



VETERANS AFFAIRS



Support, Growth & Taking Initiative

Dear Indiana County Veterans and Families,

As we step into February, I want to take a moment to highlight some important opportunities and updates from our office.

Our Battle Brew coffee group continues to grow, and we're seeing firsthand how these gatherings positively impact Veterans' lives. These social events provide a space for connection, shared experiences, and mutual support, reminding us that no Veteran stands alone. If you haven't joined yet, we encourage you to come out, have a cup of coffee, and engage with fellow Veterans. Battle Brew is held the first Friday of each month. We hope to see you on February 7th. Please call our office for more information.

On February 13th, ICTC will be hosting classes on Email Basics and Cybersecurity to help you stay connected and protect your personal information. Whether you're looking to improve your digital communication skills or safeguard yourself against online threats, these classes are a great opportunity to enhance your knowledge. See the flyer on page two for more information and how to sign up.

While our office proudly serves as your advocate, it is vital that you take initiative in managing your care and benefits. Staying informed, keeping up with documentation, and being proactive in your claims process can help ensure you receive the benefits you deserve in a timely manner. We're here to help, but your involvement is key to success!

Our office is currently booking appointments seven weeks out due to high demand. If you miss your appointment or don't call to reschedule, your next available appointment will be another seven weeks later. Please be mindful of this scheduling challenge and reach out if you need to make changes so we can best serve you and others in need.

Walk-ins for support with general topics such as DD-214s, records requests, brick applications, questions on how to get started with services, and other general benefit questions, are always welcome. If you need assistance, stop by our office, and we'll be happy to help.

We take great pride in serving our Veterans and remain committed to providing the best possible support. Your service and sacrifices deserve the utmost respect, and we are honored to stand by you in your journey. Thank you for allowing us to serve you.

Jessica
Jessica Walker
Director

Highlights

Soup for Souls

Golden Onsite
Dental

VA Health
Care Costs

What Happens
Next?

Real Estate Tax
Exemption

Vehicle
Registration

Veteran Discount
Program

Indiana County *Soup for Souls*

COMMUNITY TABLE

FREE COMMUNITY DINNER!
2ND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH | 5-6:30 PM
INDIANA MALL | NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH

February 13th: Chili

March 13th: Sausage Orzo

April 3rd: Chicken Noodle with Homemade Noodles

May 15th: Taco Soup

June 12th: Italian Wedding

Community. Hospitality. Authenticity. Jesus.

Learn Email and Cybersecurity!

Join us at the ICTC as we host two workshops to explore essential digital skills, from navigating online safety to mastering email basics! Our Cybersecurity materials help learners protect themselves from cyber threats by covering safe browsing, recognizing suspicious communications, and creating strong passwords. Additionally, our Email Basics resources are perfect for beginners, focusing on Gmail and covering everything from account creation to sending, organizing, and identifying suspicious emails. Whether you're looking to stay safe online or become more proficient with email, we've got you covered!

Join Us!

Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025

Time: 9am (Email) & 12:30am (Cybersecurity)

Location: The Indiana County Technology Center

RSVP: by 2/6/25 to jrobertson@ictc.edu

* Lunch is available for purchase (\$5.00)

Available Workshops

Internet Basics

- Web browsers and search engines
- Navigate the internet
- Basic and advanced search

Computer Basics

- Find and navigate the desktop
- Find and organize files and folders
- Save, close, and delete files

Email Basics

- Create an email account
- Email tools and apps
- Perform basic email functions

Mobile Device Basics

- Identify external buttons
- Common touch gestures
- Identify apps for common tasks
- Identify a secure network

Cybersecurity

- Identify a secure website
- Create a strong password
- Key factors in an email message that indicate a scam.

Videoconferencing

- Join/schedule a Zoom meeting
- Create a personal Zoom account.
- Recognize common participant features.

Contact Us

Mrs. Jessica Robertson
Information Technology Services Instructor
724-349-6700 x119 | jrobertson@ictc.edu

Mrs. Melaney Brubaker
Digital Communications Instructor
724-349-6700 x124 | mbrubaker@ictc.edu

INDIANA COUNTY TECHNOLOGY CENTER

441 Hamill Road · Indiana, PA 15701

www.ictc.edu

AARP TAX AIDE PROGRAM

The Tax Aide Volunteers are once again doing taxes at the **Indiana Elks Lodge**.

They will start taking phone reservations every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, starting on January 7th from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm.

Please call 724-762-8945 or 724-762-8961.

You can also stop by the lodge on the above days to make an appointment in person.

GOLDEN ONSITE DENTAL

The Arc is partnering with Golden Onsite Dental to provide individuals with disabilities a sensory-safe location to receive dental health check-ups. All insurances are welcome!

We bring the dental office to you!

