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**MEDIA CONTACT**

[vapublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vapublicaffairs@va.gov)

**Through 2027, Veterans no longer need to pay copays for their first three outpatient mental health care visits of each year**

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**WASHINGTON** — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that Veterans no longer need to pay copays for their first three outpatient mental health care and substance use disorder visits of each calendar year through 2027. This benefit expands Veterans’ access to mental health services and lowers their out-of-pocket costs.

This copayment exemption benefits dates back to June 27, 2023 and—by law—will end Dec. 29, 2027. To be eligible for this exemption, the outpatient visit must be with a qualified mental health professional at VA or provided through VA’s network of community care providers. VA will automatically refund Veterans for any copays paid to VA on or after June 27, 2023 for these appointments, with no further action required by those Veterans.

VA and the entire Biden-Harris administration are committed to providing all Veterans with the timely, world-class mental health care they deserve. VA is currently delivering mental health appointments to more Veterans, while [reducing mental health wait times](#) for new appointments. Additionally, Veteran trust in VA outpatient care is currently at 91.8% — an [all-time high](#) — and VA has recently outperformed non-VA care in [peer reviewed studies](#), [hospital ratings](#), and [patient satisfaction surveys](#).

“We want every Veteran, regardless of their financial status, to have access to the mental health care they deserve—and that’s what this copayment exemption is all about,” **said VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “We are constantly working to expand access to mental health care, and we won’t rest until every Veteran has access to care whenever and wherever they need it.”

In addition to this copayment exemption, VA launched a [new policy](#) in 2023 allowing [eligible Veterans and certain former service members](#) in acute suicidal crisis to go to any VA or non-VA emergency facility for no-cost emergency health care. Since then, more than 60,000 Veterans and former service members have used this benefit — providing them with lifesaving care and saving millions of dollars in health care costs. The policy increased access to no-cost emergent suicide care for up to 9 million

individuals, because eligible individuals do not need to be enrolled in the VA system or go to a department facility to use this benefit.

To maximize access to world-class mental health care, VA has been aggressively hiring mental health professionals nationwide. Over the last three fiscal years, VHA hired more than 9,000 mental health positions including psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, licensed professional mental health counselors, peer support specialists, mental health nurses and mental health physician assistants — including 2,000 hires during fiscal year 2024. Additionally, our retention rates for VHA employees — including mental health professionals — are at all-time record highs and outperform private sector benchmarks.

The copay exemption benefit is part of the [Cleland-Dole Act of 2022](#). For more information on mental health care at VA, visit our [mental health website](#).