



# PROTECT YOUR VBA BENEFITS

*Tips for Veterans that identify with LGBTQ+ Community*

## VBA IS COMMITTED TO DETERRING FRAUDSTERS

**Have you or a loved one been the victim of an online romance scam? Are you wondering how you can protect your data and safeguard your benefits?**

**We are here to help.** Honoring our LGBTQ+ Veterans and their families by arming them with the tools and knowledge to guard against fraudsters, is paramount to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).

## PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Romance and friendship scams are becoming increasingly popular on online platforms. As scammers become more sophisticated in how they attack, Veterans must adjust to protect themselves and their data.

**The following tips and behaviors can help LGBTQ+ Veterans protect themselves and their benefits from online scams and fraud.**

- ✓ **Trust your instincts.** Fraudsters may be overly flattering to befriend individuals or attempt to quickly establish a relationship or friendship. If your online interactions with a user seem too good to be true or feel disingenuous, cease communication immediately.
- ✓ **Never send bank information or payment to online friends or others.** Fraudsters may request monetary assistance for financial woes or threaten to release or destroy your private photos or conversations if you fail to comply and send payment or banking information. If you are being blackmailed, do not respond, and report the incident immediately.
- ✓ **Be suspicious of fake profiles.** Check for evidence of suspicious activity and perform a Google search with the name of the organization or person plus the words "scam," "review" and "complaint." [Conduct a reverse image search](#) on suspicious profile images.
- ✓ **Never share your VA login credentials and regularly change your passwords.** Keep all personal VA information (e.g., Va.gov, eBenefits logins) private, never share PII with "online friends" and do not use PII in your passwords.
- ✓ **Be wary of phishing emails.** These are typically requests for personal information from unfamiliar or suspicious email addresses.
- ✓ **Be cautious of fees being charged for VA processes and legal threats.** VA will never charge you for processing a claim, request a fee, or threaten claimants with jail or lawsuits.



**1,000,000**

The estimated number of Veterans in the United States who identify as LGBTQ+

Source: VHA LGBTQ+ Veteran Health Care Fact-Sheet

## REPORTING FRAUD

VBA works diligently to serve America's Veterans and remains committed to protecting all Veterans and beneficiaries, specifically the most vulnerable, from fraud and abuse. **To report fraud:**

- Contact [VA Office of Inspector General \(OIG\)](#) at 1-800-488-8244
- File a file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by visiting [reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://reportfraud.ftc.gov).
- Email [VBA](#) for assistance with reporting to OIG

If you are ever unsure about a call, email or text, call VA directly at 1-800-827-1000.

## GUIDANCE FOR NAME & GENDER CHANGES



Ensure credit reports and documents from federal agencies reflect your correct name and gender.



Notify and follow up regularly with credit bureaus and federal agencies to prevent potential fraud risks.



Reach out to your [LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator](#) at your local [VA Medical Center](#)