

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

HELLO.

Welcome to VA. Let's get started.

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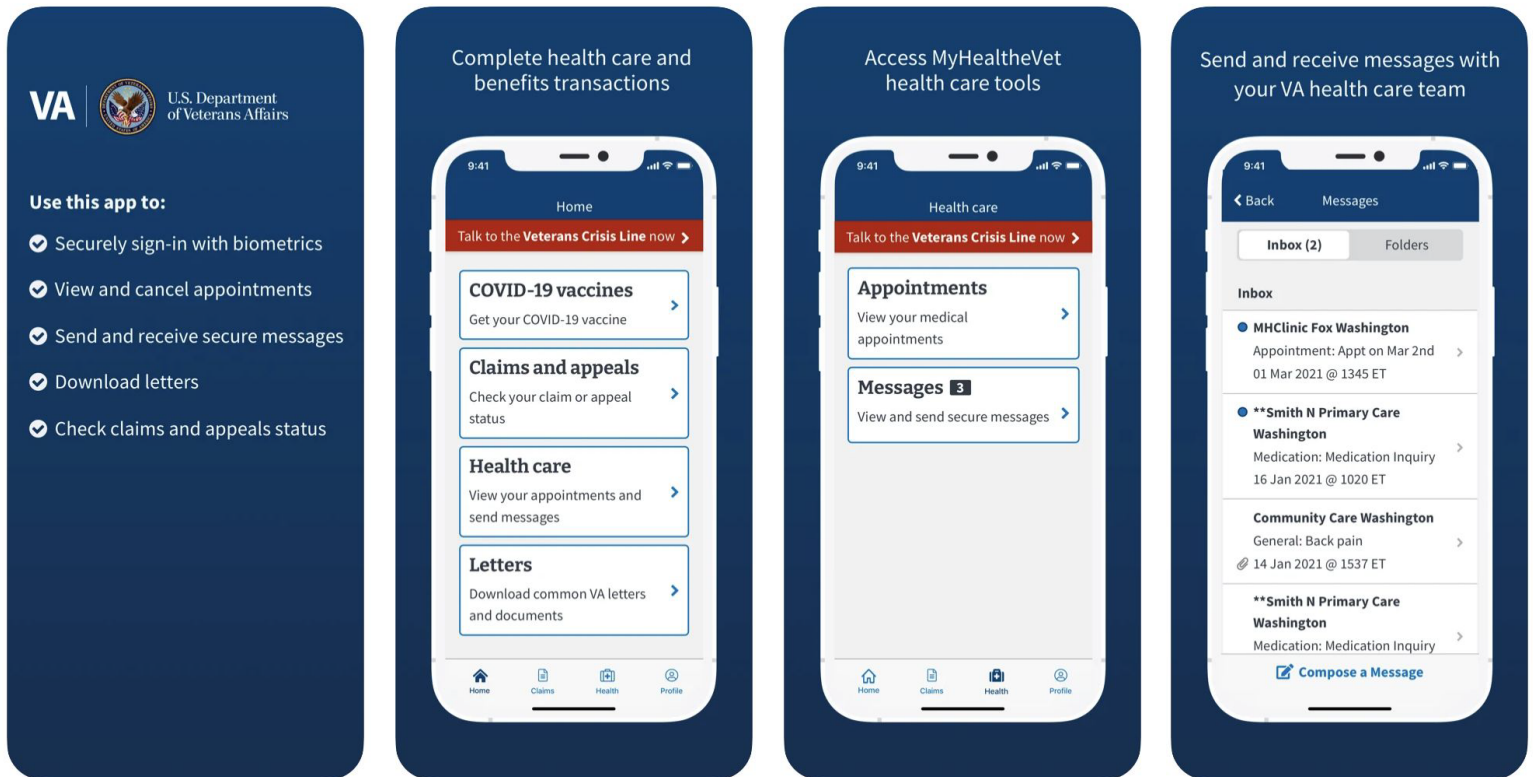
Get additional details on accessing key
VA benefits and services



VA: Health and Benefits Mobile App

An app to help you quickly and easily manage your VA benefits and services

VA's app allows you to quickly and easily check the status of your services and complete simple transactions across health care and benefits.



Voices from Veterans

"Everything that I would go on there for is readily available, so I like it...VA.gov has changed and it's straightforward. This is giving me the same feeling."

"I love that I can manage my benefits...on here. Thank you!!!"

"Easy to use, quick to access, great info right at your fingertips, and looks great. Well done, VA. Thank you!"

"Love the sign in options, the biometrics are a huge time saver"

Key Features

Biometric login: Enable face, fingerprint, or iris biometrics as a more convenient method for authentication

Profile: View personal information, including disability rating and edit certain personal information, such as direct deposit information for payments

Claims and Appeals Status: View claim statuses and upload additional evidence if needed for some claims

Facility Locator: Use phone location services to find the nearest VA facilities

Appointments: View or cancel appointments, integrated with native phone features, such as calendar and map apps

Veteran Crisis Line: Access the crisis line with SMS integration

Secure Messaging: Communicate with your VA health providers directly through the app



Learn what VA can do for you

VA can support you and your loved ones in different ways throughout your life. Your VA Welcome Guide provides a broad overview of services VA can offer you. To access more information about VA benefits and services, **visit us online at <https://www.va.gov>**.

GET HELP FOR
YOURSELF OR A
FRIEND IMMEDIATELY

*Dial **988** and **press 1** to reach the **Veterans Crisis Line**, or refer to the emergency resources on page 15 for additional information and access to immediate care.*



Health Care

- Basic and Specialty Care
- Mental Health Care
- Long-Term Care
- Crisis Support
- Well-Being Services



Finances

- Monthly Disability Payments
- Life Insurance
- Burial Allowances



Housing

- Home Loans
- Refinancing Options
- Specially Adapted Housing Assistance



Employment

- Skills Training and Counseling
- Online Career Tools
- Hiring Events



Education

- GI Bill
- Training Programs



Memorialization

- Burial and Committal Services
- Headstones and Markers
- Burial Flags



More Support

Organizations outside of VA can help you find the support you need:

- Veterans Service Organizations
- Local Community Resources

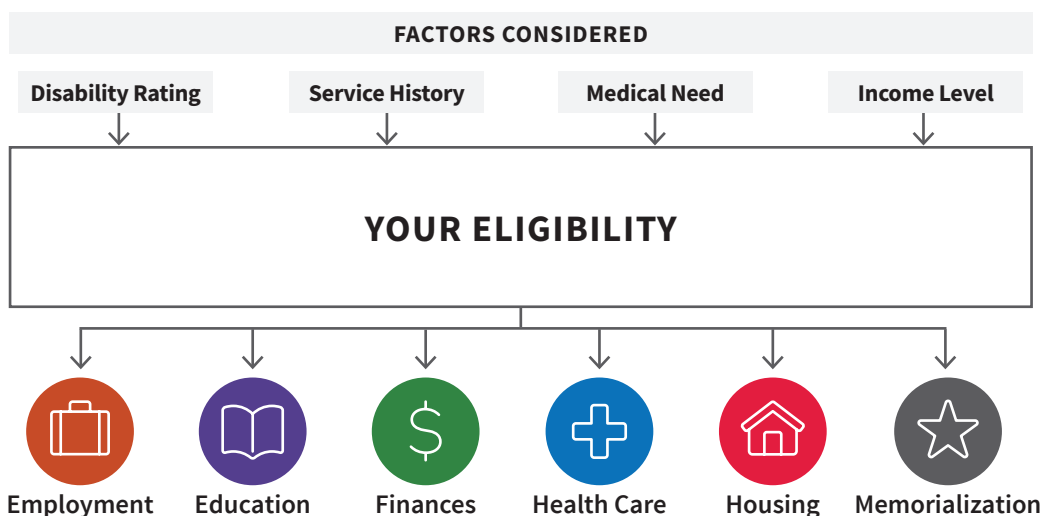
Understand your eligibility

Access to VA benefits and services depends on your eligibility. Eligibility is determined using different factors depending on the benefit. While a lot of information is used to determine your eligibility for benefits, **one critical factor may be your disability rating.**

What is eligibility?

"Eligibility" refers to **whether a Veteran qualifies for certain benefits by law.** Eligibility for different benefits may vary. For example, you may be eligible for education assistance under the GI Bill but not for enrollment in VA health care. If you are interested in a certain benefit, work with VA to determine your eligibility.

How is eligibility determined?



VA considers a different combination of factors for each benefit, which could include your **disability rating, service history, medical need, and income level.**

Understand your Disability Rating

Your disability rating is one of several factors that affects your eligibility for benefits and services. **Your disability rating is important because there are a number of services available only to Veterans with a disability rating.**

What is a disability rating?

A disability rating is an **evaluation VA gives you to describe how much your service-connected disability impacts your daily life, particularly your ability to work.** A service-connected disability is an injury, disease, or condition that resulted from, or was made worse during, military service. **Disability ratings range from 0%–100%.** A 0% rating means your disability does not affect your everyday life. Any rating, including a 0%, makes you eligible for certain services. While you may feel your condition is not serious, you should still consider applying for a rating.

How is a disability rating determined?

You must file a claim for disability. VA determines your disability based on the evidence you provide, which includes your medical records and DD214, and the severity of your condition. Once your claim is processed, you will receive a disability decision. To find out more about filing a claim, call 800-827-1000 or visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>.

WHAT BENEFITS AND SERVICES CAN YOU ACCESS WITH A DISABILITY RATING?

Some benefits and services include:

- Disability compensation
- Enrollment in VA health care
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- Federal hiring preference
- VA Home Loan fee exemption
- Specially Adapted Housing Assistance
- Life Insurance

Visit the following link for a comprehensive list of VA benefits and services, <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/about.asp>

