

SERVICE OFFICER REPORT

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APPEALS COURT GIVES BLUE WATER VETS THE WIN CONGRESS DENIED

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A federal court ruled Jan. 29th that Vietnam veterans who served on ships offshore during the war are eligible for benefits to treat illnesses linked to exposure to the chemical herbicide Agent Orange--a decision that has the potential to extend help to thousands of veterans. The decision could result in thousands of dollars of disability benefits each month. John Wells, of the attorneys on the case, estimated 50,000 to 70,000 veterans could now become eligible for benefits. For more information go to www.Military.com Benefits section. This article was in the week of Feb 4th edition.

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EMPHASIS ON SUICIDE PREVENTION

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Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system have access to high-quality mental health services, including inpatient and outpatient care for : however, not all Veterans are enrolled in the VA health care system.

“The VA recognizes that the challenges and tribulations brought on by such medical conditions occur whether a person is enrolled in the VA health care or not; therefore, the VA provides program and services to help Veterans and their families in obtaining assistance during a crisis,” said Dr Rodolfo A. Quintana, a psychologist who serves as the suicide prevention coordinator for VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VCB).

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie stated earlier this month, ‘preventing Veteran suicide is our number one clinical priority,’ so it goes without saying that local VA health care systems have an important role to play.

That role as Quintana referred to involves taking steps to help raise awareness about suicide prevention, because according to him, “knowing that help is available and how a person can get it is critical for suicide prevention.”

Those recent steps came in the different forms of outreach efforts in order to inform the public about the free programs such as the Veterans Crisis Line(<https://veteranscrisisline.net/Default.aspx>) (VCL), which since its launch in 2007, has answered more than 3.5 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis nearly 100,000 times, of which more than 39,000 times have been lifesaving rescues.

You can call 800-273-8255 and go to option 1 for help.

HOUSE PASSES BILL TO OFFER FREE CHILD CARE AT VA FACILITIES NATIONWIDE.

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The House easily passed legislation Friday to provide free child care for some veterans at Department of Veterans Affairs facilities nationwide.

The Veterans' Access to Child Care Act, HR 840, would make permanent a program the VA began in 2011 to provide child care for veterans who need the VA for intensive medical and mental health care, such as cancer treatment or care for PTSD. Because the program expires after one year, Congress had to reauthorize it each year since 2011. Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Calif, has sought to make the program a full-time service and expand it to VA locations nationwide.

“My bill makes that pilot program permanent, finally,” Brownley said Thursday during a House Rules Committee hearing. “We have renewed it year, after year, after year.”

Free child care services are now available only in Buffalo, NY, Northport, NY, Dallas, Tx, and VA Puget Sound Health Care System and the VA Northwest Health Care Network in Washington.

Child care has recently been considered a barrier to VA access for some veterans. Before the program launched in 2011, the VA found more than 10 percent of its patients had to cancel or reschedule VA appointments because they lacked child care.

The VA later estimated more than 10,000 children had used the program by 2015, and women veterans used it in significantly higher numbers than men.