

VA is launching a nationwide Presumptive Conditions campaign “Your Service. Our Mission: Bringing Benefits Home” to roll out veteran disability enrollment claim events collaboratively with 20 Tribal communities. Navajo Nation March 21-22, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma April 17-18, Osage Nation of Oklahoma, May 7-8 Additional Dates & locations to follow

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**VA Presumptive Conditions Campaign Launches in Indian Country
*20 Tribal Communities to Host Events***

March 6, 2018 --- Throughout 2018, VA is launching a nationwide campaign to roll out veteran disability enrollment claim events collaboratively with 20 tribal communities. The campaign, titled “Your Service. Our Mission: Bringing Benefits Home” kicks off March 21 in Navajo Nation and tribal communities in eleven states have already confirmed their participation.

“This nationwide outreach campaign will focus on identifying and assisting Veterans across Indian Country to come and fill out disability and pension claims,” said Thayer Verschoor, executive director, VA’s intergovernmental affairs.

VA realizes that reaching these veterans could have a direct, tangible impact on the lives of thousands of previously unreached veterans and their spouses.

“We appreciate the participation of our 20 tribal communities who have shown interest,” said Stephanie Birdwell, director, VA’s Office of Tribal Government Relations. “This helps VA enhance and improve the experience for all Veterans and their families.”

“VA’s Benefits Assistance Service is working hand and hand with tribal government leaders to roll out these claims events,” said Mike Frueh, chief of staff, VA’s Veterans Benefits Administration. “With the focus on veterans and their widows with presumptive disabilities and those who are pension eligible, VA is hopeful we can help Indian Country veterans access the full range of benefits they have courageously earned through their service.”

Late last year, letters were mailed to over 500 tribal communities nationwide. “While we have confirmed interest from 20 communities thus far, we are hopeful as word spreads and tribal

communities see the benefit from these events, requests to schedule more will occur,” said Birdwell.

A full list of the 20 tribal communities currently scheduled for claim clinics in 2018 are listed here: Copper River Native Association (Alaska); Native Village of White Mountain (Alaska); Tule River Tribe (Calif.); Walker River Paiute Tribe (Nevada); Siletz Tribe (Oregon); Nooksack Indian Tribe (Washington); Bay Mills Indian Community (Michigan); White Earth Nation (Minnesota); Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (Wisconsin); Osage Nation (Okla.); Seminole Nation of Oklahoma (Okla.); Eastern Shawnee Tribe (Okla.); Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (Okla.); Kewa Pueblo (N.M.); Pasqui Yaqui Tribe (Ariz.); Tohono O’odham Nation (Ariz.); San Carlos Apache (Ariz.); Navajo Nation (Ariz.); Pueblo of Pojoaque (N.M.); and Taos Pueblo (N.M.).

“Many tribal Veterans and families may not realize VA presumes that certain medical conditions are related to military service, although these conditions may first appear after discharge,” said Frueh. “In addition, spouses may be eligible for certain benefits when a veteran dies as a result of what VA calls presumptive disabilities.”

VA will have staff on hand to review claims on the spot, with the goal of completing the claim same day.

To learn more about VA tribal government programs and services visit <https://www.va.gov/TRIBALGOVERNMENT/locations.asp>.

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