

Improve Access to Fertility Services Through VA

Thousands of service members have suffered a genitourinary injury, resulting in the loss of, or compromised ability, to have a child. Among those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, genital injury occurrences were higher than any previous wars, most of these injuries were a result of ground-based explosive mechanisms. These injuries result in medical and psychological trauma that can affect a veteran's ability to procreate.

Recognizing the need for increased assistive reproductive therapy options, in September 2016, Congress granted a temporary authorization for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide in-vitro fertilization (IVF) to veterans with a service-connected condition that prevents the conception of a pregnancy.

VA began offering IVF services in January 2017, and in September 2018, they were reauthorized for another two years. In drafting the rules for the program, VA anticipated recurring authorization by Congress; so, the Department stipulated IVF may continue to be provided if Congress approves its funding through the annual appropriations process. VA's current temporary authority prohibits the use of gametes that are not a veteran's and his or her spouse's. Because they require donated gametes, they are ineligible for IVF through VA.

Also, due to the complex care needs of women veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders, many women veterans are unable to carry a pregnancy to term. These women need the services of a surrogate in order to have a child.

Congress should permanently authorize assistive reproductive therapies to include IVF services, gamete donation, and surrogacy for veterans with service-connected infertility, and include the treatment of the veteran spouses in applicable cases.

PVA Position

- Congress must repeal the ban on VA's provision on IVF and make these services a regular part of the medical benefits package available to veterans.
- Congress must also pass legislation to authorize VA to provide assisted reproductive technology, including IVF, surrogacy, and gamete donation at VA for any veterans enrolled in VA health care who are living with infertility, including the authorization of services to non-veteran partners.