

# Veterans need VHIC for in-person Commissary, Military Exchange, MWR access



The Defense Department has announced expanded Commissary, Military Service Exchange and MWR access Jan. 1 and established a standard for physical access to military installations.

Veterans and Primary Family Caregivers who are eligible and want to take advantage of in-person benefits must have a Veterans Health Identification Card, or VHIC. Primary Family Caregivers must have an eligibility letter from VA's Office of Community Care.

Veterans use VHICs for identification and check-in at VA appointments, but will also use them for base access under the new program.

Veterans eligible solely under this act who are eligible to obtain a Veteran Health Identification Card must use this credential for in-person installation and privilege access. The card must display the Veteran's eligibility status (i.e., PURPLE HEART, FORMER POW or SERVICE CONNECTED).

Veterans eligible solely under this act who are not enrolled in or are not eligible to enroll in VA health care, or who are enrolled in VA health care, but do not possess a Veteran Health Identification Card will not have access to DoD and Coast Guard installations for in-person commissary, exchange, and MWR retail privileges, but will have full access to online exchanges and American Forces Travel.

Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are eligible for DoD credentials under DoD policy.

## How to get a VHIC

Veterans must be enrolled in the VA health care system to receive a VHIC. To enroll, you can complete an application for enrollment in VA health care by telephone without the need for a signed paper application. Just call **1-877-222-VETS (8387)** Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Eastern.

You can also apply for VA healthcare benefits online at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll), or in person at your local VA medical facility. Once your enrollment is verified, you can have your picture taken at your local VA medical center, and VA will mail you a VHIC.

## **ID needed to get VHIC**

To ensure a Veteran's identity, enrollees must provide one form of primary identification when requesting a VHIC. Acceptable forms of primary identification are:

Primary Identification (Unexpired)

State-Issued Driver's License

United States Passport or Passport Card

Other Government ID

This ID can be issued by federal, state or local government agencies provided it contains a photograph, name, date of birth and address. If the address is not on the proofing document, Veterans can provide separate documentation to confirm their address. Acceptable address documents include:

- Electric bill
- Cable bill
- Other mailing document
- Voters Registration card

## **How long does it take?**

Once you have your picture taken, you should receive your VHIC within 10 days. If you have questions about the status of your VHIC, you may call your local VA medical facility where you receive your care or contact us at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

## **The VHIC provides:**

Increased security for your personal information – no personally identifiable information contained on the magnetic stripe or barcode.

Unique Member Identifier — Department of Defense assigns an electronic data interchange personal identifier (EDIPI) that allows VA to retrieve the Veteran's health record.

A salute to your military service – The emblem of your latest branch of service is displayed on your card. Several special awards will also be listed.

Accessibility – Braille "VA" helps visually impaired Veterans to recognize and use the card

Anti-Counterfeiting – Microtext helps prevent reproductions

## **Lost or stolen?**

If your VHIC is lost or stolen, contact the VA medical facility where your picture was taken to request a new card be re-issued, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387). Veterans will need to provide identification information, when reporting lost or stolen cards.

## Caregivers

Eligible caregivers will receive an eligibility letter from VA's Office of Community Care.

If you are a primary family caregiver under the PCAFC and lose your eligibility letter, please call 1-877-733-7927 to request a replacement. Please allow two weeks for processing.

For installation access, entry to some commissary stores and at point of sale at commissaries, exchanges, and MWR retail facilities, eligible caregivers will need to show an acceptable credential along with their eligibility letter. Acceptable credentials may include:

- DoD common access card (CAC) (when otherwise eligible)
- DoD uniformed services identification card (when otherwise eligible)
- REAL ID-compliant driver's license issued by a State, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
- REAL ID-compliant non-driver's identification card issued by a State, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
- Enhanced driver's license issued by a State, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
- U.S. passport or passport card
- Foreign passport bearing an unexpired immigrant or non-immigrant visa or entry stamp
- Federal personal identity verification card (when otherwise eligible)
- VHIC
- Transportation Worker Identification Card

## First visit

Upon the first visit to an installation, these eligible Veterans and caregivers must stop at the visitor control center. Depending on the type of installation, Veterans may enroll for recurring access, which would allow them to proceed to the gate for entry upon subsequent visits without having to stop again at the visitor control center.

As with all other individuals seeking access to DoD installations, all eligible Veterans must pass a basic on-the-spot background check prior to enrolling, and an automated check each time they enter the installation. Veterans with felony convictions, felony arrest warrants, or other types of derogatory information related to criminal history or terrorism will not be permitted entry.

## Find out more about military resale privileges.

Army and Air Force Exchange Service (<https://www.shopmyexchange.com/vets>)

Coast Guard Exchange (<https://shopCGX.com>)

Defense Commissary Agency (<https://www.commissaries.com/>)

Navy Exchange (<https://www.mynavyexchange.com/>)

Marine Corps Exchange (<http://www.mymcx.com/>)

MILITARY STAR Card (<https://www.myecp.com/>)

American Forces Travel (<https://www.americanforcetravel.com>)