

# Stakeholder Monthly Newsletter



## Veterans and Community Connections Expo a Resounding Success at the University of Maine

On Saturday, January 11th, the Veterans and Community Connections Expo brought together Veterans, families, and community members for a day filled with resources, camaraderie, and support. Held at the University of Maine Orono (UMO), the event highlighted the strength of community collaboration and the power of partnerships in serving those who have served our nation.



The expo featured representatives from various organizations and aimed to connect Veterans with vital resources. This event welcomed new partnerships with Border Patrol, Jeeps 4 Vets, and Marine Corps League 881 in Bangor, adding even more options to the support network available to attendees.

One standout moment from the event was the story of a Veteran who, after seeing the expo advertised, decided to attend and file a claim for the first time. Thanks to the guidance of participating organizations, the Veteran took an important step toward accessing the benefits they earned. Stories like this highlight the importance of events like the expo in empowering Veterans to seek the support they deserve.

The University of Maine played a crucial role in the success of the event, providing the perfect venue to host the expo. In addition to offering space for the event, UMO generously donated tickets to the men's basketball game, giving attendees a chance to enjoy a fun and engaging experience after the expo. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the organizations, volunteers, and attendees who made this day so impactful. Together, we're fostering connections, breaking barriers, and ensuring that veterans have the resources they need to thrive.

The Togus RO administers a variety of services and benefits including Disability Compensation and Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E). The Regional Office provides outreach services for all Veterans.

Please encourage Veterans and Service Members to sign-up to receive information directly from VBA Togus RO about upcoming events and services.

To sign up to receive our bulletins, click on the link below, or scan the QR code.

[Veterans Benefits Administration \(govdelivery.com\)](http://govdelivery.com)



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### Special Point of Interest

Maine Veterans may call 207-621-6938 to ask questions about benefits or to schedule an in-person or video call for assistance with claim related matters.

## Viewing or changing dependents on a Veterans VA disability benefits

As outlined below, there are several ways for a Veteran to add a new dependent, update their marital status, or remove someone from their claim. While all methods will achieve the same result, VA.gov or in-person at your local Regional Office represents the fastest and most accurate way to update.

**Form:** [VA Form 21-686c.pdf](#)

**Websites:** [View Or Change Dependents On A VA Disability Benefits | Veterans Affairs](#)

**General Information:** Veterans may be eligible for additional disability compensation for a qualified spouse, child, and/or parent if they meet both of these requirements.

### Both of these must be true:

- They're eligible for VA disability compensation, **and**
- They have a combined disability rating of at least 30%

Adding a dependent may make them eligible to receive a higher compensation payment (also called a benefit rate).

One of the most common ways to establish dependency benefits is through VA Form 21-686c, "Declaration of Status of Dependents." This form helps Veterans add or update their dependents for increased compensation. However, how they file this form can make a big difference in processing time.

### Filing Options for VA Dependency

1. **Traditional Mail Submission** Many Veterans are familiar with downloading VA Form 21-686c, filling it out, and mailing it to The Department of Veterans Affairs Evidence Intake Center. While this method is still valid, it is often the slowest. Paper-based submissions are processed manually, which can significantly delay the approval of their benefits.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Pension Intake Center  
P.O. Box 5365  
Janesville, WI 53547

2. **Online Filing Through VA.gov** Filing online via [VA.gov](#) is the most efficient method. By logging into their account, they can update their dependents directly and avoid the delays associated with mailed forms. Online filing eliminates the need for physical paperwork, streamlines the submission process, and allows them to track the status of their claim.
3. **In-Person Filing at a Regional Office** Visiting their local VA Regional Office can also speed up the process. Trained VA representatives can help them complete and file their claim in real time. This hands-on approach ensures that their submission is accurate and complete, reducing the risk of delays due to errors or missing information.