Our Public Health Team will Provide:

- Exam
- Cleaning
- Fluoride Varnish

• Treatment options if needed, including with a local dental provider

• Parent education and hands-on learning for families

Upcoming dates:

November 21, 2024 10 AM – 2 PM
December 19, 2024 10 AM – 2 PM
January 16, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM
February 20, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM
March 13, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM
April 10, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

ACCEPTS ANY INSURANCE!

FOR AN APPOINTMENT – Please Text: Arc to 412-361-9265 and someone will be with you to schedule an appointment time.

The clinic will be held at The Arc of Indiana County
(120 N. 5th Street Indiana, PA 15701)

Veteran Spotlight

Jon "JD" Walker is a 1996 graduate of Marion Center Area High School. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership from Colorado State University and an MBA from Penn State University.

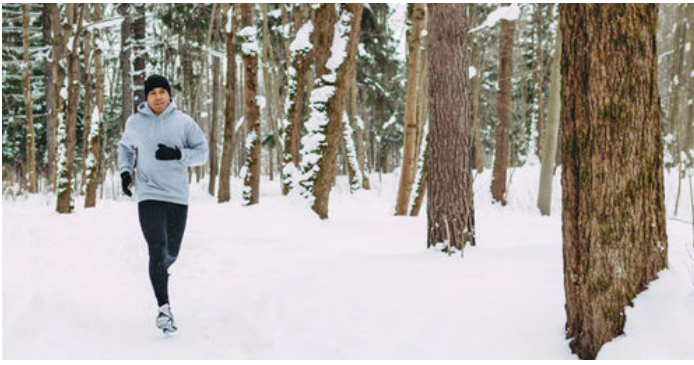
JD began his military career in 1996 as a Cargo Specialist and retired in 2018 as a Civil Affairs Noncommissioned Officer with the 10th Special Forces Group. He served in key assignments, such as a recruiter and instructor at the JFK Special Warfare Center. JD completed six combat deployments supporting operations Iraqi Freedom, Afghanistan Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve.

He has completed numerous military courses, including U.S. Army Airborne, Air Assault, Jumpmaster, Army Recruiting, Civil Affairs, Arabic Language, SERE-C courses, and many others. His awards include three Bronze Star Medals, three Meritorious Service Medals, and multiple campaign and unit awards. JD also holds the Master Parachutist, Air Assault, Combat Action, and Gold Recruiter badges, as well as foreign parachutist badges from several countries.

Following his service, JD pursued roles in academia, conservation management, and leadership, including service as a Military Science Instructor. In 2022, JD graduated from the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, earning the "Torch Award" for leadership excellence, and was assigned State Game Warden for Indiana County.

He has been married to his wife Jessica for nearly 20 years, and they have two daughters, Victoria and Brinley.

VA News and Information



[Achieve Your Resolutions](#)

VA offers a variety of tools and resources that can help both Veterans and their caregivers set and track achievable goals for the new year.

Here are five VA resources for making and committing to your resolutions in 2025:

1. To get better sleep: Insomnia Coach
2. To manage weight: MOVE! Coach
3. To eat healthier: VA's Healthy Teaching Kitchen
4. To improve well-being: Mindfulness Coach
5. To stay consistent: Live Whole Health

No matter what your goals may be, VA has a variety of tools and resources to transform your New Year's resolutions into lifelong healthy habits. To learn more about VA's virtual care tools, visit the [Connected Care website](#). You can also check with your VA provider to find the best options for you. [Read More](#)



[Learn How PTSD Treatment Can Help](#)

Some people who've lived through a traumatic event—such as combat, a serious accident, sexual assault, or a natural disaster—will develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of PTSD, like flashbacks or avoiding certain places or people that remind you of the event, can make daily life challenging.

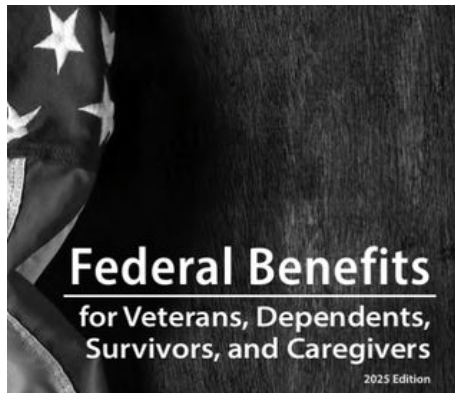
After experiencing a traumatic event, it's normal to feel stressed, anxious or even scared. If those feelings don't go away or start interfering with your life, it's time to talk to a health care provider.

