicare Supplement” whether you use Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan.**

NEED HELP WITH MEDICARE OPTIONS? A health insurance broker can provide you with information regarding various Medicare Advantage carriers/plans. Just be aware these brokers generally focus on plans offered by insurers with whom they have a contractual arrangement (think Kaiser, Humana, Blue Cross, United Healthcare, etc). You can do a Google search to locate a health broker in CO. Another alternative is the counselors working in the federally funded **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).** **These counselors provide free advice with no conflicts of interest** whereas brokers typically earn commissions from policies they sell. For example, a broker will get no commission if you select Original Medicare vs a Medicare Advantage plan. You can get additional info on SHIP and counselors in your area at the following link: <https://www.shiptacenter.org/> click on the “SHIP Locator” icon. For Colorado you can also call 1-888-696-7213 or visit the following link: <https://doi.colorado.gov/insurance-products/health-insurance/senior-health-care-medicare>

TRICARE PRIME OR SELECT OPEN SEASON IN 2021: Tricare Open Season is the annual period when you can enroll in, or change, your health care coverage for the next year. **This is only for those using Tricare Prime or Select, not Tricare for Life! In 2021, Tricare Open Season for those with Tricare Select or Tricare Prime begins on 8 Nov and ends on 13 Dec with the enrollment change going into effect on 1 Jan 2022.** You have three options during enrollment: keep the same plan you have now, enroll in Tricare Prime or Tricare Select if you are not currently enrolled, or change between Tricare Prime and Tricare Select. If you are already enrolled in a plan that you want to stay with, you don’t have to re-enroll. For those interested, there is a webinar being offered on Thursday, 4 Nov, from 1100-1200 Mountain Time - “Making the Most of the Tricare Open Season.” During the webinar, TRICARE experts will review your health care coverage options for the upcoming plan year. **Webinar Registration Link:** <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8215914139783093775>

Related Links:

TRICARE Open Season: www.tricare.mil/openseason

Federal Benefits Open Season: www.benefeds.com

VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER (VSO) LOCATION IN AURORA: Those of you who have used VSOs may know the main offices for the Adams and Arapahoe County VSOs are both on the west side of town (Littleton and Westminster), not in our local area. Needless to say, these locations are not convenient for the nearly 80k vets living in these two counties. The new office, located at Arapahoe County's Altura Plaza facility, 15400 E. 14th Place in Aurora (basically at Colfax and Chambers), provides a more convenient option. The office is jointly funded by Adams and Arapahoe County. There is no unique phone number for this VSO location, and you won’t see this location listed on the VSO website that has all the counties in CO. You use the phone numbers for the Adams & Arapahoe County VSOs that you find on the website and, if you are scheduling an in-person

appointment, just let them know you want to meet at the office in Aurora. The following link will show you all the VSOs for every county in CO, and the contact info for each (phone and e-mail). [County Veterans Service Offices | Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs](#)

VETERANS AFFAIRS AID AND ATTENDANCE BENEFITS: What is the aid and attendance benefit? Wartime veterans and their surviving spouses, 65 years and older, may be entitled to a tax-free benefit called Aid and Attendance (A&A) provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). The Benefit is designed to provide financial aid to help offset the cost of long-term care for those who need assistance with at least two of the daily activities of living. The daily activities of living are generally agreed to be those which are described below:

1. Personal hygiene - bathing/showering, grooming, nail care, and oral care.
2. Dressing - being able to make appropriate clothing decisions and physically dress and undress oneself.
3. Eating - the ability to feed oneself, though not necessarily the capability to prepare food.
4. Maintaining continence - being able to mentally and physically use a restroom. This includes the ability to get on and off the toilet and cleaning oneself.
5. Transferring/Mobility - being able to stand from a sitting position, as well as get in and out of bed. The ability to walk independently from one location to another.

For more information on this benefit see the following website: [Aid And Attendance Benefits And Housebound Allowance | VA.gov | Veterans Affairs](#)

COMMISSARY SALES FLYER: For those who don't know already, you can access the current commissary sales flyer online by going to the following link: [Home | Commissaries](#) Once on the page, click on the "Sales Flyer" banner in the upper right of the page, then click on "Confirm Your Privileges", fill out the info on the form, and click "Submit." You can then click on the link to see a PDF file of the latest sales flyer.

