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Where Veterans Near Portage County, Ohio Can Get Help

Free local help, VA care, and the online tools — for veterans near Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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1 The 60-Second Version

The whole idea, if you only have a minute.

If you are a veteran living in or near Portage County, Ohio, you have help close to home — and the most useful kinds cost nothing. Your county has a Veterans Service Commission, a public office whose whole job is helping local veterans. National veterans groups have trained officers who file your VA claims for free. And the VA runs a medical clinic in Ravenna, with a larger hospital in Cleveland.

- Free local office: the Portage County Veterans Service Commission helps with VA claims, can assist with emergency needs, and arranges rides to VA appointments. Its phone is (330) 297-3545.
- Free claim help: the VFW, American Legion, DAV, and AMVETS have accredited service officers who file claims at no charge.
- VA care nearby: a VA clinic in Ravenna handles routine care; the Cleveland VA hospital handles more.
- Help any hour: the Veterans Crisis Line is reachable by dialing 988 and then pressing 1.

GOOD TO KNOW

The single most important thing to know: real help with VA benefits is free. The county office and accredited veterans groups never charge you to file a claim. Anyone who wants a fee or a cut of your back pay is not where you should start.

> *You earned this help. Nobody should have to pay a stranger to claim what they already earned by serving.*

THE LAY OF THE LAND

2 Who Does What

Four different helpers, and why they are not the same.

The names sound alike, so people mix them up and end up in the wrong line. Here is the plain version of who handles what. You do not have to pick perfectly — any one of them can point you to the others.

Who	What they do
County office	Free claim help, rides, local aid
Veterans groups	Free claim help, advocacy
The VA	Your care and your benefits
Crisis Line	Urgent support, any hour

The county office is your local one. Every county in Ohio has a Veterans Service Commission — a public office funded by the county to serve local veterans. For you that is the Portage County Veterans Service Commission. They file VA claims for free, can help with short-term emergencies, and arrange rides to VA appointments. This is usually the best first phone call.

The veterans groups — the VFW, American Legion, DAV, and AMVETS — are national organizations with local posts. Many have accredited service officers, trained and recognized to represent you with the VA, and their claim help is also free. You do not have to be a dues-paying member to get help filing a claim.

The VA itself is the federal agency that provides your health care and decides your benefits — it runs the clinics, the hospitals, and the va.gov website. The county office and the veterans groups sit on your side of the table and help you deal with it.

YOUR LOCAL OFFICE

3 The Portage County Veterans Service Commission

The free office built for exactly this.

This is the office to know. The Portage County Veterans Service Commission exists to serve veterans who live in the county, and its services are free. If you are not sure where to start with anything on the benefits side, start here. Here is what they help with.

- Filing and following up on VA disability and pension claims.
- Emergency financial assistance for veterans facing a short-term hardship, within the program's rules.
- Transportation to VA medical appointments.
- Pointing you to the right VA office, clinic, or program when your need is outside what they handle directly.

How to reach them

The main phone number is (330) 297-3545, and the office is in Ravenna, the county seat. Office hours are generally weekday business hours. Because offices occasionally move or change their hours, confirm the current address and hours on the county's own website before you drive over — see the online chapter later in this guide for exactly how to find it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> When you call, have your discharge paperwork (the DD-214) handy if you can find it. If you cannot, say so — helping veterans track down a lost DD-214 is a routine part of what these offices do.

GOOD TO KNOW

A Veterans Service Commission is a county office, not a branch of the VA. That is a good thing: their job is to help you get what you are owed, so they work for the veteran, not the paperwork.

FREE CLAIM HELP

4 Filing a VA Claim Without Paying

Who actually fills out the forms with you — for free.

Filing a VA claim is where many veterans get stuck, and it is exactly where free, trained help makes the biggest difference. A good service officer knows which evidence matters, how to word things, and how to follow a claim through the system. Here is where to get that help.

- The county Veterans Service Commission — trained officers, no charge.
- Accredited service officers at the VFW, American Legion, DAV, or AMVETS — also no charge.
- The VA's own accredited-representative search at va.gov, if you want to confirm someone is officially recognized.

What to bring

1. Gather your discharge paperwork (DD-214) and any service medical records you have.
2. Write down the conditions or issues you want the claim to cover, in plain words.
3. Call the county office or a veterans group and ask for an appointment with a service officer.
4. Let them prepare and submit the claim, and keep their contact information so you can follow up.

