



The Guardian

The Newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

www.nmdvs.org

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March, 2018

Five Military & Veteran-Related Bills Signed into State Law by Governor Martinez



Governor Susana Martinez signed five military and veteran-related bills into state law which were sent to her desk for signature into state law. The bills were passed in the 2018 State Legislature which adjourned on February 18.

House Bill 47—Expands eligibility for use of the *Family Assistance Program* to provide financial assistance to all members of the New Mexico National Guard and their families. Previously, the fund was only available to National Guard members deployed overseas for thirty days or more. This new law will help Guard

members and their families to pay for food, rent, and utilities when facing financial emergencies.

House Bill 67—prohibits making false claims of military service for personal gain such as employment or appointment to public office. This will protect the integrity of military service.

Senate Bill 16—increases the rank required for appointment as the state's Adjutant General from Major to Colonel. The new law places the state in line with official laws utilized in most states in the nation.

Senate Bill 86—allows parents, spouses, children, and siblings of military service members killed in the line of duty to purchase a Gold Star Family Vehicle License Plate. Previously, only parents, stepparents, stepchildren, and spouses were eligible for the plate.

Senate Bill 97—ensures out-of-state teachers who are veterans or active-duty personnel—along with their spouses—to obtain their New Mexico state teaching licenses as quickly as possible. The new law will allow military families to settle into the community more quickly--and help schools fill vacancies with qualified teachers.

“One of my priorities is protecting those who put their lives on the line for our freedom,” said Governor Martinez. “By signing these bills into law I want to recognize the hard work and dedication of all the brave men and women who serve or have served our state and nation in the U.S. Armed Forces.”

New Mexico Department of Veterans Services Secretary Jack Fox praised Governor Martinez for enthusiastically signing all military-related legislation passed by legislators during the 2018 legislative session.

“I thank Governor Martinez for signing these bills into state law,” said Secretary Fox. “Once again, she has demonstrated her commitment to New Mexico’s military community by unhesitatingly signing all military-related bills presented to her into state law.”

More information about these bills can be found on the legislature website at www.nmlegis.gov.

DVS Hires New Veterans Service Officer in Gallup



Raymie Hurley

DVS Gallup Veterans Service Officer

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has hired Raymie Hurley as its new Veterans Service Officer in the agency's Gallup office.

Raymie proudly served in the United States Marine Corps from 1999-2003 with the Marine Security Guard Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA. After his service, Raymie completed training, graduated from the Navajo Law Enforcement Training Academy, and went on to serve for eight years as a Navajo Nation Police Officer. He is also a proud member of the Navajo nation and has earned an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of New Mexico, and a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Western New Mexico University.

The DVS Gallup office is located in the Ford Canyon Senior Center, located at 908 Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A. Raymie can be contacted at raymie.hurley@state.nm.us or (505) 863-7457.

Applications Sought for Vacant DVS Women Veterans Program Coordinator Position

Applications are still being accepted for the vacant Women Veterans Program Coordinator position at the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services. The DVS Albuquerque office-based position is a "classified" state government position, so interested applicants must apply online through the New Mexico State Personnel Office—and *not through DVS*.

The application and more information can be found by going to the following SPO website: www.governmentjobs.com/careers/newmexico and typing in the vacant position's job number: **#15691**. The deadline to apply is March 9. No late applications will be accepted.

*****Again...do not contact DVS to apply for the job. This is a state government position—and must be applied through the normal online state application process.**

According to the VA, there are 16,354 *registered* women veterans in the state. DVS created a Women Veterans Program to plan, develop, implement, and coordinate helping women veterans in the state—and to register what it believes are many more unregistered women veterans.

The program's goal is to improve the awareness of women veterans about their eligibility for VA and state veterans' benefits and services. The program's coordinator assesses the needs of New Mexico women veterans, and makes recommendations to the DVS Cabinet Secretary regarding existing benefits and possible future benefit options and related programs—working with veterans' groups throughout the state to carry out this mandate.



State Veterans Home to Host *Rapid Hire Event* to Fill Immediate Job Vacancies



The New Mexico State Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences, which is managed by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, will be holding a *Rapid Hire Event* from 9am-4pm on March 30 to fill immediate Nursing, Janitorial, and Food Service job vacancies.

DVS managers and division supervisors will conduct interviews and are prepared to make job offers to qualified applicants who bring résumés, a valid New Mexico Driver's License or Photo ID, a Social Security Card, and a High School diploma, certificate of graduation, transcripts, or other proof of graduation. Certain positions require a college degree;

applicants for these positions should also bring documentation showing this.

Nursing Aide, Certified Medication Aide, RN and LPN positions are subject to random drug/alcohol testing. Offers will be contingent upon position availability, the results of drug/alcohol screening, license/certification checks, employment reference verification, and, if applicable, fingerprinting.