PHARMACY HOURS: As of 21 June, the pharmacy implemented the following hours: Mon-Tues 0800-1630; Wed 0800-1130; Thurs-Fri 0800-1630. Please remember holidays, family days, etc. can impact these hours so you can always check the Buckley SFB Facebook page for the latest info on hours.

LEGAL OFFICE OPENS "LIMITED SERVICES" FOR RETIREES & DEPENDENTS: Legal is once again providing **limited** legal assistance services for military retirees and their dependents. **Wills for retirees and dependents will only be done on Thursdays of each week from 1300 to 1500 and you must have an appointment.** For notary services and powers of attorney, walk-ins for retirees are available on Mondays and Wednesdays from 0800-1200. Retirees have the option of conducting their legal assistance appointment by telephone or in person. Legal expects the will appointments to fill up very quickly and they will **not** have a "waitlist." Thus, legal may ask that retirees call back in 2-3 weeks to check for open appointments once they are booked for several weeks. **Prior to scheduling an appointment for a will, medical directive or power of attorney, legal will require a ticket # or worksheet, as well as your DoD ID Number** which is located in the lower right front of the old (DD Fm 2) ID card (10-digit number). You can obtain a ticket # from the AF legal assistance website at [U.S. Air Force Legal Assistance \(AFLASS\)](#) when you go to the site to fill out the required information for whatever document it is you want completed. **If you call legal to make an appointment, they will not give you an appointment unless you have the ticket number issued by the website.** For any questions call base legal at 720-847-6444.

PHARMACY - PATIENT ADVOCATE E-MAIL ADDRESS: As you know, pharmacy patient advocates are available to hear your comments and concerns related to pharmacy operations. There are forms available in the pharmacy for you to submit comments to them, but with the pandemic you don't have access to those. The pharmacy has established an e-mail inbox for the patient advocates so you can now e-mail them directly at the pharmacy patient advocate org box: usaf.buckley.460sw-mdg.mbx.pharmacy-patient-advocate@mail.mil .

WHERE CAN I GET RID OF UNUSED/UNWANTED MEDICATIONS? Do you have unused/unwanted medications you are trying to dispose of safely/properly? **The Buckley SFB pharmacy does have a drop box in the lobby to take your unwanted medications.** If that is not convenient for you, you can locate other places using the following link: [Colorado Household Medication Take-Back Program | Department of Public Health & Environment](#) You can also try the following links: [Medication Disposal Near Me | CVS Pharmacy](#) [Safe medication disposal | Walgreens](#) [Drug Drop Box | Littleton CO \(littletongov.org\)](#)

HOW TO CREATE A MYPAY ACCOUNT WITH DEFENSE FINANCE & ACCOUNTING SERVICE (DFAS): If you don't have a MyPay account with DFAS I recommend you create one. With your own account you can download your Form1099 for taxes, print a copy of your Retiree Account Statement (RAS), set up beneficiaries for Arrears of Pay, update your mailing and e-mail address, adjust federal and state withholding for taxes, etc. You start by requesting an initial password on the myPay homepage ([myPay Web Site \(dfas.mil\)](#)) using the "Forgot or Need a Password" link. The password will be mailed to the address you have on file with DFAS and you will receive it in about 10 business days. Once you receive your password in the mail, you return to the myPay homepage and log in with your social security number and the password you received in the mail to create your myPay profile. DFAS has a downloadable step-by-step Get Started Guide to myPay on their website and a how-to video on the DFAS YouTube channel. For additional info on obtaining a MyAccount you can visit: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/manage/mypay/>

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA) NEW WEB FEATURE & PHONE NUMBER: The VA has launched a new web feature and new phone number designed to ease frustrations faced by veterans trying to connect with services and resources.

Beneficiaries can now update their contact information via their [VA.gov profile](#), and the change will synchronize across VA networks. Veterans can enter demographic information - including a phone number, email addresses, home addresses, and disability ratings *one time* and have it change across networks addressing health care, disability compensation, pension benefits, claims/appeals, and the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. Previously, if a veteran needed to change any demographic information, they were required to call *each individual VA network* where that information is on file. (Veterans still must connect with separate offices to change details regarding education and home loan benefits, CHAMPVA, Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance, and The Foreign Medical Program.) Step-by-step instructions on changing your address are available [at this link](#).