WATCH OUT

Only an accredited representative or attorney is allowed to help prepare and file a VA claim. If someone is not accredited, they are not supposed to be doing this work — and the accredited people at the county office and the veterans groups do it for free.

> *The form is not the hard part. Knowing what the VA is actually asking for is the hard part — and that is what a good service officer carries in their head.*

RIDES TO CARE

5

Getting to Your VA Appointments

If driving to the VA is the obstacle, there is help.

For a lot of veterans, the hardest part of VA care is simply getting there — especially a trip up to Cleveland. The county office can help with that, and there are a couple of separate programs worth knowing about.

First, county rides. County Veterans Service Commissions commonly arrange rides to VA medical appointments, often with volunteer drivers. Call the Portage County office at (330) 297-3545 and ask how their transportation program works and how far ahead you need to schedule a ride.

Second, VA travel pay. Separately, the VA itself may reimburse eligible veterans for mileage and travel costs to and from appointments. This is filed through the VA, and it is easiest to claim promptly after each visit. Ask the clinic's travel office, or the county service officer, how to set it up.

TIP

File travel reimbursement right after an appointment, while the trip is fresh and the deadline is not a worry. The VA's travel claim can often be submitted online once you have a va.gov sign-in.

GOOD TO KNOW

Rides and travel pay are two different things. A ride gets you there; travel pay helps cover the cost if you drove yourself. You may qualify for one, the other, or both — the service officer can sort out which.

WHEN MONEY IS TIGHT

6 Emergency Financial Help

A short-term bridge for a veteran in a pinch.

One of the lesser-known things a county Veterans Service Commission can do is help a local veteran through a genuine short-term emergency — the kind of squeeze that a little timely help can carry someone past.

Programs vary and have rules about who qualifies and what they cover, but the idea is to be a bridge in a hardship, not a long-term income. Think along the lines of help keeping the lights on, the rent current, or food on the table during a rough stretch.

How to ask

1. Call the Portage County Veterans Service Commission at (330) 297-3545 and explain the situation plainly.
2. Ask what their emergency assistance covers and who is eligible.
3. Gather whatever they ask for — proof of service, the bill or need, and basic income information.
4. Meet with them to walk through it; they will tell you what they can and cannot do.

GOOD TO KNOW

Even if the emergency program itself is not the right fit, the office knows the other local resources — food help, utility help, housing help — and can point you to them. One call opens several doors.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

CARE CLOSE TO HOME

7 VA Medical Care Nearby

What is in Ravenna, and what is up in Cleveland.

The VA care that serves this area is run by the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center and its network of outpatient clinics across northeast Ohio. For Portage County, the closest clinic is in Ravenna.

The Ravenna VA Outpatient Clinic handles routine, everyday care — the kind of visits you do not want to drive an hour for. The VA has been building a larger replacement clinic in Ravenna, so the exact address may change. Always confirm the current location and phone on the VA's own facility locator rather than relying on an old listing.

The Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center is the main hospital for the region, on the east side of Cleveland. It handles specialty care, surgery, and services the local clinic does not. Many veterans use the Ravenna clinic for routine needs and travel to Cleveland only when they are referred for something specific.

One more option: if the VA cannot provide a service you need within a reasonable time or distance, you may qualify for community care — treatment from a non-VA provider, paid for by the VA. This is arranged through the VA, so ask your VA care team or the county service officer whether you are eligible before booking anything outside.

WATCH OUT

There are several medical offices in the Ravenna area with similar names. Make sure the clinic you are calling is the VA clinic. The surest way is to start from va.gov and use its facility locator, which only lists official VA sites.

GETTING ONLINE

8 Setting Up VA.gov

One sign-in opens almost everything.

A great deal of VA business now runs through one website, va.gov — checking a claim's status, messaging your care team, refilling prescriptions, filing travel pay, and more. The one hurdle is the sign-in, and it is worth getting over once.

How the sign-in works

To protect your information, the VA uses a verified sign-in through one of two trusted services: Login.gov or ID.me. You create the account once, prove who you are, and from then on you use it to sign in to va.gov every time. It feels like extra steps the first time and routine after that.

1. Open a web browser and go to va.gov.
2. Choose Sign In, then pick Login.gov or ID.me to create an account.
3. Follow the prompts to verify your identity — this usually means a photo of your ID and a code sent to your phone.
4. Once you are in, bookmark va.gov so you can get back easily.