They may walk into the Togus Regional Office Monday—Friday from 8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m. to drop off the form(s):

1 VA Center, Augusta, ME 04330  
Building 248, Second Floor

### Why Filing Method Matters

While VA Form 21-686c remains a crucial tool for dependency updates, the method they choose can significantly affect processing times. Online filing or visiting a regional office often takes less time than mailing in their form,

If you or your organization is hosting an event and you want Togus to participate, please contact Christina Smith at [VBATOGROEngage@va.gov](mailto:VBATOGROEngage@va.gov).

## Look for a Togus Representative at one of the following locations:

- ◆ **February 15, 2025** - Winter Softball Classic, American Legion Post #202, 79 Foreside Rd., Topsham, ME. Time: 9:00am to 5:00pm. Open to the Public.

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## Claims Clinics

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To schedule an appointment at one of the Claims Clinics near you:

- Call 207-621-6938; or
- Go to: [VERA - Home \(site.com\)](http://VERA-Home(site.com)) ; or
- Scan the QR code

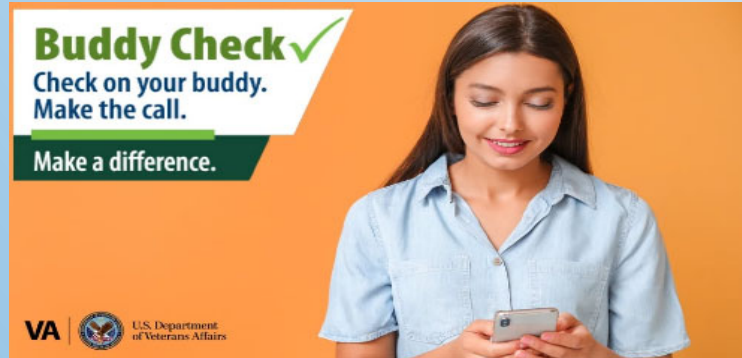


- ◆ **February 4, 2025**– Lewiston VA Clinic, Lewiston, ME, Time: 9:30am to 2:30pm
- ◆ **February 6, 2025**– Rumford VA Clinic, Rumford, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **February 11, 2025**- Portland VA Clinic, Portland, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **February 13, 2025**– Bangor VA Clinic, Bangor, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:30pm
- ◆ **February 14, 2025**- Caribou Vet Center, Caribou, ME, Time: 8:00am to 11:30am
- ◆ **February 20, 2025**- Bangor Vet Center, 615 Oldin Rd. Ste. 3, Bangor, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **February 25, 2025**- Portland VA Clinic, Portland, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **February 27, 2025**– Sanford Vet Center, 628 Main St., Springvale, ME., Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm

## VA Buddy Check

Our busy lives can make it hard to keep up with loved ones and friends. Make the time today to pick up the phone and check on a buddy. You never know the positive impact one call can make.

Learn more: <https://department.va.gov/vetera.../va-veteran-buddy-checks/>



### Contact the Regional Office

#### Togus Regional Office

1 VA Center

Augusta, ME 04330

207-626-4788

[DIR.VBATOG@VA.GOV](mailto:DIR.VBATOG@VA.GOV)

Jennifer A. Bover, Executive Director

Michael J. Brawn, Assistant Director

Timothy R. Hum, Veterans Service Center Manager (VSCM)

Thomas C. Whitney, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager (AVSCM)

Philip S. Black, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager (AVSCM)

Daniel Pelletier, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager (AVSCM)

Allison D. Bubier, Veteran Readiness and Employment Officer

Cody R. Volpe, Assistant Veteran Readiness and Employment Officer

Tracy L. Sinclair, Support Services Division Chief

Christina M. Smith, Public Affairs Officer

### Contact Your Congressional Liaison

Sara Graney

Email: [CIC.VBATOG@va.gov](mailto:CIC.VBATOG@va.gov)

### Helpful Websites

- Access the latest information on the PACT Act: [www.va.gov/PACT](http://www.va.gov/PACT)
- View the impact of this legislation: [VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard](#)
- Access the Togus Regional Office website: [www.benefits.va.gov/togus](http://www.benefits.va.gov/togus)
- Refer Veterans to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or the [VA: Health and Benefits App](#) for self-service options