The administration also has officially launched the **My VA hotline**, which will serve as the starting point to all VA contact centers and will help veterans find the right person to address their needs. Veterans can call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) with the option to press 0 to be immediately connected with a customer service agent to answer questions or connect to the appropriate VA expert. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **Please remember you always have access to local Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) here in CO. Locate the one closest to you using the following link:** <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/vets/county-veterans-service-offices>

The VA also maintains the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, by chat at [veteranscrisisline.net](#) and by text message at 838255. The VA also maintains the White House VA Hotline at 1-855-948-2311 which can be used "for Veterans and their families to share compliments and concerns," per the release.

BUCKLEY SFB AGENT LETTERS - WHAT ARE THEY? Did you know if you are a family member of an elderly military retiree, or their surviving spouse, that has trouble getting around on their own you may be able to get authorization to shop for them, as their "agent", at the commissary, exchange and base pharmacy? You will require a letter from the care provider of the retiree/surviving spouse, which you will then take to the MPF in Bldg 606, where you (the "agent") and the retiree/surviving spouse will fill out a "Commissary/AAFES/MWR Escort Authorizations" form. You will need two forms of ID, the agent's driver's license the sponsors military ID. Once the form is completed you will be issued an "Agent Letter" which you will take to the Visitor Control Center (VCC) by the 6th Ave gate and Security will issue you a card/letter which will allow you to access the base and use

those facilities without your retiree/surviving spouse being with you. For any questions, or more details, on this process please contact the MPF at 720-847-6974 (per the above form).

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE: If you know of a recently deceased military retiree, surviving spouse of a military retiree or a veteran who was receiving a disability payment from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the RAO can provide guidance making the necessary notifications. For those receiving a military pension, Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments, VA disability payments or Dependency and Indemnity payments notifications must be made to the Defense Finance & Accounting Service (DFAS), VA, etc. The RAO can put you in touch with the Buckley AFB Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR), provide you with a “checklist” to help guide you through process, provide you with phone numbers and websites for various organizations, etc. Please contact the RAO (720-847-6693) with any questions.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR VETERANS: Arapahoe/Douglas Works! (A/D Works!) Workforce Center is a member of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and provides a variety of no-cost services to veteran job seekers; resources and workshops for a self-directed job search, one-on-one employment counseling, customizing resumes, referrals to other state and federal agencies and training assistance. For more information you can visit their website at <http://www.adworks.org/> Just FYI, there is an A/D Works! Veterans Employment Specialist that works several days a week in Bldg 606 on base (when non-mission essential personnel are allowed back in their offices on Buckley AFB). For more info you can also contact the AD Works! Call Center at (303) 636-1160 and ask to be contacted to a Veterans Employment Team Member.

ASKDFAS WEBSITE AVAILABLE: DFAS has the askDFAS website available with a specific category for “Retirees and Annuitants.” When you click on that category you will find general categories related to MyPay, mailing address, tax statements, reporting a retirees death, arrears of pay, etc. This site allows you to submit questions to DFAS via e-mail instead of using the customer service number so some may find it more convenient. You can check it out at <https://www.dfas.mil/dfas/AskDFAS/>

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED UNSATISFACTORY SERVICE FROM THE RAO? We are staffed completely with volunteers who do their very best to help with your issues. While we always strive to provide you with the best possible support, we realize there may be times you experience what you consider to be unsatisfactory customer service when you contact the RAO. Perhaps you never received a response to a voice mail/e-mail you left, you got inaccurate information regarding a question you had or the person who helped you was unable to provide an adequate answer to your question. **If you are ever dissatisfied with the support you get from the RAO please contact the RAO Director to discuss the situation.** The best way to reach me is via my home e-mail - elkfive@centurylink.net.

RAO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: We currently have only 7 permanent RAO volunteers that support our “Help Desk” (720-847-6693) which, when all volunteers are available, means the office has someone present during some hours of the morning and afternoon Mon-Fri. You can leave a voice mail anytime, and we check Voice Mails frequently to return calls. We can still find time slots during the week to use one or two volunteers. **If you think you might be interested, or just have questions, please contact me (Steve Young) at my home e-mail - elkfive@centurylink.net.**

COAST GUARD NATIONAL RETIREE HELP DESK (NRHD) HOTLINE: For any questions a retiree or retiree spouse has regarding benefits (other than those related to pay) such as health care issues, assistance obtaining important forms and/or papers, etc. call 1-888-224-6743 or e-mail nrhdesk@gmail.com. For questions concerning pay call 1-866-772-8724 or e-mail ppc-dg-customer-care@uscg.mil.