TIP

Set up the sign-in on a day when you are not in a hurry, and keep the email and password somewhere safe. The identity check is the slow part; after that, signing in takes seconds.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the sign-in steps feel fiddly, that is normal — they are deliberately careful because your health and benefit records sit behind them. A service officer, a family member, or I can sit with you and get it set up in one sitting.

HELP RIGHT NOW

9 The Veterans Crisis Line

Free, confidential, and open every hour of every day.

If you or a veteran you care about is struggling and needs to talk to someone now, there is a dedicated line staffed around the clock. You do not need to be enrolled in VA care to use it, and it is confidential.

How to reach it

- By phone: dial 988, then press 1.
- By text: send a message to 838255.
- Online: there is a confidential chat at the Veterans Crisis Line website, reachable from va.gov.

The line is for any veteran, service member, or family member in distress — it does not have to be a life-or-death moment to call. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

> *You do not have to be at the edge to call. A hard night is reason enough. That line exists for exactly that.*

GOOD TO KNOW

Write 988, then 1 on the refrigerator or save it in your phone today, before it is ever needed. The best time to know a number like this is long before the moment you reach for it.

FINDING THEM ONLINE

10

How to Find and Contact Them

The handful of official websites worth trusting.

There is a lot of noise online around veterans benefits, so it helps to know the few official places and go straight to them. These are the sites that will always give you current, correct contact information.

- va.gov — the official VA site for care, benefits, and the facility locator at va.gov/find-locations.
- The Portage County government website — the official source for the Veterans Service Commission's current address, hours, and phone.
- The national sites of the VFW, American Legion, DAV, and AMVETS — to find a local post and an accredited service officer.

Finding the nearest VA clinic online

1. Go to va.gov/find-locations.
2. Type in your city or ZIP code.
3. Choose the kind of place you need, such as VA health facility.
4. Pick the closest result to see its current address, phone, and hours.

WATCH OUT

When you search, add the words 'official' or look for a web address ending in.gov. The real VA and county sites end in.gov; many look-alike sites do not.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you only bookmark two things, make them va.gov and the Portage County government site. From those two, you can reach nearly everything else in this guide.

THE FREE RULE

11 Spotting Scams — Real Help Is Free

The one rule that keeps your money where it belongs.

Because veterans benefits can mean real money, a whole crop of businesses has grown up around charging veterans for help that is free. Some operate in a legal gray area; some are outright scams. The good news is that one simple rule protects you from nearly all of them. The rule is simple.

Filing a VA claim with the help of the county office or an accredited veterans group is free. If someone wants a fee up front, a monthly charge, or a percentage of your back pay to help you file a claim, that is your signal to stop and call the county office instead.

Common warning signs

- They promise a specific rating or a guaranteed outcome — nobody can honestly promise that.
- They want a cut of your retroactive or back pay.
- They pressure you to sign quickly or keep the arrangement private.
- They are vague about whether they are VA-accredited, or they dodge the question.

WATCH OUT

Be wary of unsolicited calls, texts, and emails about your benefits, especially any that ask for your Social Security number, bank details, or a va.gov password. The VA will not cold-call asking you to confirm those. When in doubt, hang up and call the office back using a number from va.gov or the county site.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can always check whether a person is officially recognized using the VA's accredited-representative search on va.gov. If they are not on it, they are not supposed to be charging you to file a claim — and the free help is one phone call away.

COMMON QUESTIONS

12 Questions Local Veterans Ask

The things that come up most.

I lost my DD-214. Can I still get help?

Yes. Helping veterans recover a lost discharge document is routine for the county office. Call them and explain; they can walk you through requesting a copy.

Do I have to be a member of the VFW or Legion to get claim help?

No. You do not need to be a dues-paying member to have an accredited service officer at one of those groups help you file a claim. Their claim help is free either way.

I am not comfortable with computers. Is that a problem?

Not at all. You can do a great deal by phone and in person. The online tools are a convenience, not a requirement, and a service officer or a trusted family member can handle the website parts with you. The county office is a county office working on the veteran's behalf, not a branch of the VA — which is part of why it is such a good first call, by phone or in person.

WHERE TO BEGIN

13 Your First Step

A calm, simple way to get moving.

You do not have to solve everything at once. Almost every path in this guide starts with the same small, free step — one phone call — and the rest unfolds from there.

1. Call the Portage County Veterans Service Commission at (330) 297-3545, or look it up on the county website to confirm the current number.
2. Tell them in plain words what you need — a claim, a ride, a hardship, or just where to start.