The New Mexico Veterans Home is located at 992 South Broadway in Truth or Consequences. For more information about this Rapid Hire Event, contact the Home's HR Department at (505) 894-4234.

Veterans Sought to Fill Seasonal Firefighter Vacancies

The Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest is looking to hire five military veterans to form a crew in support of wildland fire operations for three or more months beginning in May.

Duty location is the Pecos District Ranger office in Pecos, NM, and work will primarily be in support of the hazardous fuels program. VIWF crewmembers will earn Federal Civil Service pay and benefits at the GS-3 pay grade, and receive crew housing if needed.



The VIWF crew's primary purpose is to perform thinning, hand-piling, limbing and brushing vegetation, assist with prescribed fire implementation, prepare prescribed fire burn units for implementation and monitoring. Focus areas are Rowe Mesa, where the VIWF crew will help improve fuels, range and wildlife habitat conditions, while protecting and/or improving other resources such as archaeology and watershed. The deadline to apply is March 16.

There can also be opportunities for the VIWF crew to spend time with resource specialists and receive an orientation across other Forest Service work areas. The work is very rewarding and positions can fill quickly. For more information, call (505) 757-6121 or email mburton@fs.fed.us or jjulian@fs.fed.us.

Save the Date: April 24-25...

2018 SW Veterans Business Conference in Albuquerque



The premier event for entrepreneurial-minded veterans and their spouses in the southwest is returning to Albuquerque.

Registration will soon begin for the 2018 Southwest Veterans Business Conference will at the Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town on April 24-25. This will be a free event—no registration fees.

Everything you need to know about starting and expanding a small business will be presented at this must-go conference for business-minded veterans. Some of the topics to be covered are: Access to Start-Up and Expansion for Veterans, Capital, Boots-to-Business Reboot Training, Balancing Home & Business Life, a panel discussion headed by successful veteran entrepreneurs, a “meet-and-greet” with prime contractors, and many more topics you need to know about to be successful in running your own business.

The conference will be presented by the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center—the business development division of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services—along with the U.S. Small Business Association (SBA) New Mexico District Office, the Small Business Development Center of New Mexico (SBDC), New Mexico Veterans Business Advocates, the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of New Mexico, the American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), SCORE, and WESST New Mexico.

Watch for registration information at www.nmvboc.org, or call the VBOC at (505) 383-2401.

The New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)

The New Mexico Veterans’ Business Outreach Center (VBOC) was created by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services to help entrepreneurial-minded veterans or their spouses with their business development needs. It is funded by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration and was the first state-managed center in the nation created specifically to help veterans.

New Mexico’s VBOC is located in Albuquerque but provides service to any veteran statewide. For more information, contact VBOC Director Rich Coffel at (505) 383-2402 or richardl.coffel@state.nm.us.

VBOC Veterans Business Advisor James Cassidy can provide assistance in southern and southeastern New Mexico from the VBOC field office in Roswell. He can be contacted at jamesm.cassidy@state.nm.us or (575) 624-6002.

All VBOC services are free for transitioning active-duty personnel, veterans, or their spouses. More information about the VBOC can be found at www.nmvboc.org.



Rich Coffel
VBOC Director

Bataan Death March Survivor Passes Away



USA CPL Julio T. Barela
Sep. 28, 1916-Feb. 12, 2018

Bataan Death March Survivor Julio T. Barela passed away on February 12 in the New Mexico Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences. The 101-year old native of San Ysidro in Doña Ana County was buried with full military honors on February 20 at the Masonic Cemetery in Las Cruces.

Mr. Barela worked on the family farm when, at 16 years old and due to a desire “to see the world,” he secretly left home to join the Navy. But his mother found out, and followed him to California where he was starting Basic Training. She revealed to camp officials that her son was underage, and was allowed to bring him home.

When he turned 18, Julio was drafted into the Army in April, 1941—one of the first 21 men from Dona Ana County to be drafted. After completing basic training at nearby Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas, he was assigned to

the Army’s 200th Coast Artillery, Battery A Unit as a Search Light Crewmen and shipped to the Philippine Islands. Coincidentally, most of the unit was made up of New Mexico National Guard members. The unit was sent to the Philippines for what was to be a year-long anti-aircraft training exercise.

On April 8, 1942—four months after Japan launched surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, and other Asian locations, Allied forces in the Philippines were ordered by their commanding officer, U.S. Army Major General Edward King, to surrender to the Japanese forces. Mr. Barela was among the more than 70,000 American and Filipino prisoners forced by their captors to walk more than 60 torture-filled miles under intense heat through the jungle to prison camps. Thousands died or were killed along the way. Those who survived “The Bataan Death March” faced equally-brutal captivity as prisoners-of-war.