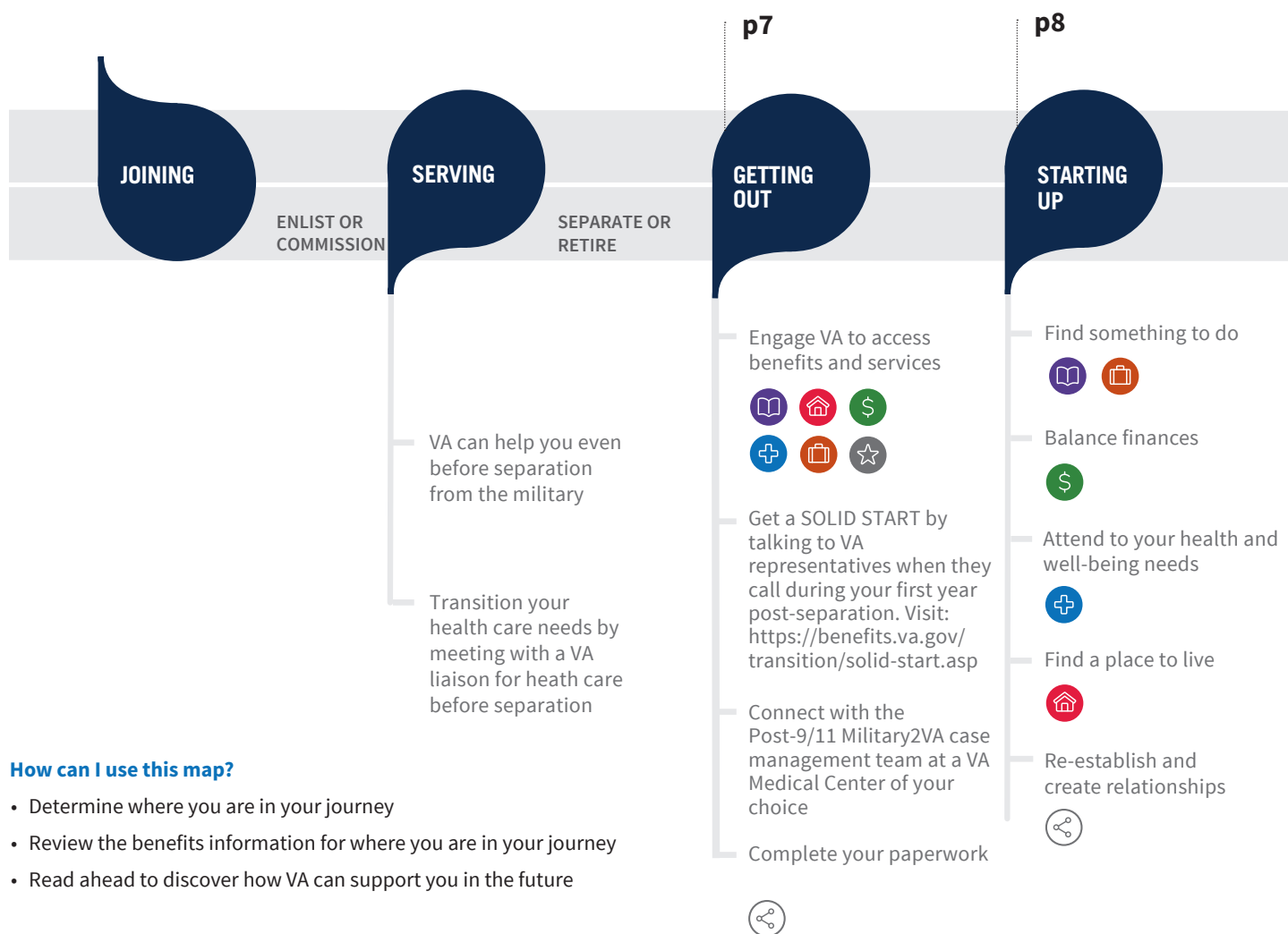
WHERE CAN YOU GET IN-PERSON HELP?

You can receive help preparing your claim from a Veterans Service Organization (VSO). To find a VSO, visit <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation> and search by state or zip code. You can also get help in-person at a VA Regional Office.

Find out where VA fits into your life

No two Veterans are the same. You may experience many of these important life moments in a different order. **Based on where you are in your life, VA can serve you in different ways.** Use this map to explore how VA can support you both now and in the future.

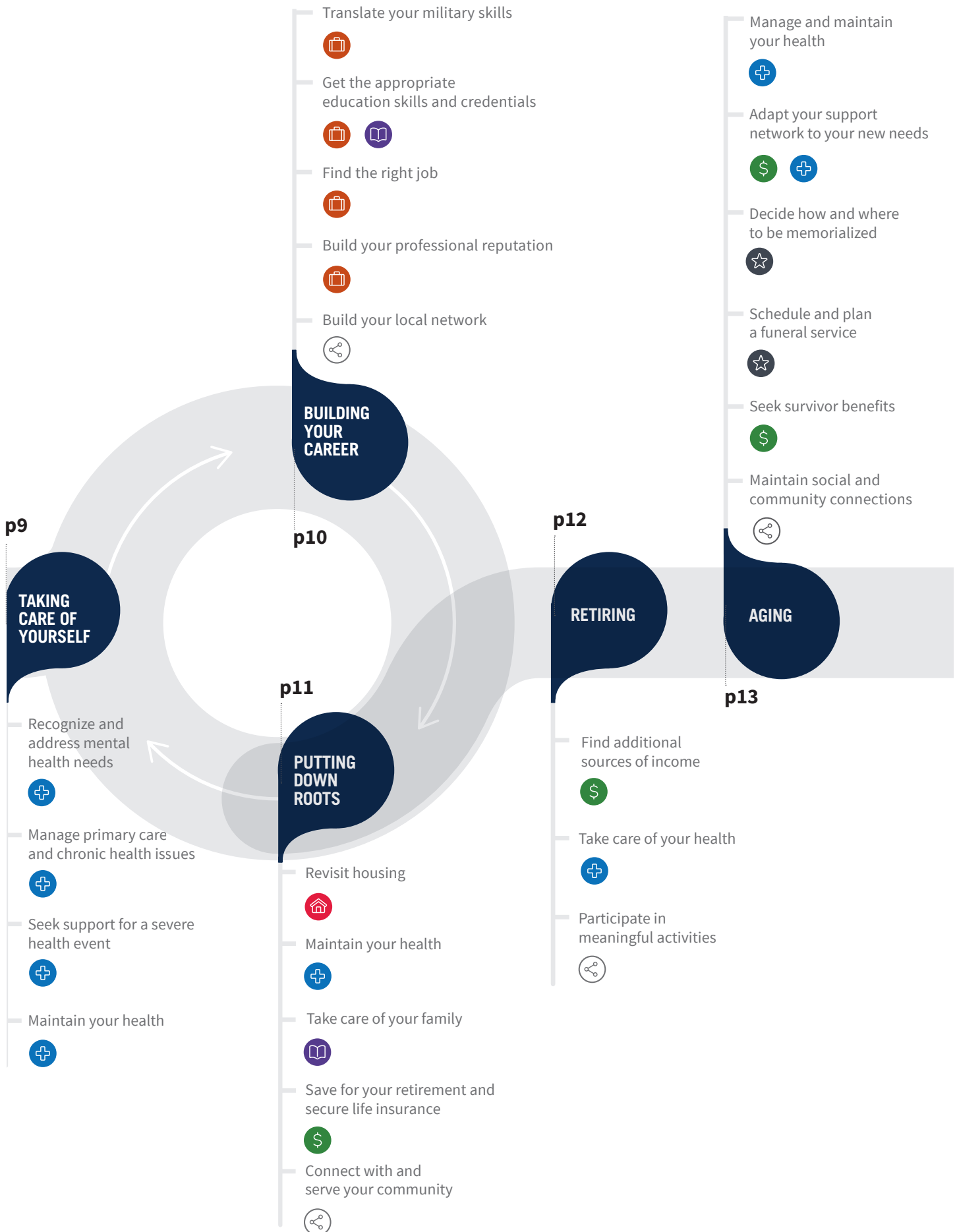
WHAT DO YOU NEED?



How can I use this map?

- Determine where you are in your journey
- Review the benefits information for where you are in your journey
- Read ahead to discover how VA can support you in the future

If you are interested in VA benefits, make sure to work with VA to determine your eligibility as soon as possible.



Some ways VA can help you while you're...

GETTING OUT

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Engage VA to access benefits and services	 Get a Solid Start	<i>VA is calling every newly separated Service member three times during their first year of separation. Qualified VA representatives will be reaching out to help you better understand the benefits available to you and help you get a solid start on your civilian life.</i>	Find out more: https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/solid-start.asp	Ask us a question: MyVA411: 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)	Locate facilities: https://www.va.gov/find-locations
	 Transition your health care	Post-9/11 Transition and Case Management <i>VA liaisons for health care and Post-9/11 Military2VA case management teams will help transitioning Service members and Post-9/11 era Veterans access VA health care, services and resources</i>	https://www.oefoif.va.gov/caremanagement.asp	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Transition and Care Team Locator: https://www.oefoif.va.gov/map.asp
	 Apply for enrollment in VA health care	VA Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient health services at VA Medical Centers, clinics and potentially in the community</i>	https://www.va.gov/health-care	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 1)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Continue your education	GI Bill <i>Helps pay for education for Veterans or their dependents</i>	https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits	Education Center: 888-442-4551 From Overseas: 001-918-781-5678	Your VA Regional Office
	 Obtain educational and career counseling	Personalized Career Planning and Guidance <i>Receive personalized, professional planning and guidance to help you choose how to use your education benefits to support your career goals</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
	 Prepare to find a job	Careers and Employment <i>Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 10% or more may receive individualized support for their education, training or credentialing needs for employment</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office for Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
	 Become a homeowner	VA Home Loans <i>VA can help you obtain a VA guaranteed loan</i>	https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans	Regional Loan Center: 877-827-3702	Your VA Regional Loan Center
	 Apply for a disability rating	Disability Compensation <i>Compensation paid to Veterans for a disability related to service</i>	https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
	 Plan for your family's financial future	VA Life Insurance <i>Life insurance for Service members, Veterans and their families. Some benefits must be applied for shortly after separation.</i>	https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance	SGLI/VGLI: 800-419-1473 All Other VA Life Insurance: 800-669-8477	Your VA Regional Office
	 Apply for supplemental income	Veterans Pension <i>Supplemental income available to low-income wartime Veterans</i>	https://www.va.gov/pension	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Complete your paperwork	 Request your service records and discharge papers	<i>Request military records, such as your DD214</i>	https://www.va.gov	National Personnel Records Center: 314-801-0800	

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

 Health Care
  Finances
  Housing
  Employment
  Education
  Memorialization
  More Support

Some ways VA can help you while you're...

STARTING UP

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Find something to do	 Continue your education	GI Bill <i>Helps pay for education for Veterans or their dependents</i>	https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits	Education Center: 888-442-4551 From Overseas: 001-918-781-5678	Your VA Regional Office
	 Obtain educational and career counseling	Personalized Career Planning and Guidance <i>Receive personalized, professional planning and guidance to help you choose how to use your education benefits to support your career goals</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
	 Get help finding a job	Careers and Employment <i>Veterans with service-connected disabilities receive individualized support for their education, training or credentialing needs for employment</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office for Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
Balance your finances	 Apply for a disability rating	Disability Compensation <i>Compensation paid to Veterans for a disability related to service</i>	https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Attend to your health and well-being	 Apply for enrollment in VA health care	VA Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient health services at VA Medical Centers, clinics and potentially in the community</i>	https://www.va.gov/health-care	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 1)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Seek help for mental health needs	Mental Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient mental health services</i>	https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/MENTALHEALTH/get-help	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center
Find a place to live	 Become a homeowner	VA Home Loans <i>Home loan benefits for Veterans</i>	https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans	Regional Loan Center: 877-827-3702	Your VA Regional Loan Center
	 Housing grants for certain disabled Veterans	Specially Adapted Housing Assistance <i>Grant funding to help certain disabled Veterans obtain or adapt their home to suit their unique needs and enhance their ability to live independently</i>	https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/#get-veterans-housing-assistance-grants	Regional Loan Center: 877-827-3702	Your VA Regional Loan Center
Re-establish and create relationships	 Meet Veterans and people who can help	Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) <i>Variety of services and community opportunities for Veterans and their loved ones</i>	Find a VSO near you at: https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation		

Some ways VA can help you while you're...

