

VA Health Services

When it comes to the VA, this is the one that is really easy. Go to va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/. The form is relatively easy. You will need a PDF of your DD214 (you can fax, but it could end in a black hole and will definitely delay the process). If you need help with getting a PDF of your DD214, send me an e-mail and we can get together up here in Monument, where I have an office and can scan and convert to a PDF for you. Or, make a copy, mail it to me with your e-mail address and I'll take care of it upon receipt: Kent Jarnig 4 HD 20, PO Box 1580, Palmer Lake, CO 80133.

Requirements: Served in a war zone or be retired from the military. No other requirements. However, just because you served in one of the branches doesn't mean you qualify. And, no, you don't have to be disabled.

Don't wait until you are in desperate need. Even though this is a yes/no decision, it usually several months. Once approved, you will get an appointment for a physical (normally a week or two) and the meds you are on converted to the VA pharmacy. Also, once accepted, you can just walk in to see your Primary Doctor (emergency) or send them an e-mail for an appointment, usually the next day (Primary Doctors are required to respond within 24 hours to e-mails). Specialists, in my experience, are 7 to 10 days, unless an emergency.

Cost? If you are not retired military or disabled by at least 30%, you will have a co-pay of \$15 for your Primary (physical is usually about 45 minutes), \$50 for specialists and \$8 for a month's supply of any medication. Surgery, x-rays, blood draws and virtually anything else, including hospital stays are free. This is a really good deal.

How's the care? I have been in the system for over 10 years and it's been amazing. Great Doctors, nurses, facilities...basically everything. Meds are mailed to my home. ER services, too, up in Denver.

Where? Our clinic is at 3141 Centennial Boulevard, Colorado Springs, CO 80907. The hospital is at 1055 Clermont St, Denver, CO 80220. If you need directions, a Google search works. They are both reasonably close. And if you need transportation, the VA will supply that at no cost.

Congress passed a law specifying that if you can't receive service within 30 days of request (after acceptance), then you are automatically sent to Choice. My experience is that this is a horrible program. Wait times up to 6 months. Sometimes, there is no option, but just be aware.