Mr. Barela was among thousands of prisoners who were then sent aboard “hell ships” to Japan. He was imprisoned in the Niigata Prison Camp before being liberated when Japan surrendered to the United States on September 2, 1945. He returned home to his native southern New Mexico—and to a life as a farmer.

CPL Barela was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation with an Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star, the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the American Defense Medal with Bronze Star, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, the Philippines Defense Service Star, the Victory Medal, Seven Overseas Service Bars, the Distinguished Unit Badge with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Prisoner of War Ribbon. He is survived by his daughter Anita Dawson of Las Cruces.

DVS Las Cruces-based Veterans Service Officer J.R. Turner presents a Condolence Message and state flag on behalf of Governor Susana Martinez to Anita Dawson, at the February 20 funeral of her father Julio T. Barela.

Mr. Turner got to know Mr. Barela and his daughter through helping them with their veterans’ benefits needs.



Bataan Memorial Day to be Observed in Ceremonies in Santa Fe & Albuquerque

The New Mexico National Guard will host a ceremony in Santa Fe on April 9 at 11a.m. to honor the 76th anniversary of the surrender of Bataan in the Pacific theater of World War II. The annual ceremony will once again be at in front of the Bataan Memorial Building, located at 407 Galisteo Street.



The ceremony honors the heroic service of the 1,800 New Mexicans of the New Mexico National Guard's 200th and 515th Coast Artillery Regiments. The men had been in the Philippines for about eight months for a training exercise when Japan launched a December 8, 1941 surprise attack on that country. The men were activated, and proceeded to put up a valiant fight—despite being vastly outnumbered—before they and 75,000 American and Filipino troops were ordered by Army Major General Edward King to surrender four months later--on April 9, 1942. Of the 1,800 New Mexicans who endured the Bataan Death March and 3-1/2 year imprisonment, only nine are alive today.

DVS to Present Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony in Clovis



The 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War will be commemorated in Clovis on March 16 at a special 11 a.m. ceremony presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) at American Legion Post 25, located at 2400 West 7th Street.

All veterans who served during the Vietnam War era, as well as family members of deceased Vietnam War-era veterans, are invited to attend—and will be presented with a 50th Anniversary Commemorative Pin and a Certificate of Appreciation for their service and sacrifice.

The ceremony is part of an ongoing nationwide effort launched in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to commemorate our nation's 50th Anniversary of its initial engagement in the Vietnam War. Communities have been urged to commemorate this anniversary, and also honor the men and women who served during the entire Vietnam War era. DVS has been designated as the organization in charge of the commemoration effort here in New Mexico—which in 2009 was extended as a rolling effort through 2025. There have been similar ceremonies in other communities here in New Mexico since the launch of the initiative, and a additional ceremonies will be presented in the future.

The initiative applies to any man or woman who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War era, defined as 1955-1975. No distinction is made regarding service in-country, in-theater, or elsewhere around the globe during this Vietnam War era. All answered the call of duty.

For more information, contact DVS State Benefits Director Dale Movius at dalej.movius@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6374.

Welcome Home Ceremony for Vietnam War Veterans to be Held in Las Cruces



Vietnam War-era veterans, as well as the public, are invited to attend the Eighth Annual *Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans* ceremony on March 31 from 8am-1pm at Veterans Memorial Park in Las Cruces.

New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center Director and Vietnam War veteran Rich Coffel will be among the speakers at the ceremony, which is presented by Vietnam Veterans of America/Chapter 431 of Las Cruces.

More information, contact Bruce Fonnest at brucefonnest@hotmail.com or (575) 649-1145.



Women Veterans Monument to be Dedicated at Las Cruces Veterans Memorial Park



The group *United Military Women of the South West (UMWSW)* will lead a dedication of a new Women Veterans Monument at a public ceremony on Saturday, March 10, at 10a.m. at Veteran's Memorial Park in Las Cruces.

The monument is a tribute to women who have served or are currently serving in our nation's military. It will feature six life-size bronze statues representing Army, Marine, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Army National Guard women in detailed uniforms from World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Cold War and current eras.

UMWSW was the driving force behind the construction of the monument. It secured funding from the state Legislature to supplement privately-raised funds, and partnered with the City of Las Cruces to complete the project.

For more information, contact UMWSW at (575) 528-4551.

DVS to Make Benefits Outreach Stops This Month in the ABQ Metro Area



The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) will host Veterans Benefits Outreaches in Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia Counties in March.

On March 12, DVS staff will be in Los Lunas at the Valencia County Assessor's Office (444 Luna Ave.) from 10am-4pm for a Veterans Property Tax Exemption Outreach/Workshop. Veterans can get help with filing for

the Veterans State Property Tax Exemption—a \$4,000 reduction in the taxable value of a veteran's primary residence. Veterans rated at 100% service-connected disabled can have the total property tax liability waived.