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Recognize and address mental health needs	 Address mental health needs	Mental Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient mental health services</i>	https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/MENTALHEALTH/get-help/index.asp	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center
	 Use counseling services	Vet Center <i>Counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible Service members, Veterans and their families</i>	https://www.vetcenter.va.gov	Vet Center Line: 877-927-8387	Your local Vet Center
	 Maintain your health and well-being	Well-Being Services <i>Maintain your whole health and well-being by participating in self-care, peer-led groups and other well-being services, such as Yoga, Tai Chi, Mindfulness, Acupuncture</i>	https://www.va.gov/wholehealth	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
Manage primary care and chronic health issues	 Get regular medical care	VA Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient health services at VA Medical Centers, clinics and potentially in the community</i>	https://www.va.gov/health-care	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Potentially visit a doctor in your community	Community Care <i>Access to non-VA health care when eligible</i>	https://www.va.gov/communitycare	Community Care National Contact Center: 877-881-7618	Your local VA Medical Center
Seek support for a severe health event	 Get help with an urgent medical need	Urgent Care <i>Urgent care at VA and potentially in the community for minor illnesses or injuries (examples: strep throat, pink eye, ankle pain)</i>	https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Urgent_Care.asp	MyVA411 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)	Your local VA Medical Center with an Urgent Care
	 Get help in an emergency	Emergency Care <i>Emergency care at VA or in the community (examples: chest pain, stroke symptoms, severe burns)</i>	https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Emergency_Care.asp	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
Maintain your health	 Get regular check-ups	Preventive Care <i>Services such as vaccinations and health screenings to help you stay healthy</i>	https://www.prevention.va.gov	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Get woman specific care	Women Veterans Health Care <i>Women-specific health care</i>	https://www.womenshealth.va.gov	Women's Veterans Care Center: 855-829-6636	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Keep track of your health	My HealtheVet <i>Online tool to make health decisions and manage care</i>	https://www.myhealth.va.gov	My HealtheVet Help Desk: 877-327-0022	Your local VA Medical Center

Some ways VA can help you while you're...

BUILDING YOUR CAREER

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Translate your military skills	 Put your military skills to use	Careers and Employment <i>Receive personalized, professional planning and guidance to help you choose how to use your education benefits to support your career goals</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment	Ask us a question: MyVA411: 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)	Your VA Regional Office
Get the appropriate education, skills, and credentials	 Continue your education	GI Bill <i>Helps pay for education for Veterans or their dependents</i>	https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits	Education Center: 888-442-4551 From Overseas: 001-918-781-5678	Your VA Regional Office
	 Obtain educational and career counseling	Personalized Career Planning and Guidance <i>Receive personalized, professional planning and guidance to help you choose how to use your education benefits to support your career goals</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
	 Get help finding a job that suits your disability	Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) <i>Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 10% or more may receive individualized support for their education, training or credentialing needs for employment</i>	https://www.va.gov/vre	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Find the right job	 Explore your job options	Careers and Employment <i>Personalized career planning, guidance and hiring events</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
	 Consider working for the federal government	Veterans' Preference <i>Gives Veterans an advantage in the application process for Federal government jobs</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Build your professional reputation	 Compete for federal contracts	Veteran-Owned Small Business Program (VOSB) <i>Helps Veteran-owned small businesses compete for Federal contracts set aside for VOSBs</i>	https://www.va.gov/osdbu	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization: 866-584-2344 (press 1)	Meet with a Verification Assistance Counselor in your area
Build your local network	 Connect with other Veterans	Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) <i>Variety of services and community opportunities for Veterans and their loved ones</i>	Find a VSO near you at: https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation		

Some ways VA can help you while you're...

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Revisit housing	 Become a homeowner	VA Home Loans <i>Home loan benefits for Veterans</i>	https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans	Regional Loan Center: 877-827-3702	Your VA Regional Loan Center
	 Refinance existing home loans	VA Refinance Loans <i>Benefits that allow for refinancing of an existing home loan</i>	https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans	Regional Loan Center: 877-827-3702	Your VA Regional Loan Center
Maintain your health	 Address mental health needs	Mental Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient mental health services</i>	https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/MENTALHEALTH/get-help/index.asp	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center
	 Improve your well-being	Well-Being Services <i>Maintain your whole health and well-being by participating in self-care, peer-led groups and other well-being services such as Yoga, Tai Chi, Mindfulness, Acupuncture.</i>	https://www.va.gov/wholehealth	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center
Take care of your family	 Assistance with social work needs	Social Work <i>Helps with housing, income, social and emotional needs</i>	https://www.socialwork.va.gov	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Apply for VA educational benefit	GI Bill <i>Helps pay for education for Veterans or their dependents</i>	https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits	Education Center: 888-442-4551 From Overseas: 001-918-781-5678	Your VA Regional Office
	 Obtain educational and career counseling	Personalized Career Planning and Guidance <i>Receive personalized, professional planning and guidance to help you choose how to use your education benefits to support your career goals</i>	https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Save for your retirement	 Apply for supplemental income	Veterans Pension <i>Supplemental income available to low-income wartime Veterans</i>	https://www.va.gov/pension	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Connect with and serve your community	 Meet and serve fellow Veterans	Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) <i>Variety of services and community opportunities for Veterans and their loved ones</i>	Find a VSO near you at: https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation		

Some ways VA can help you while you're...

RETIRING

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Receive income for disabilities	 Apply for a disability rating	Disability Compensation <i>Compensation paid to Veterans for a disability related to service</i>	https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Assess need for life insurance	 Apply for VA insurance coverage	VA Life Insurance <i>Offers financial security for Service members, their spouses and dependent children, as well as Veterans</i>	https://www.va.gov/life-insurance	SGLI/VGLI: 800-419-1473 All Other VA Life Insurance: 800-669-8477	Your VA Regional Office
Take care of your health	 Get regular medical care	VA Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient health services at VA Medical Centers, clinics and potentially in the community</i>	https://www.va.gov/health-care	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Address hearing needs	Audiology <i>Care for hearing aids and other hearing assistive devices for Veterans</i>	https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/Hearing_Aids.asp	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Address vision needs	Optometry and Blind Rehabilitation <i>Rehabilitation services for blind and low-vision Veterans</i>	https://www.va.gov/optometry or https://www.rehab.va.gov/blindrehab	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center or Blind Rehabilitation Center
Participate in meaningful activities	 Volunteer in your community	Veterans Service Organizations <i>Variety of services and community opportunities for Veterans and their loved ones</i>	Find a VSO near you at: https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation		

Some ways VA can help you while you're...

AGING

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?	WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	VISIT US IN PERSON
Update your life insurance benefit	 Make sure you have updated your beneficiaries	VA Life Insurance <i>Offers financial security for Service members, Veterans, and their dependent children</i>	https://www.va.gov/life-insurance	SGLI/VGLI: 800-419-1473 All Other VA Life Insurance: 800-669-8477	Your VA Regional Office
Manage and maintain your health	 Get regular medical care	VA Health Care <i>Inpatient and outpatient health services at VA Medical Centers, clinics, and potentially in the community</i>	https://www.va.gov/health-care	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Seek long-term care for later in life	Geriatric and Extended Care <i>Veterans who need care and are unable to remain in their home may be eligible for hospice care or nursing home care</i>	https://www.va.gov/geriatrics	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Seek assistance with advance directives	Social Work <i>Assists with advance directives so you can decide what actions should be taken if you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself due to illness or incapacity</i>	https://www.socialwork.va.gov	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
Adapt support network to your new needs	 Seek in-home support	Home and Community Based Services <i>At-home support services are available to assist Veterans with remaining at home, such as skilled home care, homemaker, home health aide, adult day care and more</i>	https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/Home_and_Community_Based_Services.asp	Health Care Line: 877-222-8387 (press 0)	Your local VA Medical Center
	 Get financial support for daily medical assistance	Aid and Attendance and Housebound Benefit <i>Payments for Veterans who are receiving VA pension and are housebound or require the aid of another person in daily life</i>	https://www.va.gov/pension/aid-attendance-housebound	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Make burial arrangements	 Decide how and where to be memorialized	Burial Benefits <i>Apply for pre-need determination eligibility Schedule and plan funeral and burial arrangements</i>	https://www.cem.va.gov https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-10007.pdf	NCA Scheduling Office: 800-535-1117 nca.scheduling@va.gov	Your nearest VA National Cemetery
Finance your burial	 Get financial assistance for burial services	Burial Allowance <i>Financial assistance for funeral and burial services</i>	https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Seek survivor benefit	 Talk about the future with loved ones	Survivor's Benefit <i>Various benefits available to the survivors of a deceased Veteran</i>	https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits	VA Benefits Line: 800-827-1000	Your VA Regional Office
Maintain social and community connections	 Engage with fellow Veterans and people who can help	Veterans Service Organization (VSO) <i>Variety of services and community opportunities for Veterans and their loved ones</i>	Find a VSO near you at: https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation		

Get started today

Use the checklist below to get started accessing the VA benefits and services you deserve.

1

RESEARCH

- ☐ Identify VA services that can meet your goals
- ☐ **Prioritize time-sensitive benefits**
- ☐ **Identify which benefits and services you and your loved ones may be eligible for:**
 - **Visit** <https://www.va.gov>
 - **Call** 800-MyVA411 at 800-698-2411 to speak with a VA representative
 - **Talk** with a Veterans Service Organization (VSO)

2

PREPARE

- ☐ Prioritize which benefits you want to pursue **now**
- ☐ Consider applying for a disability rating
 - **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim> to learn more
- ☐ Get a copy of your **discharge papers**
- ☐ Collect other information as necessary, which may include:
 - ☐ **Military personnel records**
 - ☐ **Orders** (if activated from the Guard or Reserves)
 - ☐ **Military and private medical records**
 - ☐ Your most recent **tax return**

3

APPLY

- ☐ Complete the form for the service you want to apply for:
 - **Online** at <https://www.va.gov>
 - **In-person** or by **mail** to your VA Regional Office (<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>)

4

REVISIT

- ☐ Check back over time as your needs change. For example, you may:
 - ☐ **Apply for a higher disability rating** if your disability gets worse
 - ☐ **Apply for a VA Pension** when you are 65 or receiving home care
 - ☐ **Decide where and how to be memorialized** using burial benefit

WHICH BENEFITS ARE TIME SENSITIVE?

- **Dental Care**
(180 days post-separation for certain dental care)
- **Life Insurance**
(240 days from date of separation to apply for Veteran's Group Life Insurance (VGLI) without proof of good health)
(1 year and 120 days from separation to apply for VGLI with proof of good health)
(2 years from date of separation to apply for Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) Disability Extension (2 years from date of notification for a new service-connected condition for VA Life Insurance for those who are eligible (VALife))
(Before age 70 for Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI))
- **Enrollment in VA health care for recent combat Veterans**
(10 years post-separation)
- **Montgomery GI Bill**
(10 years post-separation)
- **Post-9/11 GI Bill (Forever GI Bill)**
(15 years post-separation if last discharged prior to January 1, 2013. Forever GI Bill now means that qualifying Veterans discharged after that date have lifetime benefits for their Post-9/11 GI Bill)
- **Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E)**
(12 years since receiving your disability rating post-separation, though there are exceptions. If you are interested in VR&E, make sure to work with VA to determine your eligibility as soon as possible)
- **Gulf War era and Post-9/11 Veteran eligibility** (Visit <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits> to view updates to your VA benefits due to the PACT Act)

WHAT DOES A VSO DO?

Representatives from VSOs may offer free help to Veterans applying for VA benefits. Go to <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation> for more information

WHAT ARE DISCHARGE PAPERS?

