

TRICARE

WASHINGTON – The recently enacted Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 authorized temporary health care benefits and TRICARE eligibility for Reserve component sponsors and family members. Several of the new benefits are effective Nov. 6, 2003 through Dec. 31, 2004, whereas others require implementing procedures and systems before they become available. Total expenditures during Fiscal Year 2004 may not exceed the \$400 million specified by Congress for these programs.

The key provisions of the measure include the following:

Section 701: Medical and Dental Screening and Care for Members of Ready Reserve Alerted for Mobilization

- Authorizes medical and dental screening and care in advance of mobilization.
- Guidance will be issued from OSD to Service Secretaries, alerting them to new provisions and providing implementing instructions.
- Members of Ready Reserve will be notified of eligibility for medical/dental screening coincident with notification of impending activation.
- There will be no charge to the member for any screening or care provided.

Section 702: Coverage for Ready Reserve Members under TRICARE

- This section introduces premium-based TRICARE coverage for persons not eligible for employer-provided coverage, or who are eligible unemployment compensation recipients.
- To speed implementation, we plan to build on existing TRICARE mechanisms:
- Using the TRICARE regional contractors to determine eligibility and collect premiums.
- Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to record eligibility.
- TRICARE regional contractors to educate and enroll beneficiaries in TRICARE options.
- Military facilities and civilian network providers to deliver health care services.
- TRICARE regional contractors to process health care claims.
- Coverage would be effective when the member enrolls and pays premium. Implementation timeline will be determined based on time needed to modify contracts and systems and establish implementing rules and procedures.

Section 703: Earlier Eligibility Date for TRICARE Benefits for Members of Reserve Components

- This section makes TRICARE coverage effective on the date a Reservist received a delayed-effective-date order for activation.
- Guidance will be issued from OSD to Service Secretaries, alerting them to new provisions and providing implementing instructions.
- Upon issuance of a delayed-effective-date order, service will transmit eligibility records to DEERS, and Regional TRICARE contractor will initiate education and enrollment activities for affected individuals - service member and family.
- We will rely on established practice and procedure to extent practicable - but will need to modify DEERS to record eligibility and track expenditures for this benefit. Coverage is effective with issuance of qualifying orders after Nov. 6. Changes to DEERS

will need to be implemented.

Section 704: Temporary Extension of Transitional Health Care Benefits

- This section changes the period for receipt of transitional health care benefits from 60 or 120 days to 180 days for eligible beneficiaries.
- Guidance will be issued from OSD to Service Secretaries, alerting them to new provisions and providing implementing instructions.
- DEERS will be modified to reflect extended transitional health care benefit.
- The extension to 180 days is applicable to all persons eligible for the transitional benefit - this includes Reservists being deactivated after contingency call-up, other involuntary separations, and separations following retention in support of contingency mission.
- Extensions are effective for persons deactivated/separated on or after Nov. 6, and are to be implemented as soon as DEERS can be modified.
- While DEERS modifications are being made, members and their dependents will already be receiving these benefits under their previous 60 or 120 day benefit.

Section 705: Assessment of Health Care Needs of Reserves

This section requires GAO to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the health care needs of Reservists, incorporating information about the benefits included in the FY 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, and to report to Congress by May 1, 2004.

Section 706: Limitation on FY 2004 Outlays for 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Programs

- This section prescribes a limitation of \$400 million on FY 2004 outlays for the benefits authorized in sections 702, 703, and 704.
- Adherence to this limitation will entail careful tracking of outlays as they occur.
- DoD will adhere to the \$400 million limitation in FY 2004 to avoid an Anti-Deficiency Act violation

Section 707: TRICARE Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinators for Reserve Component Beneficiaries

- Reserve components will appoint beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinators to support Reserve component members. Policy guidance to Services will be issued shortly.
- This support will be part of an information campaign to inform affected members and families about the new provisions and how to use their benefits.
- The transition to new TRICARE regions will enhance support for Reserve component members.

Section 708: Eligibility of Reserve Officers for Health Care Pending Orders to Active Duty Following Commissioning

- This section makes newly commissioned officers eligible for healthcare, pending orders to active duty, if the officer lacks other health coverage.
- Guidance will be issued to Service to implement this new provision.
- Individuals needing this coverage can be handled on a case-by-case basis.

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redcom round-up



REDCOM Northwest

FORT CARSON, Colo. – LCDR Lori Karnes has been selected as the Junior Reserve Nurse Corps Officer of the Year. Karnes was mobilized to support Operations *Noble Eagle* and *Enduring Freedom* at Naval Hospital Bremerton, Wash. In her civilian capacity, Karnes is an emergency room nurse at Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs, Colo. The award, presented by the Naval Reserve Association, is named after Bea Ratner, a U.S. Naval Reserve nurse who served from 1959 to 1974.

