



Army Guard continues search for those eligible for earned pay

Thousands of Army National Guard soldiers, including those who have retired or separated, have till Oct. 28 to apply for Post Deployment Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA) compensation for serving long overseas deployments.

“We’ve got about 14,000 eligible Soldiers,” said Army Col. Dennis Chapman, chief of Personnel and Policy for the Army National Guard. “About two-thirds of those are still in service, and we’ve got packets submitted for about 87 percent of the Soldiers that are still in service.”

There are about 5,000 former Guard soldiers that are eligible for the benefit, said Chapman, adding that packets have been received for about 20 percent of those no longer serving. “So, the real challenge is reaching those out of service,” Chapman said.

The Department of Defense developed PDMRA for service members who were deployed longer than established dwell ratios. For reserve component service members that dwell ratio is one year deployed for every five years at home station.

“If you have a tour ending today, you look back 72 months and if you were (mobilized) for more than 12 months out of that 72 months, you may be eligible for PDMRA days,” said Chapman.

Initially, PDMRA allowed soldiers to earn additional administrative leave days for the additional time spent deployed. However, Soldiers must be in a Title 10 status to use those leave days. That meant that once Army Guard Soldiers returned to Title 32 status, they were ineligible to use those days, said Chapman.

As a stop-gap measure the policy was revised and allowed eligible Soldiers to apply those leave days to their next deployment. Typically, a Guard Soldier who serves longer than 12 months during the most recent 72 months gets one PDMRA day for each additional month or fraction of a month. The number of PDMRA days awarded increases after 18 months and again after 24 months served.

On average, those who are eligible receive credit for about 28 days, which translates to more than \$5,000, said Chapman. Those who feel they may be eligible are urged to contact their unit leadership or their state military pay officer.

Mullen Tells Service Members It’s OK to Get Help

In a new video spotlighting TRICARE’s behavioral health care benefits, Adm. Mike Mullen sends a strong message to service members struggling with feelings of stress, anxiety or depression.

“If you feel as though you or a close family member need help, please don’t wait. Tell someone,” Mullen said. “Asking for help may very well be the bravest thing you can do.”

In the four-minute video viewable at www.tricare.mil/mental-health, Mullen urges troops to tell someone in their chain of



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command if they having difficulties working through stress from deployments or the demands of military life.

These are issues all service members may have at one time or another and, Mullen said, by ignoring them they can hurt not just themselves, but their family, friends and fellow service members.

“The truth is, many people are reluctant to seek counseling because they fear the stigma attached to psychological or emotion problems,” Mullen said.

To avoid that, TRICARE’s new mental health options allow beneficiaries to seek help in a more private manner.

The TRICARE Assistance Program (TRIAP) brings short-term professional counseling assistance straight into the home. Beneficiaries with a computer, Web cam and the associated software can speak face-to-face with a licensed counselor over the Internet at any time of the day or night.

The video also features Marine Corps Sgt. Josh Hopper, who shares his experiences with seeking help for post-traumatic stress disorder after two deployments to Iraq. Hear more of his story and others at www.realwarriors.net.

Guard and Reserve have a portal at TRICARE SMART website

National Guard and Reserve members who may not live near a military treatment facility or TRICARE Service Center no longer have to rely on printed publications as a main source of TRICARE benefit information.

In the six years since its launch, the TRICARE SMART – Standardized Materials and Research Technology – website has been a one-stop, online information portal full of accurate, up-to-date information about TRICARE benefits that members and their families can easily access in the comfort of their homes.

By using the TRICARE SMART website, National Guard and Reserve members can stay informed about the latest TRICARE programs created just for them and their families.

These programs include TRICARE Reserve Select, as well as benefits that are only available while serving on active duty. Details: www.tricare.mil/smart.