Your discharge papers—also known as your **DD214 member-4**—are the most important documents to keep. They are necessary to get access to VA benefits. Request yours at <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records>

Get help right now

Contact the resources below to get immediate help for yourself or a friend. These resources are designed to support Veterans during difficult times.

WHAT SERVICES CAN VA PROVIDE?	VISIT US ONLINE	GIVE US A CALL	WHERE CAN I FIND IN-PERSON HELP?
Veterans Crisis Line	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net (click "chat online")	988 (press 1) text 838255 24 hours a day / 7 days a week	To locate your nearest VA Medical Center and other VA facilities, visit https://www.va.gov/find-locations
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org (click "Chat with Lifeline")	988 (press 1) 24 hours a day / 7 days a week	HEAR FROM OTHER VETERANS To hear stories from Veterans who sought help, visit https://maketheconnection.net
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat (click "Chat online")	988 (press 1) text 838255 24 hours a day / 7 days a week	Don't wait, reach out. Visit https://www.va.gov/REACH
Women Veterans Call Center	https://www.womenshealth.va.gov (click "Chat with the Women Veterans Call Center")	Call or Text 855-VA-WOMEN 855-829-6636 M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST Sat, 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. EST	
Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program <i>Coordinators can assist Veterans and intimate partners who seek safe, healthy relationships.</i>	https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV	National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)	
VA Caregiver Support Line	https://www.caregiver.va.gov	855-260-3274 M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST Sat., 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST	

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SERVING YOU.

Can't find what you need?

To access a complete list of VA benefits and services:

VISIT US ONLINE

<https://www.va.gov>

GIVE US A CALL

800-MyVA411: 800-698-2411

VISIT US IN PERSON

Visit your local VA Medical Center or VA Regional Office

ONLINE GUIDE

<https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit>

VA WELCOME KIT FEEDBACK

VAWelcomeKit@va.gov

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Apply for VA Health Care



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

ChooseVA

This guide will help you apply for VA health care, which includes regular checkups, prescriptions, and access to specialists, such as cardiologists, gynecologists, and mental health providers.

A checklist to help you apply for VA health care:

1

PREPARATION

- ☐ Collect the following information:
 - ☐ **Discharge papers (DD214)**
 - ☐ Your most recent **tax return**
 - ☐ **Social security numbers** for yourself and your dependents
 - ☐ **Account numbers** for insurance programs you are enrolled in
 - ☐ Your **VA Disability Rating Decision** (if applicable)

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

Visit <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records> to request a copy of your DD214.

2

APPLICATION

- ☐ **Apply** by completing the health care application form (VA Form 10-10EZ) in one of these ways:
 - Visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application>
 - Give us a **call** at 877-222-8387 (press 1); M–F, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST
 - Visit us **in-person** at a VA Medical Center
 - Print out and **mail** the completed form to the Health Eligibility Center (2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30329)

HOW WILL I FIND OUT ABOUT VA'S DECISION?

If enrolled and registered, you'll receive a phone call from VA and a personalized benefits handbook in the mail. **If denied**, you'll receive a letter indicating the reason.

3

REVIEW AND DECISION

- ☐ **Call** 877-222-8387 (press 0) if you haven't heard back from VA more than one week after you've submitted your application

WHAT ARE PRIORITY GROUPS?

During enrollment, each Veteran is assigned to one of eight priority groups based on different factors. Your priority group may affect your co-payment responsibilities (if any) you will need to pay for those services.

For more information, visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/priority-groups>.

4

NEXT STEPS

If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:

- ☐ **Review priority group assignment** and personalized benefits handbook mailed by VA
- ☐ Contact your local VA Medical Center to **set up an appointment**
- ☐ Make an appointment to obtain your **Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC)**

WHAT IS A VHIC?

A **VHIC** is a secured photo ID used to check-in for VA medical appointments. When you're enrolled in VA health care, you can get a VHIC by making an appointment with your local VA Medical Center.

Information you'll need to know to access VA health care:

Am I eligible for VA health care?

Eligibility for VA health care depends on a number of factors, such as whether:

- VA has rated you for a service-connected disability
- You received a Purple Heart or are a former Prisoner of War
- You are a combat Veteran who separated within the last ten years
- You are eligible for Medicaid benefits
- Your family income is below the income threshold
- You served in Vietnam, Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, or Camp Lejeune during certain periods of time
- You were exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances during service in certain locations and periods of time

Note: Not all Veterans are eligible for VA health care. Work with VA to determine your eligibility as soon as possible.

What does it mean to be assigned to a priority group?

If you are eligible to enroll in VA health care, you will be assigned to a priority group based on your eligibility. **Your priority group may affect your copayment responsibilities (if any).**

How do I schedule my first appointment?

- **On your health care application**, you can ask VA to call you to schedule your first appointment
- **Call** your local VA Medical Center to schedule an appointment

What if I live far away or can't get an appointment?

VA provides health care for Veterans from providers in your local community outside of VA. Veterans may be eligible to receive care from a community provider when VA cannot provide the care needed. This care is provided on behalf of, and paid for by, VA. Community care is available to Veterans based on their specific health care needs or circumstances, and if they meet specific eligibility criteria. Community care must generally be authorized by VA before a Veteran can receive care from a community provider.

- **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/communitycare> to learn more

Will I be covered for emergency care?

The most important thing in an emergency is to get to the nearest hospital or emergency department. If this is a VA hospital, you may be covered under your priority group eligibility. If this is a non-VA emergency care provider, VA can only pay the cost of care **under certain circumstances**.

- After receiving emergency care at a non-VA facility, **call** VA immediately at 844-724-7842 to understand what VA may cover.

Where is my nearest VA Medical Center?

- To locate **your nearest VA facility**, visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>
- Visit https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Emergency_Care.asp to find out more about VA coverage for emergency care provided at non-VA facilities.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

What are my health care options for myself and my family?

VA health care is one of many health care options Veterans may have, which may also include TRICARE, Medicare/Medicaid, and private insurance plans. In most cases, **family members and dependents are not eligible for VA health care**. It's important to figure out which option is best for you.

VA health care constitutes minimum essential coverage under the Affordable Care Act. However, Veterans enrolled in VA health care are not eligible for premium tax credits.

→ **Visit** <https://www.healthcare.gov/veterans> to learn more

How does VA support recent combat Veterans?

Combat Veterans **can get ten years of VA health care** without certain copayment requirements following separation and thereafter remain eligible for VA health care as long as they enroll within ten years of separation.

How does VA support Military Sexual Trauma (MST) survivors?

VA provides free treatment for any physical or mental health conditions related to experiences of sexual assault or sexual harassment during military service. You may be able to receive MST-related care even if you are not eligible for other VA care. For more information, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mst.

What services are included in VA health care?

- Preventive care (check-ups)
- Outpatient care (mental health care and substance abuse counseling)
- Inpatient care (surgery)
- Medications and supplies
- Well-being services (peer groups, complementary and integrative classes such as acupuncture, yoga)



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Get started with Mental Health Services

This guide will help you access mental health services, which may include treatment and support for mental health problems like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the effects of military sexual trauma (MST), depression, grief, substance use problems, and anxiety-related conditions.

I need help now.

Call, text, or chat online with our caring, qualified responders at the Veterans Crisis Line. Many of the responders are Veterans themselves. The confidential line is **open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**.

- **Call** 988, press 1
- **Text** a message to 838255
- **Online** <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>, click “chat”

For emergency mental health care, you can also **go directly to your local VA Medical Center**—regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.

I’m not in crisis, I’m just having problems sleeping, controlling my anger, or readjusting to civilian life.

You are not alone. Over 1.7 million Veterans received mental health care at VA last year. Mental health professionals at VA specialize in the mental health needs of Veterans. Services range from peer support with other Veterans to counseling with a mental health professional to medication. You may be eligible for these services from VA or VA may be able to connect you with mental health resources in your community.

- **Online** <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/gethelp.asp>

Am I eligible for VA mental health care?

Most Veterans can access VA mental health care services, but costs may vary. Here are some common scenarios:

I separated recently from uniformed service with an honorable discharge.

- All Veterans can access emergency VA mental health care. Call or visit your local VA Medical Center to determine your eligibility for non-emergency VA mental health care. Many programs and services do not require a payment. When payment is required, cost depends on many factors.
- You are automatically eligible for Vet Center services at no cost, regardless of date of service or need to enroll in VA health care.

I am a recently separated combat Veteran with an honorable discharge.

- You may be eligible to enroll in VA health care and receive care for conditions related to your combat service at no cost for ten years after your date of discharge.

I separated from uniformed service many years ago.

- All Veterans can access emergency VA mental health care. Call or visit your local VA Medical Center to determine your eligibility for non-emergency VA mental health care. Many programs and services do not require a payment. When payment is required, cost depends on many factors.

I am a current or former member of the National Guard or Reserves.

- You may be eligible for VA mental health care or Vet Center services.

If you have any questions, please give us a call at 877-222-VETS (877-222-8387).

HOW DO I SCHEDULE MY FIRST APPOINTMENT?

If you are already enrolled in VA health care, **call or visit your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center**.

- Find locations and phone numbers **online** <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

Depending on what best meets your needs, you will receive a face-to-face visit with a clinician, a phone or video call with a nurse, or a prescription filled the **same day**. If you are not already signed up for VA health care, **call us** or visit your local VA medical facility to find out what services may be available to you.

- 877-222-VETS
877-222-8387
M–F, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

VA considers a combination of your **disability rating, service history, medical need, and income level** when determining how much you may have to pay for services.

Please don’t let the possibility of paying “out-of-pocket” stop you from getting mental health care.

What if I have an Other-than-Honorable (OTH) or “bad paper” discharge?

You may receive emergency VA mental health care. You may also be eligible for non-emergency VA mental health care. Call or visit your local VA medical facility to find out what services may be available to you.

Do I have to be enrolled in VA health care to access VA mental health services?

No. There are some VA mental health services you can access without being enrolled in VA health care. For example, regardless of disability claim or enrollment status, community-based Vet Centers offer confidential individual and group counseling for eligible Veterans, Service members and their families at no cost. Vet Centers also provide counseling for survivors of MST, and their families, regardless of when or where you served and may provide other services, such as:

- Readjustment counseling
- VA benefits assistance
- Bereavement (grief) counseling
- Employment counseling
- Substance abuse assessment and referral

→ **Call** 877-WAR-VETS (877-927-8387), confidential and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

→ **Find** a Vet Center at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

If you do enroll in VA health care, you will have access to VA’s full range of health care services. Even if you do not enroll, you may be eligible for other VA **benefits**, such as housing, employment, job training, and education—all of which can affect mental health. We encourage all Veterans to contact us so we can determine how to best support you.

Will using mental health services at VA put my career at risk?

Medical records are protected by privacy laws. A mental health diagnosis or seeking mental health care does not automatically jeopardize work-related credentials, such as security clearances. Generally, employers recognize that healthy employees who get the help they need are more productive and effective in their jobs.

Am I able to see a mental health provider outside of VA?

VA provides health care for Veterans from providers in your local community outside of VA. Veterans may be eligible to receive care from a community provider when VA cannot provide the care needed. This care is provided on behalf of and paid for by VA. Community care is available to Veterans based on their specific health care needs or circumstances, and if they meet specific eligibility criteria. Community care must generally be authorized by VA before a Veteran can receive care from a community provider.