DVS representatives can also assist veterans, their spouses, or their widows with VA or state veterans' benefits issues—including answering questions or setting appointments for entrepreneurial-minded veterans needing help with starting or expanding a small business.

On March 15, DVS staff will be in Albuquerque at the Bernalillo County Assessor's Office (501 Tijeras Ave. NW) from 10am-1pm for a similar Veterans Property Tax Exemption Outreach/Workshop.

On March 19, DVS staff will conduct a similar Veterans Property Tax Exemption outreach in Albuquerque's west side—at the Cottonwood Mall (10000 Coors Blvd. NW) from 10am-4pm.

On March 21, DVS staff will be at the North Domingo Baca Multi-Generation Center in Albuquerque (7521 Caramel Ave) from 10am-2pm to assist veterans with their VA and state veterans benefits.

No appointments are necessary at any of these outreaches. Veterans are encouraged to bring their DD-214 Separation Papers or any VA documents to help expedite any on-site filing process that could begin. DVS staff can assist with filing for lost DD-214's. For more information, contact DVS Veterans Health Care Specialist Joseph Dorn at (505) 383-2414 or josephm.dorn@state.nm.us.

ENMU Veterans Benefits Outreach

New Mexico Department of Veterans Services staff will be among the dozens of agencies assisting veterans in Portales at the 2nd Annual Eastern New Mexico University Veterans Resource Event on March 9 from 10am-3pm at the ENMU Campus Union Ballroom (CUB).

DVS Staff will be able to help current or prospective student-veterans with any of their GI Bill, VA, or state veterans benefits needs.

Non-student veterans are also encouraged to stop by if they need any benefits assistance.

For more information, call the EMNU Veterans Information Line at (575) 562-2195 or veterans@enmu.edu.



Free Legal Advice Clinic in Albuquerque for Veterans

The New Mexico VA Health Care System and the State Bar of New Mexico/Young Lawyers Division are presenting another free Civil Legal Advice Clinic for military veterans and National Guard/Reserve Unit personnel on Tuesday, September 12 from 8:30am-11am in Albuquerque at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial, located at 1100 Louisiana Blvd. SE.



Volunteer attorneys will be there to offer legal advice concerning non-criminal issues involving family law, divorce/child support cases, consumer rights complaints, bankruptcies, landlord-tenant disputes, foreclosures, and employment disputes.

No appointments are necessary. The volunteer attorneys will help on a first-come, first-served basis and will limit sessions to 20-minutes. They ask that you bring any paperwork relevant to your case—claims documents, court documents, and any correspondence—to make things easier for them to help.

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services will also have staff on site to assist veterans with any VA or state veterans' benefits claims issues. Representatives from Goodwill Industries of New Mexico, the United South Broadway Corporation, the Roadrunner Food Bank, and other service provider agencies will also be there for further assistance.

For more information, please call (505) 265-1711/ext. 3434.

DVS to Hold Quarterly State VSO Commander's Briefing

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) invites commanders, presidents, or representatives of veterans and community service organizations to a briefing of veterans' issues on March 21 in Albuquerque from 9am-noon at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial, located at 1100 Louisiana Blvd. SE.

This is the second quarterly briefing of the year presented by DVS to update veterans service organizations and community service providers about veterans issues in New Mexico and nationwide.

Among the scheduled topics and updates to be discussed are: The 2018 State Legislature/Veterans Legislation, the New Mexico VA Health Care System, VA benefits, the 2018 SW Veterans Business conference, jobs at a movie production for veterans, and a statewide effort to commemorate the centennial of the end of World War I.

Updates will also be provided on the State Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences—and in particular, a push to fill job vacancies at the facility.

The briefings are an excellent networking opportunity for veterans' service organizations and community service agencies. For more information, please contact DVS Executive Administrative Assistant to the Cabinet Secretary Shannon Quintana at Shannon.quintana@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6334.

VA Launches Pilot TeleHealth Program for Rural-Area Veterans Seeking PTSD Treatment



**VA Secretary
Dr. David Shulkin**

**For more news from the VA
and for benefits
information, visit
www.va.gov**

**The VA has a Regional
Benefits Office in
Albuquerque.**

**For more Information:
[www.benefits.va.gov/
albuquerque](http://www.benefits.va.gov/albuquerque)**

**For information about VA
health care, visit the
website of the New
Mexico VA Health Care
System at:
www.albuquerque.va.gov**

With a focus on improving access to mental health care for Veterans living in rural areas, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has launched a pilot telehealth program that will give rural veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) remote access to psychotherapy and related services.

