



"We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude." -Cynthia Ozick

VET CENTER HISTORY

The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are community based and part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In April 1991, in response to the Persian Gulf War, Congress extended the eligibility to veterans who served during other periods of armed hostilities after the Vietnam era. Those other periods are identified as Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, and Kosovo/Bosnia. In October 1996, Congress extended the eligibility to include WWII and Korean Combat Veterans. The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life. On April 1, 2003 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs extended eligibility for Vet Center services to veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and on June 25, 2003 Vet Center eligibility was extended to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and subsequent operations within the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The family members of all veterans listed above are eligible for Vet Center services as well. On August 5, 2003 VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi authorized Vet Centers to furnish bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, to include federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel.

The Fresno Veterans Center opened its doors in August 1981 as a Community based consumer friendly, store front operation on 1340 Van Ness Avenue. The Center's mission was to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, education and referral services. The Center then moved to its current location in 1994 to be closer to the VAMC Medical Center, to provide ample parking and security for our veterans.

In the past 19 years, the Fresno Veteran's Center's small but dedicated personnel comprising of a Team Leader, Two counselors, and an Office Manager, and faithful volunteers, have addressed the impact and after math of war for veterans in the



Counties of Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare. Through the years the Center has provided direct services to over 6,670 veterans and their families. Subsequent satisfaction surveys indicate a 99% satisfaction rating by veterans who have accessed services at the Center through its contract program.

Eligibility Requirements

Legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President, changes eligibility for the Veterans Center services (Public Law 104-262), and extends the definition of the Vietnam era for war zone veterans (Public Law 104-275). Veterans Centers serve the following veterans population:

War Zone Veterans – All eras, including the following:

WW-II --- Three eligible categories: European-African-Middle Easter Campaign Medal (7 December 1941 thru 8 November 1945), Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (7 December 1941 thru 2 March 1946), or American Campaign Medal (7 December 1941 thru 2 March 1946).

Korean War	--- 27 Jun 1950 thru 27 Jul 1954
Vietnam War	--- 28 Feb 1961 thru 7 May 1975
Lebanon	--- 25 Aug 1982 thru 26 Feb 1984
Grenada	--- 23 Oct 1983 thru 21 Nov 1983
Panama	--- 20 Dec 1989 thru 31 Jan 1990
Persian Gulf War	--- 2 Aug thru Present
Somalia	--- 17 Sep 1992 to Present
Kosovo / Bosnia	--- 20 Nov 1995 thru Present
WW-II Merchant Marines	--- 7 Dec thru 15 Aug 1945



Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Hawaii

Afghanistan	--- 6 Jan 2000 thru Present
Iraq	--- 6 January 2002 thru Present
Global War on Terrorism	--- 11 Sep 2001 thru Present
OEF	--- 11 Sept 2001 thru Present
OIF	--- 3 Apr 2003 thru Present

Services

Veterans Centers offer a wide range of services to help you make a successful transition from military to civilian life. You've earned these benefits and there is no cost to you or your family members.

Readjustment counseling is a wide range of psycho social services offered to eligible Veterans and their families in the effort to make a successful transition from military to civilian life. They include:

- Individual and group counseling for Veterans and their families
- Family counseling for military related issues
- Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Outreach and education including PDHRA, community events, etc.
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation and referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues including TBI, depression, etc.



Does VA have readjustment counseling for family members?

Family members of combat veterans have been eligible for Vet Center readjustment counseling services for military related issues since 1979.