→ **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/communitycare> to learn more

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

It can be difficult for me to visit VA facilities. Are there services I can access online?

VA Video Connect is a telehealth service where you can talk to a VA mental health provider on a mobile device, a computer in your home, or at a local VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). VA can provide the necessary equipment if you don’t already have it. Ask any of your VA health care providers for help connecting you with the VA Video Connect Telehealth program.

What other options do I have?

Make the Connection is an online resource where you can hear stories from other Veterans who sought help with mental health challenges.

→ **Online** <https://maketheconnection.net>

Military OneSource provides many resources for active duty Service members, Veterans (up to one year after separation), and their immediate family members.

→ **Call** 800-342-9647

→ **Online** <https://www.militaryonesource.mil>

What if I lost my housing or am in danger of losing it?

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans can help.

→ **Call** 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838)

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

Are there VA mental health resources for families and caregivers of Veterans?

Caregiver Support Program Teams include social workers and nurses with extensive knowledge of VA benefits and services. They can help you connect with the resources you need.

→ **Call** the Caregiver Support Line

855-260-3274, M-F

8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST,

Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST

→ **Online** <https://www.caregiver.va.gov>

→ **Find** a Caregiver Support Coordinator in-person at a VA Medical Center

Understanding Community Care



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This guide will help you understand the process for receiving care from a local provider in your community.

Am I eligible to see a community care provider?

You may be eligible to see a community care provider if you meet one of these six eligibility criteria:

- 1. Service Unavailable** – You need a service that is not available at VA (maternity care, in vitro fertilization)
- 2. Facility Unavailable** – You reside in a U.S. state or territory without a full-service VA medical facility
- 3. Grandfathered Choice** – You were eligible for community care under the Veterans Choice Program distance criteria
- 4. Medical Interest** – Your VA provider determines it is in your best medical interest to be referred to a community provider
- 5. Quality Standards** – You need care from a VA medical service that VA determines is not providing care that complies with VA's quality standards
- 6. Access Standards** – You meet the access standards for average drive time or wait time for a VA appointment

What are the drive time access standards?

You may be eligible to see a community provider if your average drive time from home to a VA medical facility that provides the service you need takes more than:

- 30 minutes travel time to receive primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services (including adult home day care)
- 60 minutes travel time to receive specialty care services

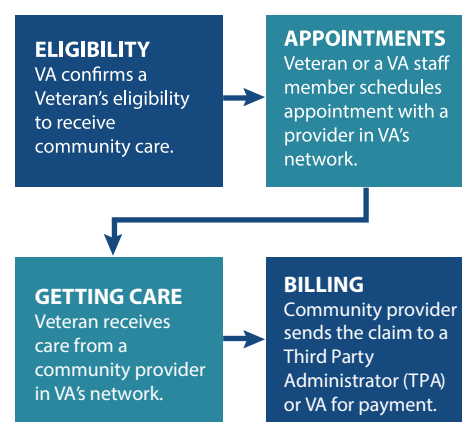
What are the wait time access standards?

You may be eligible if the wait time for an appointment at a VA medical facility that provides the service you need exceeds:

- 20 days for primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services
- 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exceptions



COMMUNITY CARE PROCESS OVERVIEW



ACCESS STANDARD	Primary Care, Mental Health, Non-Institutional Extended Care	Specialty Care
Drive Time	30 minutes	60 minutes
Wait Time	20 days	28 days

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Do I need to meet all six criteria to be eligible for community care?

No. Meeting any one of the six eligibility criteria can result in your referral to a community provider.

Does VA need to officially authorize the care I receive through a community provider?

Yes, usually. Regardless of which eligibility criterion you meet, community care must generally be authorized in advance by VA before you can make an appointment with, and receive care from, a community provider.

Can I go to any community provider I want?

If you're eligible for community care, you will be able to receive care from a community provider member in VA's network. To locate these approved community providers, please visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>.

What is the process for getting prescription medication?

You can receive a 14-day or less supply of your prescription from a pharmacy in your community. However, prescriptions for longer than 14 days must be filled by VA.

Do I have to pay a copayment for community care?

Copayment charges work the same way with community care as they do if you receive care at a VA medical facility. Usually, this means you will be charged a copayment for nonservice-connected conditions. Copayment charges and payments are made through VA, not through your community provider.

Do I have to pay a copayment for urgent care?

Copayments for urgent care depend on your assigned Veteran priority group and the number of urgent care visits per calendar year. Copayments are not paid out-of-pocket at the time you visit an urgent care provider. After the visit, VA will bill copayments separately. For more information, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/health-care/copay-rates>.

Does VA pay beneficiary travel expenses if I am referred to a community provider?

If you are eligible for beneficiary travel, your eligibility does not change. Beneficiary travel is paid the same way whether the care is provided at a VA medical facility or through a community provider.

When would it be in my best medical interest to receive community care?

Your VA provider will discuss with you what is in your best medical interest. Possible reasons include the nature of care you need, the frequency of the care, or if you need an attendant.

Who schedules my community care appointments?

There are several ways you **may** be able to schedule a community care appointment. Make sure VA has officially authorized you to receive community care (through a referral) before scheduling the appointment. Depending on the circumstances, you may be able to:

- Directly schedule an appointment yourself and inform a VA staff member about the appointment
- Use VA online scheduling to request an appointment for certain types of routine services
- Have a VA staff member schedule the appointment
- Have a VA Third Party Administrator (TPA) schedule the appointment

Can I still see a VA provider even if I am eligible for community care?

Yes, and you have the choice to have your primary or specialty care continue at VA, even when you are receiving care from a community provider.

How do I get help with adverse credit reporting and debt collection issues that might arise from using community care?

Call 866-400-1238 for assistance.

Accessing Urgent Care



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This guide will help you understand how to access urgent care services from a provider in VA's contracted network.

Choose **VA**

What is the urgent care benefit?

VA offers eligible Veterans an urgent care benefit for the treatment of minor injuries and illnesses at retail and urgent care providers who are part of VA's contracted network. **The urgent care benefit is offered to Veterans in addition to urgent care and same-day services VA provides through its medical facilities.**

What type of care do urgent care providers provide?

Urgent care providers treat injuries and illnesses that require immediate attention but are not life-threatening, such as the common cold, minor burns and skin infections.

Am I eligible for urgent care?

To be eligible for the urgent care benefit, you must (1) be enrolled in the VA health care system, AND (2) have received care through VA, from either a VA or a community provider within the last 24 months.

How do I access urgent care?

Use VA's facility locator at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>. Under Facility type, select "Urgent care" and then "In-network community urgent care" from the service type drop-down menu. You can also call your local VA medical facility to find an in-network urgent care provider.

What do I do when I arrive?

Tell the urgent care provider you would like to use your VA urgent care benefit and confirm that they are part of VA's network. They will confirm your eligibility for the benefit. If there is an issue verifying your eligibility or if you have any other issue at an urgent care location in AK, AS, AZ, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, MP, MT, NM, NV, OR, TX, UT, WA, and WY, call **866-620-2071**. In DC, PR, VI, and all other states, call **888-901-6609**.

HOW DO I CONFIRM I AM ELIGIBLE?

To check eligibility, call 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411) or contact your local medical facility.

HOW CAN I CONFIRM THAT THE PROVIDER IS IN VA'S NETWORK?

You can determine if a provider is in-network by using the VA's facility locator at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>. For telephone assistance finding locations, call 877-881-7618 (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST).

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

If you believe your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

You do **NOT** have an insurance card for this benefit.

Do **NOT** pay a copayment at the time of visit if you are eligible for this benefit. VA will bill you separately for any applicable copayment.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Will I have to pay any fees or copayments out-of-pocket?

You may be charged a copayment that is different from other VA medical copayments. Urgent care copayments depend on your assigned priority group and the number of times you visit an urgent care provider in a calendar year.

Priority Group	Copayment Amount (per calendar year)
1 – 5	• First three (3) visits: \$0 • Fourth and > visits: \$30
6	• If related to a condition covered by a special authority: ▪ First three (3) visits: \$0 ▪ Fourth and > visits: \$30 • If not related to a condition covered by a special authority: ▪ \$30 per visit
7 – 8	• \$30 per visit
1 – 8	• \$0 copay for a visit consisting of only a flu shot

There is no limit on the number of times you can access urgent care.

Copayments are NOT paid out-of-pocket at the time you receive care. They are billed separately by VA.

Can I use urgent care as a replacement for my primary care needs?

No. Urgent care is not a replacement for preventive health care or management of chronic or complex health conditions. You should work with your primary care provider for this type of care. **If you go to an urgent care provider and receive non-covered services, you are responsible for the full cost of care.**

Is urgent care prescription medication covered by VA?

VA will pay for or fill prescriptions resulting from your urgent care visit.

Urgent care prescriptions for medication longer than a 14-day supply must be sent to VA to be filled.

You can fill a 14-day supply of medication written by an urgent care provider at a contracted pharmacy within the VA network, a non-contracted pharmacy that is not part of the VA network, or directly at a VA pharmacy. Opiates are limited to seven days or fewer, consistent with state law that applies to the pharmacy location.

If a non-contracted pharmacy is used, you must pay for the prescription and then file a claim for reimbursement with your local VA medical facility.

Do I have to pay a copayment for urgent care prescription medication?

You may be required to pay a copayment for medication. The copayment will be billed separately to you by VA as a part of VA's normal billing process.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What services are covered?

Find a list of services at:

https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Urgent_Care

How do I find an in-network pharmacy or VA medical facility?

Visit VA's facility locator at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

Does VA reimburse beneficiary travel for an urgent care visit?

VA reimburses beneficiary travel for eligible Veterans that must travel to receive community care. Payment is made for the distance to either the nearest VA medical facility or community medical facility that could have provided the care or services.

What are special authorities?

Special authorities include those related to combat service and exposures, such as Agent Orange, service at Camp Lejeune, ionizing radiation, Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD/Project 112), Southwest Asian Conditions as well as military sexual trauma, and presumptions applicable to certain Veterans with psychosis and other mental illnesses.

Visit, <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures> for more information.



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Getting Started with Caregiver Support Program

This guide will help caregivers of Veterans access support at VA that may include caregiver education and training, mental health counseling, peer mentor support, access to health care benefits, monetary stipend and respite care.

Am I a “caregiver”?

Often, people do not identify themselves as caregivers. Most of us, at some point in our lives, will be in a caregiver role. Caregivers are daughters, wives, husbands, sons, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, partners and friends. Caregivers manage a wide range of responsibilities. **Here’s how you know if you are in a caregiver role.**

Do you:

- ☐ Make medical appointments or drive to the doctor and pharmacy to pick up prescriptions for a Veteran?
- ☐ Help a Veteran get dressed, take a shower, or take medicine?
- ☐ Help transfer a Veteran in and out of bed, or with physical therapy, injections, feeding tubes or other medical procedures at home?
- ☐ Talk with doctors, nurses, social workers, and others to understand what medical care or other benefits a Veteran might need?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you are a caregiver and may be eligible for caregiver services at VA. The Caregiver Support Program (CSP) provides services and support to Veterans and caregivers through two programs, the **Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)** and the **Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)**.

