



Rensselaer County
Unified Family Services
Veterans Service Agency
99 Troy Road
East Greenbush, NY
12061

Phone: (518) 270-2760
FAX: (518) 270-2956
www.rensco.com

Van Transportation...

- * *Don't drive* and need to get to the Stratton VA Medical Center?
- * We offer complimentary van transportation to and from the VAMC for *most morning* medical appointments.

For more information please call (518) 270-2760.



**VETERANS
CRISIS LINE**

**DIAL 988
PRESS 1**

****Confidential chat at
Veterans CrisisLine.net
or text to 838255**
TTY service 1-800-799-4889**

**Confidential support 24
hours a day, 7 days a
week, 365 days a year,
for veterans and their
loved ones**

Rensselaer County Veterans Newsletter

STEVEN F. McLAUGHLIN
County Executive

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Christopher E. Albert
Director

VA Health Chat At A Glance

What is VA Health Chat?

The VA Health Chat app allows Veterans to connect with VA health care professionals through text-based chat messaging within minutes. You can use this service to chat about non-life-threatening health issues, request VA prescription refills, schedule VA appointments, and more.

VA Health Chat is available to Veterans in all 18 VISNs, including in U.S. territories. It is not yet available in some parts of VISN 16, where VA continues to work on expanding Veteran access to the app.

To use VA Health Chat, you must be enrolled in VA health care and have Log-in.gov, ID.me, DS Logon Level 2 (Premium), or My HealtheVet Premium account credentials.

NOTE: VA Health Chat does not connect you directly to your VA care team. To contact your VA provider, use the Secure Messaging feature on My HealtheVet.

Getting Started

To start using VA Health Chat, sign in to the app using your preferred sign-in method. On the home screen, select a VA health care service based on your needs (e.g., Clinical Triage, Scheduling and Administration, Pharmacy Support). Chat options will vary depending on your location.

You may need to complete a brief questionnaire before starting your chat.

Chat with VA Staff

After submitting any required questionnaires, you will be entered into a queue to chat with a VA health care professional. To start your chat, type your message in the text box at the bottom of the screen, then select the arrow to send.

If your needs may be better addressed by a different health care service, the VA health care professional you are assigned to can transfer you to the appropriate service. You can also select a different VA health care service from the list of options in the left navigation bar.

Help and Additional Information

VA Health Chat is available for download on iOS and Android devices in the Apple App Store or Google Play. The app can also be launched in a web browser.

For assistance with the VA Health Chat app, dial 877-470-5947 to speak with a VA representative at the Health Resource Center.

For more info, please visit www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat



Prepare for VA’s secure sign-in changes

In, 2025, you’ll need to start using a Login.gov or ID.me account to sign into all VA websites and apps.

Why this matters to you

In 2025, you’ll have 2 secure sign-in account options (Login.gov and ID.me) for all VA websites and apps. We’ll remove the My HealthVet option after January 31, 2025, and the DS Logon option after September 30, 2025. NOTE: My HealthVet is not going away, just the mechanism you use to login. You’ll still be able to use your My HealthVet health portal—you’ll just need to sign in to it with a Login.gov or ID.me account.

Create a Login.gov or ID.me account now

We encourage you to create a Login.gov or ID.me account now. If you already have one of these accounts but haven’t yet used it, start now so you have time to get used to it before the change. With Login.gov or ID.me, you’ll have access to all the same information and services you use today.

For more information and detailed instructions please visit www.va.gov or www.myhealth.va.gov



Upcoming Events:



Call us at (518) 270-2760 to have your event listed in the newsletter.

January 13th...Honor-A-Deceased Veterans Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers at 8:15am, TBD

January 20th...Martin Luther King Jr. Day—OFFICE CLOSED

February 10th..Honor-A-Deceased Veterans Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers at 8:15am, TBD

February 17th...Presidents Day—OFFICE CLOSED

March 10th...Honor-A-Deceased Veterans Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers at 8:15am, TBD



The NYS Office of General Services curatorial team is seeking wartime correspondence between Vietnam-era veterans and their family, friends, and loved ones for an upcoming exhibit recognizing the 50th anniversary of the end of the war.

Letters From/To Home will be on view in New York State's Vietnam Gallery and Memorial located at the Empire State Plaza in Albany, NY beginning in May 2025.

If you or your family have letters and would like to participate in this important project, please contact: Kathleen Brousseau, Assistant Curator at Kathleen.Brousseau@ogs.ny.gov and Sara Hill, Outreach Specialist at Sara.Hill@ogs.ny.gov. They would like to start reviewing the submissions by the end of January 2025.

A Message from the County Veterans Director

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on our many blessings and the opportunities that lie ahead.

It is with great enthusiasm that I introduce myself as the new Director of Veterans Services for Rensselaer County. I am honored to work alongside County Executive Steve McLaughlin as we strive to enhance services for our veterans. The commitment displayed by the County Executive and the continuous support from Rensselaer County residents for our veterans have always been inspiring, and I look forward to building upon this strong tradition.

A brief personal introduction: I was born in Troy and have spent the majority of my life in Rensselaer County. I graduated from Columbia High School in East Greenbush, then earned a degree in Criminal Justice from Hudson Valley Community College. Following my education, I enlisted in the New York Army National Guard, where I served for twenty-two years, primarily with the 42nd Infantry Division in Troy, NY. Throughout my military career, I held various roles, including Heavy/Light Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic, Automated Logistical Specialist, Forward Observer, and Cavalry Scout. I had the honor of being the Noncommissioned officer in charge of the Domestic All Hazard Response Team and the Homeland Response Force, as well as serving as the head of the personal security detail for General Paul C. Genereux Jr. during Operation Iraqi Freedom. I concluded my military service as a First Sergeant.

I also dedicated several years to law enforcement, serving as a New York State Correctional Officer and later as a New York State Trooper. In 2022, I retired with nearly thirty years of combined service, and I am eager to continue my commitment to our community in this new capacity.

Thank you for the warm welcome, and I look forward to collaborating with all of you to improve the lives of veterans in Rensselaer County.

Best regards,

Chris Albert
Director, Veterans Service Agency

STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A 10-WEEK EDUCATIONAL GROUP



- Understand the impact of stress on health and wellbeing
- Identify stress triggers and reactions
- Learn effective stress management practices

WHEN: Fridays at 9:00-10:00AM | Starting January 10, 2025

WHERE: In-Person (Albany VAMC; Room 603 Core) &
Videoconference

If interested, speak to your provider or contact:

Tom D'Agostino, PhD

Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI)

(518) 626-6497