If you or someone you care about is experiencing symptoms like these, or have recently been diagnosed with PTSD, you probably have questions. What does treatment look like? Why should I get treatment? [VA's National Center for PTSD](#) can help you find answers, learn about PTSD and find the treatment that works best for you or your loved one. [Read More](#)



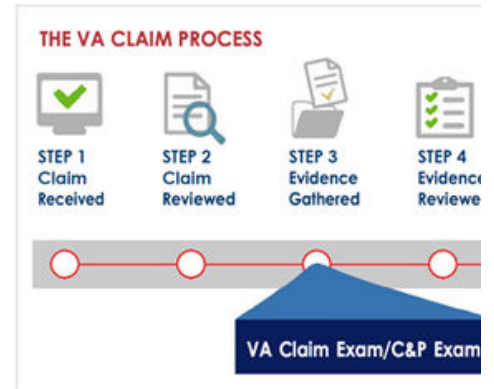
[VA Health Care Costs](#)

The VA provides free health care for Veterans with service-connected disabilities, catastrophic disabilities, or those unable to afford care. Veterans with a 50% or higher disability rating receive top priority and don't pay copays for care, tests, or medications. Health care eligibility also depends on service history or income, and some may pay copays for conditions unrelated to service. Some Veterans are eligible for free care for non-service-connected conditions based on their VA disability rating, pension payments, or other factors (like certain awards). Income information is required during enrollment and must be updated regularly to determine eligibility for free or reduced-cost care. [Read More](#)



[Federal Benefits Guide](#)

The VA published the "[2025 VA Federal Benefits Guide for Veterans, Dependents, Survivors, and Caregivers](#)," offering a comprehensive listing of VA programs, phone numbers, and websites. The guide hosts a wealth of information on most VA benefits and services, helping Veterans, service members, and their families understand the full scope of VA resources. It details eligibility requirements for benefits and outlines qualification guidelines for Veterans with service spanning peace and wartime periods. This guide serves as a valuable tool for navigating VA benefits and maximizing available support. [Read More](#)



[What Happens Next?](#)

What happens after filing a VA claim? The current average number of days to complete disability-related claims is approximately 141 days. However, the time it takes to review your claim depends on the type of claim you filed, how many disabilities and how complex they are, and how long it takes the VA to collect the evidence. You don't need to do anything unless they request additional information. Not every claim requires an exam. It depends on what medical evidence is already in your file and what you included with your application. If the VA asks you to have an exam, they will schedule your appointment at one of their facilities or with one of their contracted medical examiners. [Read More](#)



Beginning December 16, more retirees will be eligible for a reduced processing fee in lieu of the standard vehicle registration fee. Because of the new law passed by the General Assembly, the income cap will rise from \$19,200 to \$29,906. Eligible retirees pay an \$11 processing fee instead of the normal \$45 registration fee.

Eligible applicants, regardless of age, must be retired and receiving Social Security, SSI payments, retirement benefits or other pensions and annuities. The vehicle may be jointly owned however the applicant must be the principal operator of the vehicle. Only one vehicle per applicant may be registered for the retired status processing fee.

Additionally, the new law provides for the elimination of registration and title fees for one passenger vehicle or truck weighing 9,000 lbs or less owned by Veterans who meet the following requirements:

- loss of limb or eye or became partially paralyzed while serving in the Armed Forces
- was captured by the enemy in any armed conflict for which the DOD authorizes a campaign medal
- awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor
- awarded the Purple Heart

Ensure you submit applicable evidence and a copy of your DD-214. Click [HERE](#) for form.

On January 1, 2025, the State Veterans' Commission adjusted the presumptive need level for the Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption upward to \$114,637 in accordance with state law. Veterans and surviving spouses who have previously been denied for need are encouraged to consider submitting a new application. Mandatory eligibility criteria for disabled Veterans and their surviving spouses include:

- Resident of the Commonwealth
- Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions discharge during a period of war
- The real estate must be the principal dwelling and owned solely by the Veteran, jointly with their spouse.
- Must have a 100 percent permanent service-connected disability, total disability individual unemployability, or service-connected blindness, paraplegia, or loss of two or more limbs
- Must also demonstrate financial need.

Call our office to schedule your appointment!

VETERAN DISCOUNT ID CARD



Provided by the Indiana County Recorder of Deeds Office. This card can be used to verify military service in place of a DD-214 however it may not be accepted everywhere for discounts.

[Application Instructions](#)

[Application for Veteran Discount ID Card](#)

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR A CURRENT LIST OF INDIANA COUNTY BUSINESSES OFFERING A MILITARY DISCOUNT!

An official podcast of the Department of Veterans Affairs, [#theSITREP](#) (short for the Situational Report) aims to make Veterans benefits simple to understand.

The channel focuses on simplifying the process of navigating Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and claims. It aims to empower veterans by providing accessible, clear, and practical advice for handling VA disability claims and understanding available benefits.

The channel, managed by Ed Farmer—a disabled combat veteran and VA disability appeals attorney—features content such as step-by-step guides, tips for filing effective claims, and insights into eligibility criteria for various VA benefits.

The videos are tailored to help veterans confidently manage their claims and maximize their benefits, while also addressing common misconceptions and pitfalls.



Thank you for reading!

Indiana County Department of Veterans Affairs	(724) 465-3815
https://www.indianacountypa.gov/departments/veteran-affairs/	825 Philadelphia Street Second Floor, Court House Indiana, PA 15701