Who can help me determine which programs and services may be available to me and to the Veteran I care for?

Caregiver Support Program Teams include social workers, nurses, and psychologists with extensive knowledge of VA services and can help connect you to the resources you need. To find your CSP:

- **Call** the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274.
- **Visit us online** at <https://www.caregiver.va.gov>
- **Find** a CSP in-person at a local VA Medical Center
https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp

Program of General Caregiver Support Services

PGCSS is available to caregivers who provide personal care services to covered Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care. Caregivers in PGCSS have access to education and training, including courses at local VA medical centers. In addition, caregivers can receive support for the Veteran through VA home and community based care. No formal application is required for PGCSS. Contact your local CSP for assistance with accessing PGCSS benefits.

HOW DOES VA SUPPORT CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS?

The following programs and services may be available to Veterans and caregivers depending on service availability in that area and Veteran eligibility:

- VA Caregiver Support Line
- Peer Support Mentoring
- Monthly caregiver education groups by telephone
- Mental health services for caregivers
- Online workshop through Building Better Caregivers™
- In-home health care
- Help with daily tasks (like bathing, dressing) and rehab programs
- Comfort care and help with managing pain
- Adult day health care centers
- Telehealth
- Home care supplies and equipment
- Veteran clothing allowance
- Veteran home modification benefit

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILY AND CAREGIVER HEALTH SERVICES?

Download the VA PCAFC
Expansion Fact Sheet <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>

Download the PGCSS Fact Sheet
https://www.caregiver.va.gov/docs/PGCSS_Fact_Sheet.pdf

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) is for eligible Veterans who have incurred or aggravated a serious injury (or illness) in the line of duty, from any service era. This program provides resources, education, support, a financial stipend, and health insurance (if eligible), beneficiary travel (if eligible), to caregivers of eligible Veterans.

How do I apply for PCAFC?

- A Veteran who has a single or combined service-connected rating of 70% or more AND who is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on any one of the following: an inability to perform an activity of daily living; a need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury; or a need for regular or extensive instruction or supervision without which the ability of the Veteran to function in daily life would be seriously impaired.
- A Veteran who sustained or aggravated a serious injury (including serious illness) in the line of duty from any service era.

Your CSP team can provide you with more information.

PCAFC 10-STEP PROCESS

There is a 10-step application process for applying to PCAFC, which will result in an eligibility decision within 90 days of application receipt. For more information about applications, visit <https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/apply-for-caregiver-assistance-form-10-10cg/introduction>.

1. Application Submission – Veteran and caregiver applicant complete the application for PCAFC – VA Form 10-10CG. You may ask VA to help you fill out the form.
 2. Application Intake – A member of the local CSP Team conducts the application intake with the Veteran and each caregiver applicant.
- Note: If the Veteran and at least one caregiver applicant meet the specific eligibility requirements, the following steps will occur:
3. Veteran Assessment – A member of the local CSP Team conducts a clinical assessment with the Veteran.
 4. Veteran Functional Assessment – A CSP Clinical Assessor completes the functional assessment instrument with the Veteran.
 5. Caregiver Assessment – A local CSP Team conducts a clinical assessment with each family caregiver applicant.
 6. Initial Application Review – The CSP Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team (CEAT) conducts a review of the application. Steps 7 through 10 are followed only when the CEAT determines the Veteran and family caregivers meet the eligibility requirements reviewed by the CEAT.
 7. Caregiver Training – Each family caregiver applicant completes caregiver training.
 8. Home-Care Assessment – The CSP Clinical Assessor conducts the Home-Care Assessment with the Veteran and each family caregiver applicant.
 9. Final Application Review – The CSP CEAT determines initial eligibility. After caregiver training and the Home-Care Assessment are completed, the CSP CEAT determines final eligibility and the stipend level.
 10. Notification – A member of the CSP Team will call the Veteran and Family Caregiver applicant(s) to notify them of the determination, generally within 90 days of the application being received by VA. A letter notifying the applicants of VA's determination will also be mailed.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

How do I apply for the PCAFC?

You and the Veteran will need to apply together and participate in the application process to determine if you're eligible for PCAFC. You'll both need to sign and date the application and answer all questions regarding your role.

To apply:

Online at <https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/apply-for-caregiver-assistance-form-10-10cg/introduction>

By mail, fill out a joint application for the PCAFC (VA Form 10-10CG). Download the instructions and application at <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10CG.pdf>

Call the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274

In-Person, bring your completed VA Form 10-10CG to your local VA medical center's CSC. To find the name of your local coordinator, you can visit: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp

Note: Do not send medical records along with the application. VA will follow up after the application is received. If you need assistance with completing the application or would like to check the status of your 1010CG application, call 855-488-8440, option 3.

More information and Fact Sheets

- Caregivers PCAFC **Eligibility** Under the New Final Rule, visit https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/CSP_Eligibility_Criteria_Factsheet.pdf#
- Caregivers PCAFC **Application Process**, visit <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/ApplicationProcessFactsheet.pdf#>
- Caregivers PCAFC **Monthly Stipend** Under the New Final Rule, visit <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/Monthly-Caregiver-Stipend-Factsheet.pdf#>



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Getting Started with Vet Center Services

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers located in easily accessible neighborhoods near Service members, Veterans, survivors and their families. Vet Centers are located separate from VA organizational sites to ensure confidential counseling and reduce barriers to care.

What are Vet Centers?

There are 300 Vet Centers, 80+ Mobile Vet Centers (MVCs) and nearly 1,000 community access points across the country that provide a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services. Vet Centers are also located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam and American Samoa. Vet Centers help you and your family build meaningful connections and develop tools for achieving success in both your military and civilian lives.

What services do Vet Centers offer?

Vet Centers offer counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible Service members, Veterans and their families. Services include:

- Individual and group counseling for Service members, Veterans and their families
- Couple and family counseling for military-related readjustment issues
- Bereavement (grief) counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Post-Deployment Health Reassessment assistance
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Employment assessment and referral
- VA benefits explanation and referral
- Screening and referral for medical issues, including traumatic brain injury, depression, etc.

Who is eligible to receive services at Vet Centers?

If you are a Service member or Veteran, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, you can access Vet Center services if you:

- ☐ Served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility
- ☐ Experienced military sexual trauma
- ☐ Provided mortuary services or direct emergent medical care to treat casualties of war while serving on active military duty
- ☐ Served as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat zone or area of hostility
- ☐ Accessed care at a Vet Center prior to January 2, 2013, as a Vietnam-era Veteran
- ☐ Served on active military duty in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the President, or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in that state
- ☐ Are a current or former member of the Coast Guard who participated in a drug interdiction operation, regardless of the location
- ☐ Are a current member of the Reserve Components assigned to a military command in a drilling status, including active Reserves, who has a behavioral health condition or psychological trauma related to military service that adversely effects quality of life or adjustment

WHAT ARE THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH USING VET CENTERS?

Services are provided at no cost, without time limitation, to eligible individuals.

DO I HAVE TO BE ENROLLED IN VA HEALTH CARE TO RECEIVE VET CENTER SERVICES?

You do not have to be enrolled in VA health care or have a service-connected disability.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO BE SEEN?

Anyone who visits a Vet Center will be seen that day, and a plan to obtain further services will be discussed. You may also call to schedule an appointment at a time that works for you, including non-traditional hours.

Do I need to bring any documentation?

A Vet Center team member will look for one or more of the following: discharge documents (such as a DD214), receipt of certain awards, deployment orders or other documents that show qualifying military service. If these documents are not readily available before you visit, someone will help you obtain these when you arrive.

What is Bereavement Counseling?

Bereavement counseling is assistance and support to eligible individuals with emotional and psychological stress after the death of a loved one. Bereavement counseling includes a broad range of transition services, including outreach, counseling and referral services to family members.

What is Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Counseling?

MST counseling may include individual or group counseling, couples and family counseling, referral for benefits assistance, liaison with community agencies or substance abuse assessment and referral to help you deal with the emotions of MST and regain confidence in your everyday life. Any eligible Veteran who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military can receive counseling. Onsite counseling, assessment and referral for MST is available at all Vet Centers.

Will Vet Centers share my information with VA or the Department of Defense (DoD)?

Confidentiality is very important. Vet Centers are safe places to discuss feelings or emotions that may arise after transitioning out of the military, experiences endured while serving in combat, or from sexual assault or trauma that occurred while serving. Vet Center records are not linked to any mental or behavioral health records and will not be shared with other VA offices, DoD, military units or other community networks and providers without a signed release of information from the Service member or Veteran.

Contact a Vet Center:

You can visit your local Vet Center to find out what is available to you or call the Vet Center Call Center at 877-927-8387 and talk to a counselor 24/7 about any questions or concerns.

Where are Vet Centers Located?

Vet Centers are community based to be more accessible in areas where you live. To locate a Vet Center near you, visit <http://www.va.gov/find-locations>.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Will staff provide assistance outside of the Vet Centers?

In addition to the 300 Vet Centers, staff provide counseling, outreach and referral services at several outstations and community access points. This assistance can range from a few times a week to a couple times per month. Services may be offered in universities, community centers, churches and other locations.

Are any additional services or activities offered?

In addition to the services mentioned, Vet Centers also offer opportunities to build community and connect with others who have shared similar experiences. They are designed and created to meet the unique needs of those in the community they serve. Some common group activities offered at Vet Centers across the country or through their community partners include:

- Gardening
- Music groups
- Creative writing classes
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Mindful Meditation
- Potluck dinners and holiday gatherings
- Painting
- Photography
- Outdoor activities
- Community service projects
- Guest speakers and other educational opportunities

Get started with services for Aging Veterans



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This guide will help you access services of potential interest to aging Veterans, which may include financial benefits, health care, caregiver support, home health care and nursing home care. VA can provide specialized health care and support services for aging Veterans and help you plan for the future.

What types of benefits and services are available for aging Veterans and their families?

Some VA benefits and services may be of more interest to aging Veterans, such as Aid and Attendance and Housebound Allowance.

Veterans Pension is payable to Veterans of a period of war who are permanently and totally disabled or who are age 65 or older and whose annual income is below certain levels prescribed by statute. To apply, visit <https://www.va.gov/pension/application/527EZ/introduction>.

Aid and Attendance is a higher monthly pension amount paid if you meet at least one of the following conditions below:

- You require help performing activities of daily living, which may include bathing, eating or dressing
- You are bedridden, in that your disability requires that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment
- You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity
- Your eyesight is limited to a corrected 5/200 visual acuity or less in both eyes or a decrease in visual field to 5 degrees or less in both eyes

Housebound Allowance is a higher monthly pension amount paid if you are substantially confined to your immediate premises because of a permanent disability.

For more information about Veterans Pension, Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits, call 800-MyVA411 at 800-98-2411. You can also go online at:

- Veterans Pension Eligibility
<https://www.va.gov/pension/eligibility>
- Aid and Attendance or Housebound Benefits
<https://www.va.gov/pension/aid-attendance-housebound>

IT CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR ME TO VISIT VA FACILITIES. ARE THERE SERVICES I CAN ACCESS ONLINE?

VA's Telehealth Program allows you to talk to a provider, nurse, social worker or health care team on a mobile device, a computer in your home, or at a local VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). Ask any of your VA health care providers for help connecting you with the Telehealth program and about eligibility requirements for VA health care.