3. Set up a va.gov sign-in when you have a quiet moment, so the online tools are ready when you want them.
4. Save the Veterans Crisis Line — 988, then 1 — in your phone, just in case.

None of these cost a penny, and each one you check off makes the next easier. The help is there and it is yours; this is simply how you reach it.

> *Served once, earned for good. The hard part was already done years ago — this part is just making a call.*

GOOD TO KNOW

If any of the online steps feel like a wall — the va.gov sign-in, the facility locator, telling a real VA message from a scam — that is exactly the sort of thing I help neighbors with. There is no shame in it, and it is often a quick fix once someone sits down with you.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Reach the county office	Portage County Veterans Service Commission, (330) 297-3545
File a VA claim for free	Ask the county office or a VFW/Legion/DAV/AMVETS service officer
Get a ride to the VA	Ask the county office about veteran transportation
Find the nearest VA clinic	Use the facility locator at va.gov/find-locations
Set up VA online	Create a Login.gov or ID.me sign-in at va.gov
Get help right now	Veterans Crisis Line — dial 988, then press 1
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

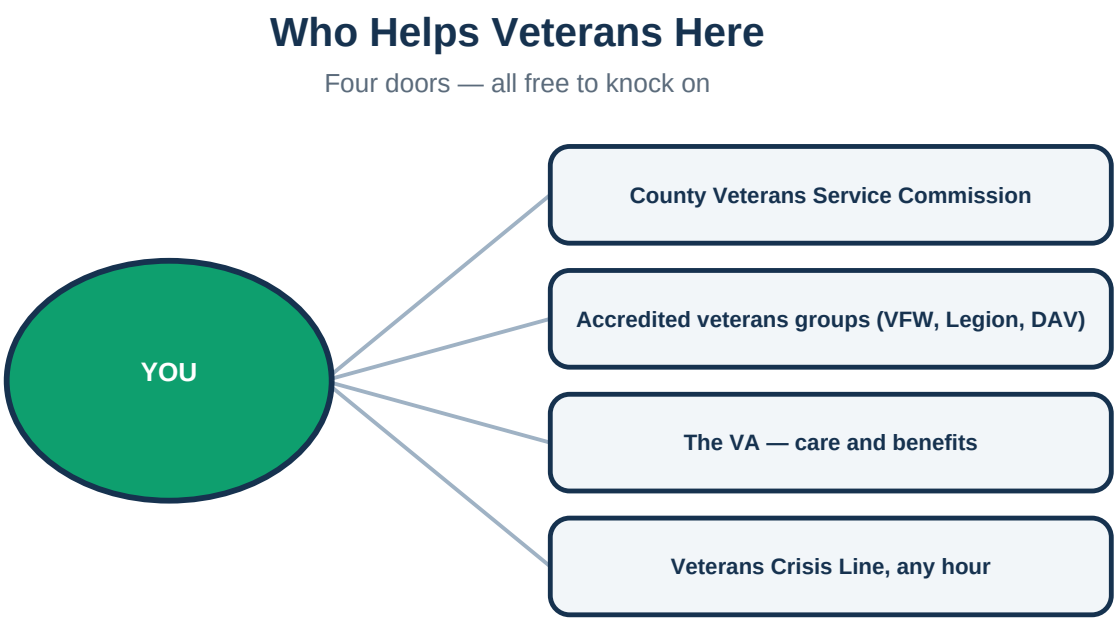


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

A Simple Path to Help

Start at the county office

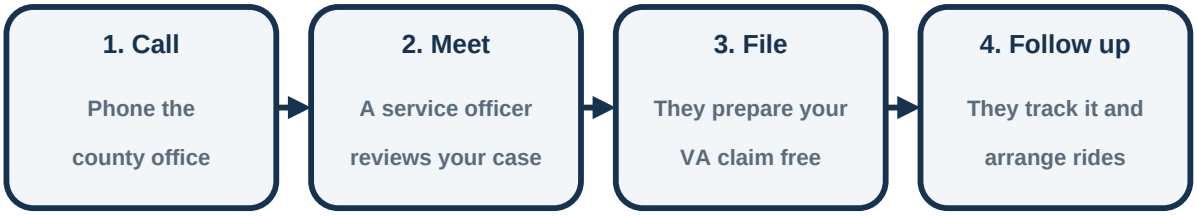


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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