- From LTJG Penny Cockerell, Navy Information Bureau Det. 1118

WHIDBEY ISLAND, Wash. – Thirty-two of the newest Naval Reservists at NAS Whidbey Island received a thorough introduction to the Naval Reserve through a “non-prior service” class. The 32 recruits will eventually take assignments with Reserve units at Naval Reserve Center Whidbey Island. The course consists of a special weekend class designed to help them learn the basics of military life that will prepare them for boot camp and for their new careers as Reservists. Class topics rotate on a regular schedule and include first aid, uniform regulations, military customs and courtesies, Naval terminology and rank structure to name only a few. The material has proven to be helpful for recruits before they participate in boot camp at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Ill.

- From ENS Shane Linkous, Navy Information Bureau Det. 1222

OAK HARBOR, Wash. – Patrol Squadron 69 (VP-69) spread goodwill to Ecuador recently through a massive airlift campaign. The effort was the brainchild of AW1 Steve Daley, who visited Ecuadorian villages during a VP-69 counter-narcotics detachment last fall. He found the villages without running water or electricity and noticed homes with dirt floors and leaky roofs, and he noted the needs of many children were not met. Upon returning home, Daley organized a drive to acquire school supplies, sporting goods and clothing items to be placed in available cargo space for future flights to the region. Over a six-week period, VP-69's P-3's delivered four shipments of supplies to support six primary schools with hundreds of pounds of shoes, socks, shirts, pencils, soccer balls, basketballs, jump ropes, hand pumps, dictionaries, etc.

- From Source



REDCOM Northeast

BATH, Maine – CWO2 Rod Hooper was honored by the Casco Bay Maine Council of the Navy League with the Walter F. Frisbee award. The award is presented each year to a local Reservist who best represents the Navy to the community. Hooper is a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician in the town of Lyman, Maine.

- From JO1 Jeremy Allen, NAR Brunswick Public Affairs



REDCOM Mid-Atlantic

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – NAVAIRSYSCOM 6066 was recently selected as the 2003 Air Systems Program (ASP) Unit of the Year. The unit was singled out most notably for dynamic, focused and measurable contributions to its supported command during Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*. Based at NAS Patuxent River, NAVAIRSYSCOM 6066's complement

of 18 officers and 15 enlisted personnel provide contributory support to NAVAIR's Industrial Capabilities competency. The award is given annually to the top command of the program's 32 units.

- From LT Mike Randazzo, ASP Public Affairs Officer



REDCOM Mid-West

DETROIT, Mich. – Naval Reservists in Detroit welcomed RADM Dirk J. Debbink for a recent all-hands call.

Debbink, who serves as Commander, REDCOM Midwest, challenged the Reservists to meet the Navy's needs. It was the first trip for Debbink to Detroit since the Naval Air Reserve Center and the Naval Reserve Center merged in October 2003.

- From JO2 Dan Heaton, Navy Information Bureau Det. 813



REDCOM South

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. – PN2 Verna Sin Garrison is excited about having the opportunity to vote. She recently took the oath of citizenship, fulfilling a dream she has had

since immigrating to America from her native Hong Kong when she was 17 years old. Garrison is a Drilling Reservist member of Military Sealift Command Japan 111, Naval Reserve Center Oklahoma City. She also attends the University of Oklahoma and is scheduled to graduate in the spring with a bachelor's degree in mathematics. She has been a Reservist since 2000 after serving five years on active duty and plans to stay in the Reserve until she retires.

- From JO2 Charles A. Isom, Jr., and JOC Susan Hammond, Navy Information Bureau Det. 411



REDCOM Southeast

COLUMBUS, Ga. – Naval Reservists from Naval Reserve Center Columbus have forged a partnership with Widner Clinic at Fort Benning, Ga., to expand the availability of

medical treatment facilities on weekends. Three Hospital Corpsmen, one nurse practitioner, one physician's assistant and a doctor lend assistance to Army medics and civilian doctors and nurses. This affords Naval Reservists with experience in the orthopedic or sick wing, where they see a variety of illnesses and injuries.

- From JO1 Linda Willoughby, NRC Columbus Public Affairs

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Naval Reservists at Naval Reserve Center Asheville conducted a holiday party for the children at the Asheville Presbyterian Home for Children of Black Mountain. This was the seventh annual party to provide personal gifts as well as items needed for the group home such as curtains, bedspreads and games.

- From PN2 Raul Flores, NRC Asheville Public Affairs

COLUMBUS, Ga. – Naval Reserve Seabees of the 20th Support Readiness Group recently received training in CBR defense during a two-day course conducted during a drill weekend at Naval Reserve Center Columbus. Training included information on chemical warfare agents, decontamination procedures, detection procedures, biological warfare agents, effects and defenses of nuclear weapons, protective clothing and equipment and mission oriented protective posture.

- From Naval Reserve Center Columbus Public Affairs

For more information, go to www.tricare.org. Start dates for each portion of the pilot program will be available online via the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil and the Reserve Affairs Web site at www.defenselink.mil/ra. TMA will also post news releases,

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and updated fact sheets online and distribute public affairs guidance to provide timely information on the pilot program to all Reserve component members and their families.