The VA's Office of Rural Health, in partnership with the VA's Quality Enhancement Research Initiative, is supporting the Telemedicine Outreach for PTSD Program (TOP) to deliver therapy and other care through phone and interactive video contact.

The program has been launched in 12 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOC's) in the following cities: Charleston, South Carolina; Iowa City, Iowa; Little Rock, Arkansas; Denver, Colorado; San Diego, California; and Seattle. The results, which will be available in 2020, will lay the groundwork for eventual nationwide implementation of the TOP program.

More than 500 rural veterans who are not receiving specialty PTSD care have already enrolled in the pilot study. The participants may choose between the two main forms of evidence-based, trauma-focused psychotherapy used in VA: Cognitive Processing Therapy, or Prolonged Exposure Therapy. Veterans participating in the program receive frequent phone calls from a care manager who helps them access services provided by off-site psychiatrists and psychologists.

The psychotherapy is delivered via interactive video from a VA medical center to a CBOC or to the veteran's home. The telephone care manager also monitors the veterans' progress and helps them overcome barriers to care.

"Our researchers have worked diligently in recent years to establish the safety and efficacy of PTSD psychotherapy delivered remotely, ensuring Veterans will get the same quality of PTSD care as if they were in a doctor's office at a VA medical center," said VA Secretary David Shulkin. "We are excited to see this program help greater numbers of Veterans living in rural areas and pleased that it will save them time and effort to get to a VA facility that is far from their homes."

Dr. John Fortney, a research health scientist at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle, WA, is leading the project.

"Long travel distances to urban areas can be a major barrier to care for rural veterans," said Dr. Fortney. "In a prior trial, we were able to use telehealth technologies successfully to engage veterans in evidence-based, trauma-focused therapy without their having to travel to a distant VA medical center."

VA, AMVETS Launch Cooperative Effort to Study and Treat Veterans Suicide

AMVETS has announced a new mental health care partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as part of a broader effort by both organizations to better combat suicide among vulnerable veterans.

“We have to start saving lives, not just talking about it,” said Sherman Gillums Jr., chief strategy officer for AMVETS.

The new initiative — nicknamed the HEAL Program — comes the same week that VA officials are set to deliver plans to the White House to provide mental health services to every service member leaving the ranks, in an effort to better identify troubled veterans and intervene before they harm themselves. Those plans are the culmination of a 60-day interagency review of mental health services and policies mandated by an Executive Order in January. At the time, President Donald Trump said the move meant that federal departments would take a closer look at “supporting our veterans during their transition from uniformed service to civilian life, taking some of their difficulty away.”

On Tuesday, VA Secretary David Shulkin called the moves an extension of his department’s clinical work on suicide prevention. He acknowledged that many service members and veterans do not know enough about the services available to them, and called the coordination with AMVETS an important step forward.

“We know that mental health care saves lives, and we can do more,” he said. “So this is really important.”

Research by the Naval Postgraduate School has found that veterans in their first year out of the military are almost three times more likely to take their own lives than individuals still serving. That has led to a new focus on that first year of military transition, and outreach to those new veterans.

The HEAL program (which stands for Healthcare, Evaluation, Advocacy and Legislation) includes a new AMVETS-run hotline for veterans to call for guidance on available resources, to be launched March 19. Email and online chat components are also being created.

The veterans group is spending about \$700,000 to pay for a team of clinicians to work with veterans, VA officials and other community advocates to better coordinate care options and measure the effectiveness of existing programs.

Additional information on the services will be available in coming weeks on the group’s web site. An estimated 20 veterans a day nationwide commit suicide. VA research has found more than half of those are veterans who do not have regular contact with department health care or support programs.

To contact the Veteran Crisis Line, callers can dial 1-(800) 273-8255 and select option 1 for a VA staffer. Veterans, troops, or their families members can also text 838255 or visit VeteransCrisisLine.net for assistance

DVS Health/Safety Tip: Spring Allergies/Hay Fever

By Heather Whipps/LiveScience



Last month's edition of *The Guardian* had a story about how to tell if you are suffering from a common cold, or influenza ("flu"). Now that Spring is right around the corner, there is another seasonal malady which shares symptoms with both the cold and flu.

Spring is the season for Allergic Rhinitis—more commonly known as Hay fever...or simply "allergies." Millions of Americans suffer from seasonal allergies—especially once the mild weather of Spring returns.

When it comes to seasonal allergies, myths abound. Itchy eyes, a congested nose, sneezing, wheezing and hives: These are symptoms of an allergic reaction to the environment caused when plants release pollen into the air, usually in the spring or fall. Many people use hay fever as a colloquial term for these seasonal allergies and the inflammation of the nose and airways.

