

Bulletin #9-Tarheel Central Chapter-6 May 2025

Surviving Spouse News for May

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NOTE: Bulletins will be sent out on an as needed basis, outside the regular monthly newsletter to address one to three subjects of personal, local, state and national importance, particularly to military service. The bulletins are numbered starting in January of each year, so if you need one resent to you, please let me know at: gychase@outlook.com.

Surviving Spouse news this month

For immediate release

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WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs today announced a three-pronged approach to eliminate barriers and streamline the process for how eligible survivors and dependents of deceased Veterans and servicemembers apply for and receive VA benefits and services.

Specific improvements include:

- Starting this month, VA's [Office of Survivors Assistance](#) will be moved from the Veterans Benefits Administration to the Office of the VA Secretary, reversing a Biden-era decision that buried OSA under layers of bureaucracy.
- Starting this month, VA will create a “white-glove” survivor outreach team to guide and assist eligible survivors throughout their [Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#) (DIC) claims process.
- Starting immediately, VA will begin work to identify areas where automation can be used to make the DIC claims process easier to navigate for survivors.

“The last thing survivors need in their time of grief is frustrating red tape and bureaucracy. That’s why we are creating a better system to more quickly and effectively provide survivors the services, support and compassion they’ve earned,” said **VA Secretary Doug Collins**.

Background information on the changes VA announced today is below.

Relocating OSA

In 2021, the Biden administration moved OSA from the Office of the VA Secretary to the Veterans Benefits Administration, creating a siloed system at odds with the intent of the [Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 2008](#). Starting this month, VA will reverse this decision and move OSA to the Office of the VA Secretary, where a staff of five full-time employees will advise the Secretary on all matters related to the policies, programs and legislative issues affecting survivors and dependents.

“White-Glove” Survivor Outreach Team

Under previous administrations, there were gaps in the survivor claims system and no defined outreach process for VA employees to gather information from survivors navigating the benefit process. VA’s “White-

Glove” Survivor Outreach Team will begin operations in May 2025 and consist of experts based out of the Philadelphia VA Regional Benefit Office. These experts will receive specialized training and guide and assist eligible survivors throughout every step of the DIC claims process with the goal of getting to “yes” on DIC claims decisions for eligible survivors.

Automation Improvements

VA now automates more than 1,000 DIC claims payments or adjustments per day and is in the process of ongoing enhancements to increase automation that will expedite survivors’ claims and improve their experience. VA will also be identifying additional areas where automation can be used to make all benefits delivery processes easier to navigate for eligible surviving dependents.

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<https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-announces-major-survivor-benefits-reforms/>

Thank you,

Jackie Kohler