

Vets Views April 5, 2006

Remember, the County Veterans Service Office will be closed the second week of April, it will re-open with normal hours on the 18th. Call and leave a message, I'll get back to you.

OK, back by popular demand...actually, this is the first time I've written about this one, so here goes. Today we're going to look into the **VA FEE ID** card. Do you have one? Not everyone does, so if you don't, well then, skip the column this week. If you do have one, it might be an old cardboard/paper card, or you may have the fancy new plastic one, either way, keep reading.

Contrary to what I hear from quite a few vets who have these cards, there are some very important rules that go along with their uses. You can't look at this card as a medical "get out of jail free" card. Nope. This card **does not** allow you to simply go to any hospital or doctor's office and get treatment for anything that you want.

Here are the rules:

You must show this card to your clinic, doctor, pharmacist, and to anyone in the billing departments of these kinds of operations, so they will be aware of the ramifications of this program and that you are using this card.

The FEE ID card authorizes you to see your local doctor for outpatient care for proper management of the medical problems listed on the card and medical conditions **directly related thereto**. The VA will pay your doctor for services upon receipt of a bill. These services include necessary x-rays, laboratory tests, and other exams. The blanket authorization is limited to a **TOTAL of \$125 PER MONTH** for services. However, this limit may be exceeded if your treating physician indicates that it is a necessity for proper management and **ONLY** with **PRIOR VA APPROVAL**. To obtain prior approval, call FEE SERVICES at the VA Medical Center (701) 239-3700, extension 3712 for consideration to exceed the limit. The decision may be made to bring you to the VA for care. I use the word "bring" very loosely here, a better way to say it might be like this--**you'll** have to drive yourself to Fargo or Grafton to get proper attention to your medical issues.

NOTE: the card does have some important limitations: This card does **NOT** authorize any **SPECIALTY CARE**, including orthopedic, chiropractic, physical therapy, podiatry, and dental. Preauthorization is required by VA for these specialty services. This card does **NOT** authorize purchase of any

type of prosthetic device, including eyeglasses, hearing aids, back supports or elastic stockings. Preauthorization is required for these items.

This card does **NOT** include hospitalization or emergency room visits in private facilities. If you have questions about these services, please contact the Fargo VA Fee Basis Department at (701) 239-3700, extension 3712 or 1-800-410-9723, extension 3712. Quiz them, and take notes!

Prescription coverage: In order for VA to provide prescriptions, VA must approve payment for medial treatment. The VA **WILL NOT FURNISH NON-FORMULARY MEDICATIONS!** (Non-formulary meds are medications not available at the VA, so if you get them, you'll have to pay for them yourself). Medications listed on the VA Pharmacy's formulary list will be furnished for treatment of a condition upon receipt of a prescription from your local doctor. If your pharmacist or physician would like to check to see if a prescribed drug is on the VA formulary list, they should call the Fargo VA Pharmacy at (701) 232-3241 ext 3167. For that matter, you could call them and ask the question yourself.

Any questions? I guess the bottom line here is this: If you have one of these cards and you plan or need to use it, better tell someone at the medical facility prior to assuming that you'll get out of jail free if you use it and run up a large bill.

One last thing, have you picked up your Support Our Troops license plates yet? Why not? Robert did, he got 2 of them--one for his car, one for his wife's. The money raised goes directly to help our MN veterans.
Over and out.