CORRECTING & REQUESTING MILITARY RECORDS: On 5 Apr 2021 the Department of the Air Force debuted a new website for past and present Airmen and Space Guardians to correct their military records. To make the portal accessible to both active-duty and retired service members, the website does **not** require a Common Access Card (CAC). Instead, a unique e-application number will be provided to track each case. While

members can still submit applications via mail, processing times may be slower. Members can use their unique e-application number to check the status of their application, whether it was submitted online or via mail.

The application portal has a decision tree that guides members through the process of figuring out which board they should apply to and determine their eligibility to apply based on their service and the issue they're trying to get corrected for the records.

Members, and those submitting on their behalf, can submit applications and supporting documents to four boards: The Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records, Air Force Discharge Review Board, Department of Defense Discharge Appeal Review Board and Department of Defense Physical Disability Board of Review.

The **records correction website** is at <https://Afrba-portal.cce.af.mil>.

In many instances, records that are available in electronic formats may also be accessed directly by veterans, without involvement from National Personnel Records Center (NPRC - 866-272-6272). We understand these are **not** CAC card sites and all you need is a DS Logon or ID.ME account. Basically, each of the options listed here are veteran's self-service portals for VA claims, VA healthcare and retiree DFAS pay. Some options are below:

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) eBenefits application at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage>

Department of Defense milConnect application at <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>.

Modern military medical records may be accessed through the VA's Blue Button application at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-medical-records/>.

For more information regarding the online availability of VA and military records, please visit <https://www.va.gov/records/>

If a veteran has filed for disability or pension benefits before, the VA may have pulled their DD-214. If so, VSOs who have access to the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) can look into their file and retrieve it. Be aware this is dependent on each individual VSO and the counties they work in as to whether this is possible. **Even if requesting records from NPRC we recommend contacting your VSO to assist in the request.**

Another place you can request a copy of your DD-214 is through the State Veterans Department from whichever state was your home of record at discharge. As mentioned, you can always contact a local Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to request assistance in getting a copy of your records. You can find a VSO closest to you using the following website: [Veteran Service Officers - List of Where to Find \(nvf.org\)](#)

You can also request a copy of your records (DD-214, Official Military Personnel File, Replacement Medals, Medical and Health Records) from the National Archives in a number of ways. You can make your request online at the National Archives website, you can fill out and submit a form SF-180 and mail/Fax it or you can write a letter to the National Archives.

You can find additional information on getting copies of your records from the National Archives web site at <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel> or calling 314-801-0800.

REPORTING THE DEATH OF A RETIREE TO DFAS ONLINE: **DFAS has re-introduced the option to report the death of a retiree online.** To use the online Notice of Death option, click on the link at the top of the Retired Military & Annuitants main page, which is located at <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary.html>. This will take you to a form where you will enter all of the pertinent information. When reporting a retiree's death, be sure to have the following information available:

- Retiree's full name
- Retiree's SSN

- Retiree's date of death
- Cause of death
- Marital status (if married, the wedding date)

The form also asks for your name, address, phone number and email address. If you are completing this form on behalf of someone else, such as the spouse or child of the deceased retiree, please use the contact information of the person you are helping to make the report. Updates on the status of the claim will be sent to the email address provided, including an email verifying that the notification was received. If you need any assistance you can always contact the Buckley AFB Casualty Assistance Representative, Loretta Lopez, at 720-847-6946.

STATE VA BENEFITS: Everyone knows about the federal benefits available to veterans, but did you know many *states* also offer great benefits to their veterans? State benefits range from free college and employment resources to free hunting and fishing licenses. Most states also offer tax breaks for their veterans and specialized license plates, some states even provide their veterans with cash bonuses just for serving in the military. A handy summary of the benefits each state and territory offers can be found here: <https://militarybenefits.info/state-veterans-benefits/> There may be a benefit available to you or your family that you didn't know about!