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT BURIAL BENEFITS?

Burial benefits and memorial services include a gravesite in any of 155 national cemeteries, government headstone or marker, burial flag, and Presidential Certificate at no cost to the family. For more information, go to:

- *Planning Your Legacy: VA Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit:*
http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Planning_Legacy_Booklet.pdf
- *Burial Benefits:*
http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/burial_benefits/index.asp

VA health care available to aging Veterans

Geriatrics is health care for Veterans facing the challenges of aging, disability and chronic diseases. Extended care—also known as Long-Term Services and Support or long-term care—is a broad spectrum of residential and community-based programs for Veterans of all ages who need the daily support and assistance of another individual. Veterans of any age may receive Geriatric and Extended Care services at home, VA Medical Centers and clinics, and in the community:

- Geriatrics programs in hospitals and clinics including geriatric research
- Home-Based Services, including skilled home care, Home-Based Primary Care and Home Health Aide
- Community Based Services, including adult day health care and caregiver respite
- Skilled nursing facility and nursing home care provided in VA, Community and State Veterans Home facilities
- Dementia care in all care settings
- Hospice and palliative care in the home, hospital or nursing facility

How can I apply for these VA benefits and services?

You can apply in any of these ways:

- Apply **online** using <https://www.va.gov> **or**
- Work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) free of charge. You can find a VSO at <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation> **or**
- **Write** to the Pension Management Center (PMC). You can find more information at <https://www.va.gov/pension/how-to-apply> **or**
- **Call** 800-MyVA411 at 800-698-2411 and talk to a VA staff member
- **Go** to a VA Regional Office and have a VA employee assist you

What will I need to apply?

- DD214 or other official separation paperwork
- Copies of any evidence, such as reports from an attending physician validating the need for Aid and Attendance or Housebound type care
- Complete VA Form 21-2680, Examination For Housebound Status or Permanent Need For Regular Aid and Attendance. You can find the form here: <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21-2680>
- VA can assist you in obtaining records needed to apply for benefits

What is the Fiduciary program?

The fiduciary program provides oversight of VA's most vulnerable beneficiaries. These beneficiaries are unable to manage their VA benefits on their own. This may be due to injury, disease, advanced age, or youth. VA appoints fiduciaries who manage VA benefits for these beneficiaries. VA also conducts oversight of VA-appointed fiduciaries to ensure VA beneficiaries' needs are met.

Individuals interested in serving as a fiduciary can find more information at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/>.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Who is a caregiver?

A caregiver is a person who cares for a Veteran who needs assistance with everyday activities, such as bathing, dressing and eating. This may be a spouse, adult child, relative or close friend.

Are there VA resources for caregivers of Veterans?

Yes, you and your caregiver may be eligible for benefits and programs, such as:

- Caregiver education and training
- Mental health services and counseling related to the Veteran's treatment
- Respite care

Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers may also be eligible for:

- A monthly stipend
- Certain travel expenses
- Access to health care benefits through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs

For more information:

- **Call** the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274
- **Visit** us online at www.caregiver.va.gov
- Find your local Caregiver Support Program Team **in-person** at a VA Medical Center

Getting Started with Women Veterans Health Services

This guide will help you apply for women's health care, which includes regular checkups, prescriptions, and access to specialists, such as cardiologists, gynecologists, and mental health providers.



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A checklist to help you apply for VA health care:

1

PREPARATION

- ☐ Collect the following information:
 - ☐ **Discharge papers** (DD214 member-4 or equivalent)
 - ☐ Your most recent **tax return**
 - ☐ **Social security numbers** for yourself and your dependents
 - ☐ **Account numbers** for insurance programs you are enrolled in
 - ☐ Your **VA Disability Rating Decision** (if applicable)

2

APPLICATION

- ☐ **Apply** by completing the health care application form (VA Form 10-10EZ) in one of these ways:
 - Visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application>
 - Give us a **call** at 877-222-8387 (press 1); M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST
 - Visit us **in-person** at a VA Medical Center
 - Print out and **mail** the completed form to the Health Eligibility Center (2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30329)

3

REVIEW AND DECISION

- ☐ **Call** 877-222-8387 (press 2) if you haven't heard back from VA more than one week after you've submitted your application

4

NEXT STEPS

If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:

- ☐ **Review priority group assignment** and personalized benefits handbook mailed by VA after enrollment
- ☐ Contact your local VA Medical Center to **set up an appointment**
- ☐ Make an appointment to obtain your **Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC)**

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

Visit <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-servicerecords> to request a copy of your DD214.

HOW WILL I FIND OUT ABOUT VA'S DECISION?

If **accepted**, you'll receive a phone call from VA and a personalized benefits handbook in the mail. If **denied**, you'll receive a letter indicating the reason.

WHAT ARE PRIORITY GROUPS?

During enrollment, each Veteran is assigned to one of eight priority groups based on different factors. Your priority group may affect what type of VA health care services you can access and how much you will need to pay for those services.

WHAT IS A VHIC?

A **VHIC** is a photo ID that gives you access to VA health care facilities. When you're enrolled in VA health care, you can get a VHIC by making an appointment with your local VA Medical Center.

Information you'll need to know to access VA women's health care:

Once you have determined your eligibility for care through VA, you can go to the nearest VA Medical Center and enroll. You will be offered assignment to a designated Women's Health Primary Care Provider, who may be working in a women's clinic or mixed gender clinic, depending on local arrangements at your site of care. Both provide comprehensive primary care and specialty care to meet the specific health needs and risks of women Veterans.

Can I transfer to a women's health care team if I am already enrolled in a primary care team?

Yes, if you are assigned to a Primary Care Provider who is not a Women's Health Provider, you will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a Women's Health Provider and Patient Aligned Care Team. Contact your Women Veterans Program Manager to discuss.

What health care Services are available to Women Veterans?

- Well-being Services
 - ✓ Health coaching
 - ✓ Mind-body therapies, yoga, and stress reduction
- General Health Services
 - ✓ Primary care for acute and chronic conditions
 - ✓ Immunizations and cancer screenings, such as mammograms, Paps and colonoscopies
 - ✓ Birth control
 - ✓ Family planning and preconception counseling
 - ✓ Menopause care
- Specialty Care Services
 - ✓ Gynecology care, including infertility counseling, treatment for pelvic pain and gynecologic cancers
 - ✓ Management of chronic or complex conditions
- Maternity Care Services
 - ✓ VA covers full maternity care from the time of the first positive pregnancy test through delivery and follow-up appointments
 - ✓ Full physical exams, lab tests, and ultrasounds
 - ✓ Genetic tests and specialty consultations
 - ✓ First seven days of newborn's care
 - ✓ Support for breast feeding
- Mental Health Services
 - ✓ Evaluation, counseling and treatment for depression, mood and anxiety disorders
 - ✓ Alcohol and drug use and addiction
 - ✓ Intimate partner violence and sexual and domestic abuse
 - ✓ Military sexual trauma (MST)
 - ✓ Post-traumatic stress
 - ✓ Stress adjustment from deployment

To learn more about the benefits you've earned, visit: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-women.asp>.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

How does VA support military sexual trauma "MST" and combat post traumatic stress disorder "PTSD" survivors?

VA offers free counseling and support services that help Veterans recover from trauma. You don't have to be enrolled in VA health care nor have service-connected disabilities to access these services. Visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/military-sexual-trauma> for more information.

Vet Centers also offer mental health services and counseling. For more information and locations, visit: <https://www.vetcenter.va.gov>.

What other resources are available?

- **Center for Women Veterans (CWV):**
<https://www.va.gov/womenvet>
The CWV mission is to monitor and coordinate VA's administration of health care, benefits services and programs for women Veterans. CWV serves as an advocate for cultural transformation and raising awareness of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.
- **Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC):**
855-VA-WOMEN (855-829-6636).
WVCC staff are trained to provide women Veterans, their families and caregivers information about VA services and resources. The call is free, and you can call as often as you like.
 - The Call Center is available M-F 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST and on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. EST. Call, chat or text available.
- **Veterans Crisis Line** at 988 and press "1" to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **VA HUD-VASH PROGRAM.** If you are at risk of becoming homeless, visit <https://www.hud.gov/findshelter> for assistance or ask to speak to a social worker at your VA Medical Center.



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Getting Started with Services for LGBTQ+ Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) welcomes all Veterans, families, caregivers, survivors, and employees, and is inclusive of diverse gender identities and sexual orientation(s). VA is committed to providing a safe, welcoming and equitable environment for all Veterans we serve.

What is LGBTQ+? Why does VA offer specific health care services for these Veterans?

All Veterans are welcome at VA, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. LGBTQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities. The “+” sign captures identities beyond LGBTQ, including pansexual, asexual, agender, gender diverse, nonbinary, gender neutral and other identities. Veterans with sexual and gender minority identities have faced stigma and discrimination, which can affect health. As a health care institution, VA works to ensure that LGBTQ+ Veterans know that they are welcome and we are trained to meet their health care needs.

Does my sexual orientation or gender identity matter to my health care provider?

As a result of stigma, stress, and discrimination, LGBTQ+ Veterans face increased health risks and unique challenges in health care. We want you to be comfortable speaking with your VA providers about all aspects of your life so we can offer you the best care possible.

Why is it important to come out to my health care provider?

Coming out to your health care provider is an important step in maintaining your health. To see that you receive the best care possible, your health care provider needs to know who you are. VA policy recommends providers ask every Veteran about their sexual orientation identity and conduct a sexual health assessment as part of comprehensive care. Information about your sexual orientation, sexual behavior and gender identity will prompt your provider to ask specific questions about potential risks to your health and offer appropriate health screenings.

If you don't feel comfortable opening up to your provider about your sexual orientation or gender identity, ask for another health care provider. It's important for you to be able to trust your health care provider. Tell your provider about the medicines you have taken and the surgeries you have had. Information about your full health history will enable your provider to determine the best treatment for you. For answers to more questions, visit <https://www.maketheconnection.net/events/coming-out-health-care-provider>.

If I come out to my health care provider, will this information be shared?

No. Your conversations and the information you share with your health care provider are confidential. You can also ask that this information not be entered into your medical record. However, medically necessary information, such as diagnosis or medications, must be included in your medical record to ensure that your providers have a complete picture of your health and that you are receiving the best care possible. Adding your sexual orientation and gender identity in your medical record helps your provider personalize your care and communicate respectfully with you.

If you are not comfortable with your current health care provider or do not feel you are being provided compassionate care, please contact your facility's Patient Advocate or your LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator for assistance.

<https://www.va.gov/HEALTH/patientadvocate> or <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities.asp>.

WHAT HEALTH ISSUES SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT AS A VETERAN WITH AN LGBTQ+ OR RELATED IDENTITY?

Studies have shown that LGBTQ+ Veterans are at an increased risk for elevated levels of stress. This stress can increase the risk for certain mental and physical health conditions.

As a group, LGBTQ+ Veterans have elevated rates of the following behaviors and conditions that can affect their health:

- Smoking, problem drinking, and substance use
- Anxiety, trauma exposure, and depression
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection
- Some cancers

LGBTQ+ Veterans can also face forms of bigotry and discrimination that can cause the loss of employment, housing, child custody, or physical or sexual assault. These challenges and events can also lead to stress and anxiety, as well as social withdrawal and low self-esteem.