But hay fever is a misnomer, said Dr. Jordan Josephson, an ear, nose and throat doctor and sinus specialist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

"It is not an allergy to hay," Josephson, author of the book *Sinus Relief Now* told Live Science. "Rather, it is an allergy to plants that pollinate."

About 8% of adults in the United States have allergic rhinitis, Josephson said. Among children in the United States, 9% reported having allergic rhinitis symptoms during the past 12 months, according to a recent study, he added. Worldwide, between 10-30% of people are affected by allergic rhinitis, he said.

Symptoms

The symptoms of allergic rhinitis may at first feel like those of a cold. But in the case of hay fever, symptoms usually appear when a person encounters an allergen, such as pollen or mold.

Symptoms include itchy eyes, itchy nose, itchy throat, itchy ears, sneezing, irritability, nasal congestion and hoarseness. People may also experience cough, postnasal drip, sinus pressure or headaches, decreased sense of smell, snoring, sleep apnea, fatigue and asthma, Josephson said.



Many of these symptoms are an immune overreaction by the body attempting to protect the vital and sensitive respiratory system from outside invaders. The antibodies produced by the body succeed in keeping the foreign invaders out, but also cause the symptoms characteristic of allergic responses.

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People can develop hay fever at any age, but most people are diagnosed with the disorder in childhood or early adulthood, according to the Mayo Clinic. Symptoms typically become less severe as people age.

Often, children may first experience food allergies and eczema before developing hay fever, Josephson said. "This then worsens over the years, and patients then develop allergies to indoor allergens like dust and animals, or seasonal rhinitis, like ragweed, grass pollen, molds and tree pollen."

Hay fever can also lead to other medical conditions. People who are allergic to weeds are more likely to get other allergies and develop asthma as they age, Josephson said. But those who receive immunotherapy, such as allergy shots that help people's bodies get used to allergens, are less likely to develop asthma, he said.



Common Allergens

The most common allergen is pollen, a powder released by trees, grasses and weeds that fertilize the seeds of neighboring plants. As plants rely on the wind to do the work for them, the pollination season sees billions of microscopic particles fill the air, and some of them end up in people's noses and mouths.

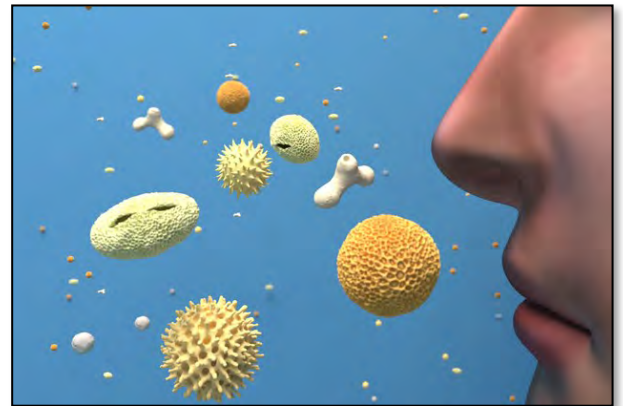
Spring bloomers include juniper, ash, birch, cedar, elm and maple trees, plus many species of grass. Weeds pollinate in

the late summer and fall, with ragweed being the most volatile. The pollen that sits on brightly colored flowers, it is interesting to note, is rarely responsible for hay fever, because it is heavier and falls to the ground rather than being borne in the air. In addition, bees and other insects carry that pollen directly from one flower to the next without ever bothering human noses.

Mold allergies are different. Mold is a spore that grows on rotting logs, dead leaves and grasses. While dry-weather mold species exist, many types of mold thrive in moist, rainy conditions, releasing their "seeds" overnight. Both in the spring or fall allergy seasons, pollen is released mainly in the morning hours and travels best on dry, warm and breezy days.

Pollen Count

How do scientists know how much pollen is in the air? It's more than just a guess. Specialists charged with counting pollen set a trap where ambient air flows freely. The trap — usually a glass plate or rod coated with adhesive — is analyzed every few hours, and the number of particles collected is then averaged to reflect the particles that would pass through the area in any 24-hour period. That measurement is converted to pollen per cubic meter. Mold counts work much the same way.



A pollen count is an imprecise measurement, scientists admit, and an arduous one — at the analysis stage, pollen grains are literally counted one by one under a microscope. It is also highly time-consuming to discern between types of pollen, so they are usually bundled into one variable. Given the imprecise nature of the measurement, total daily pollen counts are often listed simply as low, moderate or high.

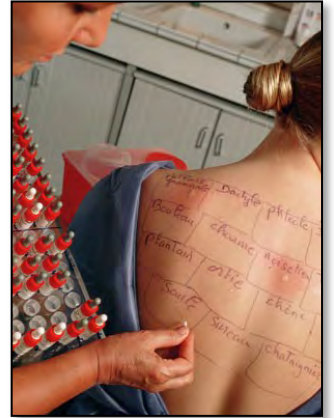
People who have access to pollen counts may decide to stay indoors if a pollen count is high, or simply may take medication to help control their symptoms.