Other **Federal VA benefit numbers:** life insurance 800-669-8477; status of headstones and markers, 800-697-6947; special issues such as Gulf War/radiation/Agent Orange/Project Shad call 800-749-8387; and GI Bill and education matters call 888-442-4551. Visit the Federal website at www.va.gov/ for more info.

DENVER VA REGIONAL BENEFITS OFFICE HOURS & LOCATIONS: *Do you have a question about your VA Benefits? Compensation Claim, Pension Claim, Aid and Attendance, Appeals, survivor and burial benefits, Home Loans, Employment, or Education*

The VBA Office in the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center is holding office hours:

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (last appt. at 3:30 p.m.)

Phone: (800) 827-1000

Location:

Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

1700 North Wheeling Street

Aurora, CO 80045

Sign up to meet with a counselor in the Pharmacy waiting room.

We also have a Veterans Affairs Office on Buckley SFB in Bldg 606 with Benefits Advisors (Mr Tyrone Groce & Ms Deloris Evans) who can normally be reached at 720-847-4838 from Mon-Fri 0800 - 1600.

LOCAL ID CARD RENEWAL LOCATIONS: **While you need to verify who is still operating and their hours of operation during the pandemic,** below are **locations** where you can get an ID card.

MPF at Buckley AFB (Bldg 606 on 18401 E A-Basin Ave) - by appointment only. You can call them at 720-847-4357 to schedule an appointment.

ANG at Buckley AFB (18860 E Breckenridge Ave, Hangar 801, Rm N224) - Call 720-847-9295, closed Monday.

NAVOPS Space Ctr at Buckley AFB (7 N Snowmass St, Bldg 1301) - you can call 720-847-7808, Closed Monday

CO HQ Army NG in Centennial (6848 South Revere Pkwy) - you can call 720-250-1315, Closed on Monday.

NOAA Facility in Boulder (Skaggs Bldg, Rm GB515 - 325 Broadway) - you can call 303-497-6119, open Mon-Wed-Fri by appointment only.

GRAY AREA RESERVISTS: We get quite a few calls in the RAO from Gray Area Reservists approaching 60 who have questions regarding the processing of their retirement package, when they can anticipate their first pension check, what they need to do regarding Tricare, etc. Below is some POC information for Guard/Reserve members from the various services. We can also provide you with a copy of DoD Fm 2656 (current version is Oct 2018) if you are having trouble downloading it.

Air Force Guard/Reserve:

Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC): <https://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/retirement/> or 1-800-525-0102. If you experience trouble reaching ARPC with this number, please get in touch with us and we will use our back-channel contacts at ARPC to try and assist. ARPC encourages retirees to file retirement packages using a MyPers account. There is a retirement application status bar in MyPers so applicants can track the status of their submitted package. Instructions on the status bar can be found at:

<https://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/Portals/4/Documents/Retirement%20application%20status%20bar%20instructions.pdf?ver=2019-11-20-120624-723×tamp=1574269784796>

Army Guard/Reserve Personnel in CO

88th Readiness Division Retirement Services Office (RSO) - 60 South O Street, Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin 54656 608-388-7448/9321 or DSN 280-0596. Locally, **Mr. Randy Stroud (1SG, Ret) is the Retirement Services Officer (RSO) for the Army National Guard, but he can assist with Reserves. He can be reached at 720-250-1341.**
<http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/reserve-component-retirement-services>

Navy Guard/Reserve Personnel

PERS-912: 1-866-827-5672 or 1-833-330-6622

https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/retired_activities/Pages/default.aspx

The Navy also has a MyNavy Career Center website at <https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/organization/npc/MNCC/Pages/default.aspx> or you can call 1-833-330-6622 for assistance.

USMC Reserve Personnel

MMSR-5 Reserve Retirement & Separation Section: 703-784-9306/9307

Coast Guard Reserve Personnel

National Retiree Help Desk Hotline (unless it is a pay related issue): 1-833-224-6743 -
For pay related issues call 1-800-772-8724 or 785-339-3415

<https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Human-Resources-CG-1/Retiree-Services-Program/>

Colorado Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA)

This office assists Service members in accessing Dept of VA health care services & benefits. The TAA initiative was started in May 2005 when the National Guard Bureau (NGB) signed a MoA with the VA.

