

January 30, 2008

**CHANGE IN BENEFICIARY TRAVEL MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT RATES
AND DEDUCTIBLES**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive announces the new mileage reimbursement rates and deductibles for travel to or from, a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility or other place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care and it requires that Patch DGT*1*14 must be installed before February 1, 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

a. In accordance with Title 38 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) § 111, "Payments or Allowances for Beneficiary Travel" the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has authority to establish rates for payment of mileage reimbursement for certain eligible beneficiaries. Funding for beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement comes directly from the annual health care appropriation. Funds expended for beneficiary travel decrease those available for direct medical care. Accordingly, due to the steady rise in patient workload and the associated increased demand for VA medical care resources, the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate has not been changed since 1978. The 2008 Appropriations Act provided funding in VA's health care appropriation to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate to 28.5 cents per mile, which is the current reimbursement rate for Federal employees if a Government-owned vehicle is available and the employee chooses to drive a personally-owned vehicle (POV). The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has made the decision to increase VA's beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate effective February 1, 2008, to 28.5 cents per mile for travel related to health care. This would include travel for recalls due to a deficient lab, electrocardiogram (EKG), and x-ray in relation to a Compensation and Pension (C&P) examination (convenience of the Government).

b. Title 38 U.S.C. § 111(c)(5) requires VA to adjust proportionately the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate deductibles for travel in relation to examination, treatment or care (currently \$3 one way; \$6 round trip; with a maximum of \$18 per calendar month) effective on the date of a beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate change. Therefore, based on the increase of the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate, the deductible is adjusted proportionately to \$7.77 per one way trip; \$15.54 for a round trip; with a maximum deductible of \$46.62 per calendar month. *NOTE: These deductibles may be waived in accordance with Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §17.144(b) when their imposition would cause severe financial hardship.*

c. Mileage reimbursement claims for travel prior to February 1, 2008, may still be received. Such claims will be processed using the previous rates and deductibles.

d. Patch DGBT*1*14 provides modifications to the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (Vista) Beneficiary Travel package to allow processing of claims

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES JANUARY 31, 2013

VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-006
January 30, 2008

for mileage reimbursement at appropriate rates for dates of travel both before and after February 1, 2008. The patch must be installed by February 1, 2008.

e. Those eligible for mileage reimbursement for travel to or from a VA facility or other place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care include:

(1) Veterans rated 30 percent or more service connected (SC) for travel relating to any condition;

(2) Veterans rated less than 30 percent for travel relating to their SC condition;

(3) Veterans receiving VA pension benefits for all conditions;

(4) Veterans with annual income below the maximum applicable annual rate of pension for all conditions;

(5) Veterans traveling in relation to a C&P Examination; and

(6) Veterans in an authorized Vocational Rehabilitation Program for all conditions.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that effective February 1, 2008, the Beneficiary Travel Program mileage reimbursement rate will be 28.5 cents per mile with associated deductibles of \$7.77 per one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and a maximum deductible of \$46.62 per calendar month for travel to or from a VA facility or other place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care.

4. ACTION: All Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) and VA medical facility Directors are responsible for ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place so that:

a. Patch DGBT*1*14 is installed by February 1, 2008;

b. Appropriate staff are informed and trained in use of the new rates;

c. Claims for mileage reimbursement are processed using appropriate rates using VistA's Beneficiary Travel package; and

d. As appropriate, outreach to eligible beneficiaries is made using station letters, posters, and notifications to inform eligible beneficiaries of the new rates.

5. REFERENCES

a. Title 38 U.S.C. § 111.

b. Title 38 CFR §§ 17.143-17.145.

VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-006
January 30, 2008

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief Business Office (16) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to (202) 254-0400.

7. RESCISSIONS: None. This VHA Directive expires January 31, 2013.

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