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Tests & Diagnosis

A physician will take patient history and do a thorough physical examination if a person reports having hay fever-like symptoms. If necessary, the physician will do an allergy test. According to the Mayo Clinic, people can get a skin prick test, in which doctors prick the skin on a person's arm or upper back with different substances to see if any cause an allergic reaction, such as a raised bump called a hive



A person can also do an allergy blood test. This test rates the immune system's response to a particular allergen by measuring the amount of allergy-causing antibodies in the bloodstream, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Hay Fever Treatment

Dr. Sarita Patil, an allergist with Massachusetts General Hospital's Allergy Associates in Boston, talked to Live Science about strategies for outdoor lovers with seasonal allergies. For instance, Dr. Patil suggested figuring out exactly what type of pollen you're allergic to, and then avoiding the months when those plants are in bloom.

Her other strategies:

- Be able to identify the pollen perpetrator by sight
- Monitor pollen counts before scheduling outdoor time
- Go outside at a time of day when the plants that make you sneeze are not pollinating (grasses, for instance, have a peak pollination time of afternoon to early evening)
- Wear protective gear like sunglasses, among other tips.



Allergy sufferers may also choose to combat symptoms with medication designed to shut down or trick the immune sensitivity in the body. Whether over-the-counter or prescription, most allergy pills work by sending chemicals that bind naturally to histamine — the protein that reacts to the allergen and causes an immune response — coursing through the body, negating the protein's effect.

Other allergy remedies attack the symptoms at the source. Nasal sprays contain active ingredients that decongest by soothing irritated blood vessels in the nose, while eye drops both moisturize and reduce inflammation. Doctors may also prescribe allergy shots for those particularly afflicted, Josephson said.

For kids, allergy medications are tricky, according to a nationally representative poll of parents with kids between the ages of 6 and 12. That study, carried out in January 2017 by the University of Michigan's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, found that 21 percent of parents said they had trouble figuring out the correct dose of allergy meds for their child.

Fifteen percent of parents gave a child and adult form of the allergy medicine, with one-third of these parents giving their child the adult dose of that medicine.

(continued)

Doctors may also recommend allergy shots, a neti pot that can rinse the sinuses, or a Grossan Hydropulse, an irrigating system that cleans the nose of pollens, infection and environmental irritants, Josephson said.

Alternative and holistic options, along with acupuncture, may also help people with hay fever, Josephson said. People can also avoid pollen by keeping their windows closed in the spring, and by using air purifiers and air conditioners at home.



Probiotics may also be helpful in stopping those itchy eyes and runny noses. After analyzing more than 20 previous, and relevant, studies, researchers found that those who suffer from hay fever may benefit from using probiotics, or "good bacteria" thought to promote a healthy gut.

Though the jury is still out on whether probiotics are an effective treatment for seasonal allergies, the researchers noted these gut bacteria could keep the body's immune system from flaring up in response to allergens, something that could reduce allergy symptoms. The study was reported in 2015 in the journal *International Forum of Allergy & Rhinology*. Probiotics can be found in certain foods such as yogurt, sauerkraut, Korean Kimchi, as well as in supplements.

NM VA Health Care System and Allergy Care

Though the New Mexico VA Health Care System does not provide direct allergy care, it does refer veterans seeking allergy treatment to allergists in the community. But veterans must see their VA provider first...either at the main Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque or any of the fifteen VA-managed Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's) in the state...to receive a referral.

For more information, contact the Murphy VA Medical Center at (505) 265-1711. For the locations of the fifteen CBOC's in the state, go to

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?dnum=ALL&STATE=NM>



The Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque

NMDVS FIELD OFFICES

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services has fourteen field offices to assist veterans and their eligible dependents with filing for VA and state veterans benefits. Each office is managed by a nationally certified Veterans Service Officer (VSO), who also make regularly-scheduled outreach visits.

Below are the DVS field offices (LISTED IN ALL CAPITAL LETTER HEADINGS) and outreach locations (*shown in italicized headings with an asterisk*). Walk-ins are welcome, but DVS encourages making an appointment.