Amy Eagen - 720-250-1173 (works Tues-Fri)

MyPay ADDRESS CHANGE: The simplest and quickest solution for updating your mailing address is through myPay, using the online account management system. For any questions or concerns regarding myPay, call 888-332-7411 (option 5) for a customer service representative. Both retirees and annuitants may call DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay at 800-321-1080. If you call MyPay have your banking information available - you may need **routing and account information** before they will talk with you.

MAIL OPTION: Please include: both your old and new mailing address, effective date for the new address, your name, social security number and signature with date on your request. For retirees, use the address below:

DFAS U.S. Military Retired Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200
Or FAX DFAS Retired Pay at 800-469-6559

If you are an annuitant, please mail your request to:

DFAS U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1300
Or FAX DFAS Annuitant Pay at 800-982-8459

LIFE CHANGING EVENT? KEEP DFAS INFORMED: Ensuring your retired pay comes to you accurately and on time is the primary goal at DFAS. To do this, they need your help to keep your account up to date. *Keeping your account up to date includes making sure your mailing address, banking information, allotments, tax withholding status, and your beneficiary choices are current. Be sure to report any change of life events as soon as they happen. These life-changing events include:*

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Death of a spouse or child
- Birth or adoption of a child

Some changes, especially those regarding SBP, have a one-year time limit, so it is very important that DFAS is notified of life-changing events when they happen. When you notify them, be sure to include supporting documents, such as birth or marriage certificates. Keeping your contact information updated is also key to staying informed. DFAS occasionally sends out correspondence regarding changes in the law that affect your pay, and a new Retired Account Statement (RAS) is sent when your net pay changes (unless you are on **myPay** where the new RAS is available online). **If your mailing address is not correct and you are not on myPay, they have no way of notifying you about changes. The easiest way to stay up to date is to use myPay. You can use myPay to change your mailing address, your direct deposit information, Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage, certain allotments and your tax withholding status. You can create a myPay account at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>**

Reporting the Death of a Retiree

Do your loved ones know who to contact in the event of your death? Casualty Assistance Representatives (CARs) stand ready to lend a hand with your casualty assistance needs. Call them for an appointment to talk about what you should have ready for your loved ones in the event of your passing. **If you are not sure who your AF Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR) is, you can call 877-353-6807, enter your zip code, and you will be automatically transferred to the base CAR responsible for your area.**

Buckley SFB Casualty Assistance Office (Loretta Lopez) - CAR/SBP Rep 720-847-6946

Retired Air Force.....	1-877-353-6807
Retired Army.....	1-800-626-3317
Retired Coast Guard.....	1-800-772-8724
Retired Marines.....	1-800-847-1597
Retired Navy.....	1-800-368-3202
Retired Civil Service.....	1-888-767-6738
Receiving VA Compensation.....	1-800-827-1000
Social Security Administration.....	1-800-772-1213

AFTERBURNER: Air Force Retiree Services (AFRS) at Randolph AFB, TX publishes the Afterburner twice a year. You can find copies of the Afterburner at the following link: <https://www.retirees.af.mil/library/afterburner/>

BUCKLEY SFB OUTDOOR REC & ITT: Buckley SFB Outdoor Rec and Information Tickets & Travel (ITT) (Bldg 1022) provides many programs and services to the Buckley community, as well as the worldwide US Department of Defense community. Stop by and check out ITT where they sell many in-state and out-of-state tickets to theme parks including Elitch Gardens, Disney and Universal Studios, plus local professional sports games such as the Nuggets and Rockies. For skiers and snowboarders, they sell lift tickets and season passes to most Colorado ski areas. For their ticket list, stop by ITT or give them a call at **720-847-6100**.

Other services provided by Outdoor Rec include an RV storage lot, Williams FamCamp RV Park, guided trips, outdoor adventures, ski and snowboard tuning services and retail sales of outdoor apparel and equipment. They also offer a wide variety of equipment for rent at very reasonable prices (camping gear, home & garden equipment, picnic needs, sports equipment & games, campers & trailers, party equipment, etc). See their website for additional information: <https://www.460fss.com/outdoor-rec-itt/>

Currently, Outdoor Rec's hours are Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri from 0900 to 1730 and Wed 0900-1300.

This newsletter is a RAO publication for retirees, annuitants and surviving spouses. Content is not to be construed as the official view of, or endorsement by, the RAO, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Air Force.