

La Plata County Veterans Services
By: Richard S Schleeter

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The main objective of the Veterans Service Office is to provide prevention, protection, advocacy and support services to veterans and their families so they can maximize their quality of life, well-being and potential. The La Plata County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) provides information and assistance to veterans and their families. There is a wide range of benefits available for our nation's veterans. Every veteran is encouraged to contact the CVSO to find out more about their VA benefits. Your CVSO can assist you in any matter pertaining to the Department of Veterans Affairs. These services are free of charge. Please visit the La Plata County web site at <http://www.co.laplata.co.us/> for more information about what the La Plata County Veterans Service Office can do for you.

The La Plata County Veterans Service Office is co-located with the Durango VA Clinic at 1970 E. 3rd Avenue, Suite 102, Durango, CO. 81301. For clinic appointments, call 970-247-2214. The Veterans Service Office phone number is 970-759-0117. Office hours are 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 5 pm, Monday – Friday, except holidays, and appointments are encouraged. Call (970) 382-6150 to schedule an appointment with the Veterans Service Office.

We have received many calls from veterans regarding the Veterans Choice card they recently received in the mail from the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System. Here are some quick facts about your Veterans Choice card.

Before your Veteran's Choice card can be used, you must first meet the following test of eligibility by asking yourself these four simple questions.

- 1) Is your current residence more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility? The Durango VA Clinic counts as your closest VA health care facility, and the 40 miles is calculated geographically, not by road miles.
- 2) Have you been told by your local VA health care facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician for an appointment?
- 3) Do you need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home?
- 4) Does a geographic challenge, such as mountains, extensive distances around water or other geologic formations present a significant travel hardship?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be eligible to use your Choice Card. **VERIFY YOUR ELIGIBILITY BY CALLING 866-606-8198.** Please be prepared to provide VA with information about any other health care insurance coverage you have.

If you answered no to all of these questions, you are not eligible for benefits. You do not need to call VA. Not all veterans who receive the card will be able to participate in the Veterans Choice program.

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IMPORTANT: If you do not receive pre-approval from VA to use your Choice Card, you will be responsible for some or all of the costs of the non-VA treatment you receive. The Choice Card is for pre-approved medical care only and the Choice Card does not cover any prescriptions.

Special note: Veterans and their family members are invited to attend a Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, February 4th in Durango at the VFW, located at 1550 Main Avenue, from 1:30 pm to 3 pm. This will provide you with the opportunity to meet the new director of the New Mexico VA Health Care System, Mr. Andrew Welch. Write down all your questions and concerns about your VA health care and the new Veterans Choice card and bring them to this meeting so they can be addressed.