ALAMOGORDO	ALBUQUERQUE #1	ALBUQUERQUE #2
Larry Weatherwax 411 10th Street # 107 (575) 437-4635 larry.weatherwax@state.nm.us	George Vargas 500 Gold Ave. SW (505) 346-4810 george.vargas@state.nm.us	Gordon Schei 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE (505) 383-2404 gordon.schei@state.nm.us
ALBUQUERQUE #3	<i>Anthony*</i>	<i>Artesia*</i>
Theresa Zuni 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE (505) 383-2404 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	<i>(Las Cruces Office Outreach)</i> Lazaro Ramos (575) 524-6124 lazaro.ramos@state.nm.us	<i>(Carlsbad Office Outreach)</i> Dagmar Youngberg (575) 885-4939 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us
<i>Aztec*</i>	CARLSBAD	<i>Clayton*</i>
<i>(Farmington Office Outreach)</i> Beverly Charley (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us	Dagmar Youngberg 101 N. Halagueno (575) 885-4939 dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us	<i>(Raton Office Outreach)</i> Gary Fresquez (575) 445-8282 gary.fresquez@state.nm.us
CLOVIS	<i>Cuba*</i>	<i>Deming*</i>
Matthew Barela 904 W. 6th Street (575) 762-6185 matthew.barela@state.nm.us	<i>(Albuquerque Office Outreach)</i> Gordon Schei (505) 383-2409 gordon.schei@state.nm.us	<i>For assistance, call the DVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220 or 524-6124</i>
<i>Española*</i>	FARMINGTON	GALLUP
<i>For assistance, call the DVS Santa Fe office at (505) 476-7903</i>	Beverly Charley 101 West Animas/Room 104 (505) 327-2861 beverly.charley@state.nm.us	Raymie Hurley 908 Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A (505) 863-7457 raymie.hurley@state.nm.us
<i>Grants*</i>	HOBBS	<i>Holloman AFB*</i>
<i>(Gallup Office Outreach)</i> Raymie Hurley (505) 863-7457 raymie.hurley@state.nm.us	Dalton Boyd 2120 N. Alto Street (575) 397-5290 dalton.boyd@state.nm.us	<i>(Alamogordo Office Outreach)</i> Larry Weatherwax (575) 437-4635 larry.weatherwax@state.nm.us

LAS CRUCES #1	LAS CRUCES #2	LAS VEGAS (NM)
J.R. Turner 2024 E. Griggs Ave. (575) 524-6220 jr.turner@state.nm.us	Lazaro Ramos 2024 E. Griggs Ave. (575) 524-6124 lazaro.ramos@state.nm.us	Karen Abeyta 917 Douglas Avenue (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us
Lordsburg*	Los Lunas*	Mora*
(vacant) <i>For assistance, contact the DVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220</i>	<i>(Albuquerque #1 Office Outreach)</i> Theresa Zuni (505) 346-4810 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us	<i>(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach)</i> Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us
Quemado*	RATON	Reserve*
(vacant) <i>For assistance, contact the DVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220</i>	Gary Fresquez 200 N. 3rd St. (575) 445-8282 gary.fresquez@state.nm.us	(vacant) <i>For assistance, contact the DVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220</i>
ROSWELL	Ruidoso*	SANTA CLARA (Grant County)
Danielle Thompson 1600 SE Main St./Suite A (575) 624-6086 danielle.thompson@state.nm.us	<i>(Alamogordo Office Outreach)</i> Larry Weatherwax (575) 437-4635 larry.weatherwax@state.nm.us	(vacant) <i>For assistance, contact the DVS Las Cruces office at (575) 524-6220</i>
Santa Rosa*	SANTA FE	*Socorro
<i>(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach)</i> Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us	Jeff George 301 W. DeVargas St/Suite 2A (505) 476-7903 jeff.george@state.nm.us	<i>(ABQ #1 Office Outreach)</i> Theresa Zuni (505) 841-5346 theresa.zuni@state.nm.us
Sunland Park*	Truth or Consequences*	Tucumcari*
<i>(Las Cruces Office Outreach)</i> Lazaro Ramos (575) 524-6124 lazaro.ramos@state.nm.us	<i>(Las Cruces Office Outreach)</i> JR Turner (575) 524-6220 jr.turner@state.nm.us	<i>(Las Vegas, NM Office Outreach)</i> Karen Abeyta (505) 454-0068 karen.abeyta@state.nm.us

DVS Women Veterans Program



DVS created a Women Veterans Program within the Field Services Division to focus on women veterans—the fastest growing segment of our nation's veteran population. According to the VA, there are 1,882,848 women veterans in America—about 10.4 % of the nation's veteran population. In New Mexico, there are 16,354 women veterans —about 10.5% of the state's veteran population of 158,994.

The mission of the Women Veterans Program is to educate women veterans about their VA and state veterans benefits—and, if necessary, to help with the filing process. Currently the program's Coordinator position is vacant. The search is underway to fill this critical position. In the meantime, women veterans seeking help with their benefits can contact DVS State Veterans Benefits Director Dale Movius toll-free at 1-(866) 433-8387 or daleJ.movius@state.nm.us.