

VETERANS' ACCESS TO TREATMENT DURING COVID-19

- We remain committed to ensuring that Veterans and their families have access to the support they need.
- Veterans Affairs Canada has extended coverage to include telehealth/virtual health services in lieu of in-person services when these alternate delivery methods are deemed to be appropriate by both the healthcare provider and their governing body.
- We are also covering the cost of Personal Protective Equipment when it is required by the Veterans to receive in-person treatment.
- As a result, Veterans continue to access mental health treatment, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and other treatments while respecting social distancing measures.
- Our Operational Stress Injury Clinics also continue to provide services to Veterans through phone and virtual/telehealth sessions.
- The VAC Assistance Service remains available to provide support for difficulties that affect the well-being of Veterans and their family members 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at no cost.

BACKGROUND – VETERANS’ ACCESS TO TREATMENT BENEFITS AND SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Veterans Affairs Canada provides coverage for eligible treatment benefits and services provided by health care professionals within the community.

As VAC’s role is a funder versus a provider of services of treatment benefits and services, VAC has been working closely with provincial health authorities and community providers to ensure that coverage available is as flexible as possible to allow Veteran’s to access available services.

The Department has been reviewing a number of alternate methods of service delivery and has been accepting a number of methods that are supported by the various governing bodies – such as the college of physicians or the college of psychologists.

VAC is also reviewing potential Virtual Assessment options for its Vocational Rehabilitation Assessments. These options are being reviewed with the intent to ensure access for Veterans, as well as the security of the information.

Veterans should contact their provider, if they have any questions about alternate treatment options available. They should contact the Department if they need assistance in accessing community supports.

What is VAC doing to ensure Veterans get access to treatment benefits?

VAC suggests that Veterans contact their providers, as they generally have plan in place to support them. Alternatively – VAC is working with Veterans to find provider supports who can offer emergency support or who can offer alternative methods of delivery.

VAC has extended coverage to include telehealth/virtual health services in lieu of in person services when these alternate delivery methods are deemed to be appropriate by both the professional opinion of the healthcare provider and their governing body during the COVID-19 pandemic.

VAC has temporarily waived the need for renewal prescriptions required to obtain healthcare services to ensure that access continues even though it

may not be feasible to see their health professional in order to obtain such documentation.

Cannabis for Medical Purposes

As of 26 June 2020, Health Canada has updated the Cannabis Regulations to let federal licensed sellers extend registration dates for those who can't access their health care practitioner for a new medical document.

If a Veteran's registration expires between 13 March 2020 and 30 September 2020 they qualify for this extension. If their registration expires between 26 June 2020 to 30 September 2020, the six-month extension will start on the day after their current registration is set to expire.

If Veterans are still able to safely contact your health care practitioner and medical specialist to get the documents for reimbursement of cannabis for medical purposes, they are encouraged to do so.

If Veterans have an existing approval for cannabis for medical purposes and cannot reach their medical specialist for renewal, they may contact Medavie Blue Cross.

Operational Stress Injury Clinics

All Operational Stress Injury Clinics are providing services to their Veteran clients, mostly through phone and virtual/telehealth sessions. A few Clinics offer in-person sessions using appropriate security measures according to provincial authority regulations. Check-ins are done with all OSI Clinic Clients including clients on waitlists. There is a reduced capacity in some Clinics and provincial directives in others to provide only essential services but all referring agencies (Veterans Affairs Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Department of National Defense) are notified to make sure no Veteran is left behind without services.

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) Assistance Service

The VAC Assistance Service remains available to provide support for difficulties that affect the well-being of Veterans and their family members. The services are available for issues such as: health concerns; work-related issues; family and marital problems; psychological difficulties; bereavement and other problems that may affect their well-being. The

psychological support is available 24/7 and is being provided through phone or telehealth at **1-800-268-7708** or TDD 1-800-567-5803.

Mental Health First Aid Training for the Veteran Community

Given that the courses are offered in a group setting, in accordance with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) COVID-19 Advisory, the Mental Health First Aid courses for the Veteran Community have been postponed in order to ensure the safety of learners and trainers. These courses will be rescheduled post-pandemic.