View VA's health fact sheets for LGBTQ+ Veterans.

- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND SEXUAL HEALTH**
<https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/LGBTQ-Sexual-Orientation-Sexual-Health-Factsheet.pdf#>
- **GAY, BISEXUAL, AND QUEER MEN**
<https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/va-pcs-lgbt-factsheet-gay-bisexual.pdf#>
- **LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND QUEER WOMEN**
<https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/va-pcs-lgbt-factsheet-lesbian-bisexual.pdf#>
- **TRANSGENDER MEN AND GENDER DIVERSE VETERANS**
<https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/va-pcs-lgbt-factsheet-transgender-male.pdf#>
- **TRANSGENDER WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE VETERANS**
<https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/va-pcs-lgbt-factsheet-transgender-female.pdf#>
- **NONBINARY VETERANS**
<https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/LGBTQ-factsheet-nonbinary-Veterans.pdf#>

If I have additional questions, who else can I speak to at the VA Medical Center regarding my concerns?

There is an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator (VCC) at every facility to help you get the care you need. To reach the LGBTQ+ VCC at your nearest facility, visit: <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities.asp>.

VA health care includes:

- ☐ Gender affirming hormone treatment
- ☐ Substance use and alcohol treatment
- ☐ Tobacco use treatment
- ☐ Treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted infections and PrEP
- ☐ Intimate partner violence reduction and treatment of after effects
- ☐ Heart health
- ☐ Cancer screening, prevention and treatment
- ☐ Military sexual trauma (MST) treatment
- ☐ Heart health and whole health

What are the birth sex and gender identity fields in my medical record?

VA understands that Veterans with transgender, gender diverse and non-binary identities face increased health risks and unique challenges in health care and is committed to promoting a welcoming environment that is inclusive of all Veterans. Previously, your medical record had only one place for your sex and gender. Now, you can have both your birth sex and your gender identity in your medical record. Veterans can enter and edit gender and preferred name through their profile on va.gov.

For more information, read the Birth Sex and Gender Identity Fact Sheet at <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/2022/Birth-Sex-Gender-Identity-FactSheet-for-Veterans-2022.pdf#>

Are there any providers specializing in transgender Veteran care in my area?

All VA facilities are required to provide care to transgender Veterans or pay for services in the community. The LGBTQ+ VCC at your facility will be the most knowledgeable about local resources.

How do I change my legal name on file with VA?

If you're a Veteran, spouse, dependent, or caregiver and you receive VA health care or direct benefit payments, you'll need to tell us if you have a legal name change so we can change your name on file with VA. You must contact your VA Medical Center, each VA program office that you receive direct benefit payments from, and the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) support office.

For more information, visit <https://www.va.gov/resources/how-to-change-your-legal-name-on-file-with-va>.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

How do I enroll in VA health care?

Veterans can apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ.

Apply online at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply>, or visit, call or write to any VA health care facility or Veterans benefits office. You can also call the VA Health Benefits Call Center toll free at 877-222-VETS (877-222-8387)

How do I apply for a military discharge upgrade?

All branches of the military consider you to have a strong case for a discharge upgrade if you can show your discharge was connected to any of these categories:

- Mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder
- Traumatic brain injury
- Sexual assault or harassment during military service (at VA, we refer to this as military sexual trauma or MST)
- Sexual orientation, including under the Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy

For more information, visit: <https://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions>

Are there any benefit updates for LGBTQ+ Service members and Veterans?

The Department of Defense (DoD), in their ongoing review of military benefits in connection with the repeal of DADT identified some VA benefits for which Service members, regardless of sexual orientation, may designate beneficiaries of their choosing, such as:

- Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)
- Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI)
- Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty
- Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserves
- Post-9/11 GI Bill

In addition, there are other benefits for Service members provided by DoD for which LGBTQ+ Service members may designate a beneficiary regardless of sexual orientation. Learn about those DoD programs on the DoD DADT website.

For more information, visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/lgbt.asp>.



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Getting Started with Whole Health

VA wants you to live your best possible life through exploring your Whole Health. This guide will help you find resources on your “Live Whole Health” journey.

What is Whole Health?

Whole Health is VA’s cutting-edge approach to care that supports and empowers you to take charge of your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. This means your health team will get to know you as a person before working with you to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs and goals. You are a critical member of your health care team, and we want to partner with you.

What Whole Health services are available to me?

Whole Health Courses

There are currently two Whole Health courses designed for and led by Veterans.

- 1. Introduction to Whole Health:** A one to two-hour course for all Veterans and spouses. Any Veteran can attend regardless of their discharge status from the military or enrollment in VA health care. All Veterans and spouses are invited to attend! You will be given the Personal Health Inventory to start you on your journey.

The Personal Health Inventory helps you explore what matters to you and self-care areas of your personal life where you currently are and want to be in the future. VA Staff will help you create goals to develop your very own Personal Health Plan. VA uses your Personal Health Inventory responses to find the combination of clinical and well-being services you need to achieve your goals. You can learn more about Personal Inventory at: https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/docs/10-773_PHI_May2020.pdf.

- 2. Taking Charge of My Life and Health:** More in-depth discovery of what matters to you and providing team support from Veteran peers and staff to help you live the best version of you—helping you explore well-being skills, complete your Personal Health Inventory, and create your Personal Health Plan. Online resources are available to help run, manage, and participate in these courses.

Where can I find the Whole Health Courses?

To find Whole Health Courses, contact your nearest VA Medical Center (<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>) and ask to speak to Whole Health, Veteran or Patient Educators.

HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH WHOLE HEALTH?

There are several ways to get started:

- You can visit the webpage at <https://www.va.gov/wholehealth>.
- Start a conversation with your health team or peer support specialists.
- Learn about Whole Health services from other Veterans through the Introduction to Whole Health by downloading the Whole Health App on your smartphone at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/live-whole-health>.



DO I NEED TO BE ENROLLED IN VA HEALTH CARE TO ACCESS WHOLE HEALTH?

Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to attend the Introduction to Whole Health Classes; however, if you choose to pursue Whole Health, you will need to enroll. For more information about enrolling in VA health care, visit www.va.gov.

What services and treatments does Whole Health offer?

If you are interested in learning more about these VA-approved Whole Health and Complementary and Integrative Health Approaches as a part of your care, contact your primary care provider. They may also be available virtually via telehealth.

- **Whole Health Coaching** - Coaches work with Veterans one-on-one, in group settings, or virtually to empower the Veteran to develop and achieve self-determined goals related to health and wellness. Coaches support Veterans in mobilizing internal strengths and external resources, developing self-management strategies for making sustainable, healthy lifestyle, behavior changes. As partners and facilitators, while working closely with the Veteran's Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) and other health care professionals, coaches support Veterans in achieving their health and behavioral goals.
- **Acupuncture** - an approach to health care that may be used alone or in conjunction with other East Asian Modalities, where thin needles are inserted into the body at different acupuncture points.
- **Biofeedback** - a process that uses your body's own signals like heart rate, and body temperature to bring about healthy change. It can improve health issues that are caused or worsened by stress. Using a two-step process, biofeedback can help you relax and reduce your stress.
- **Clinical Hypnosis** - the process of deliberately triggering a trance state and then utilizing that state to encourage helpful cognitive, emotional, or physical healing responses. A trance is a natural biological state of inner absorption, concentration and focused attention.
- **Chiropractic Care** – diagnosis and management of musculoskeletal problems using treatment options including manual spinal adjustments, other joint and soft-tissue therapies, exercise and lifestyle advice.
- **Massage Therapy** - the manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body for therapeutic purposes. Currently in VA, massage therapy is recommended primarily for pain conditions for which there is an evidence base.
- **Meditation** – a practice or technique, often arising from a contemplative tradition, that primarily focuses on training attention regulation processes, with the intent of cultivating general mental well-being or specific capacities, such as concentration, compassion or insight.
- **Guided Imagery** - involves using a series of multi-sensory images designed to trigger specific changes in physiology, emotions, or mental state to increase healing response or unconscious changes. Guided Imagery often begins with a series of relaxation techniques.
- **Tai Chi** - a mind-body exercise combining slow-flowing intentional movements with breathing, awareness and visualization. Rooted in the Asian traditions of martial arts, Chinese medicine and philosophy, Tai Chi enhances relaxation, vitality, focus, posture, balance, strength, flexibility, and mood.
- **Qigong** - is an ancient Chinese healing art, older than and like tai chi, with a focus on cultivating the body's vital energy or qi. It involves the coordination of the breath, posture, awareness, visualization and focused movements. Qigong may be stationary or moving meditation.
- **Yoga** - a mind and body practice with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The various styles of yoga typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation.

Helpful links

Whole Health
<https://www.va.gov/wholehealth>

#LiveWholeHealth Self-Care Series
<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/health/livewholehealth>

VA Medical Center Locator
<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>



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Getting Started with Food and Nutrition Services

In support of your Whole Health and well-being, this guide will help you understand the healthy food classes and nutrition services available from VA and USDA and apply for food assistance benefits if needed.

Are you and your family members getting enough nutrition?

VA's Nutrition and Food Services (NFS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are working together to address Veterans' nutritional needs and food insecurity.

What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity means your access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.

What programs are available to me and my family members?

Some of the programs available to Veterans and their family members include:

- USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Helps low-income individuals and families buy nutritious food with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card, which appears similar to a debit card.
- USDA SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T): SNAP recipients can receive services through the SNAP E&T Program, which helps participants gain the skills, training, or work experience they need to increase their ability to obtain regular employment and meet the needs of employers.
- VA MOVE!: A weight management program that is available to every Veteran receiving VA health care and provides Veterans with a variety of ways to participate in a comprehensive lifestyle intervention.
- VA Healthy Teaching Kitchen: A program through which Veterans learn to prepare, cook, and eat healthy dishes that support nutrition and self-care.
- VA Whole Health: A program that empowers and equips you to take charge of your health and well-being. It centers around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. This means your health team will get to know you and develop a personalized health plan specifically for you, considering your values, needs, and goals to live your best life.

NOTE: You do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to participate in SNAP. For more information, visit: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR SNAP?

You must apply for SNAP in the state where you currently live, because each state has a different application form and process. A member of your household must contact your state agency directly to apply.

WHAT DO I DO IF I AM PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO GO TO A SNAP OFFICE OR CONTACT THE OFFICE?

If you are unable to go to or call your local SNAP office and do not have access to the internet, you may have another person act as your authorized representative by applying and being interviewed on your behalf. You must designate your authorized representative in writing.

Note: Please contact your SNAP state agency directly to apply and request information about the status of your application. USDA FNS does not process applications or have access to case information.

WHERE CAN I GET MY STATE SNAP INFORMATION?

You can contact your state agency by visiting your local SNAP office, visiting your state agency's website, or calling the toll-free SNAP Information Number at 800-221-5689. You can find your state SNAP agency online at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory>

How do I get into VA Nutrition and Food Programs?

What you eat is very important to your health. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) provide nutrition education and counseling for Veterans across VA's health care facilities and most clinics. There are many programs, telehealth visits, groups, or individual appointments available to you. Visit <https://www.nutrition.va.gov> to learn more.

How do I get help from a Dietitian?

RDNs are VA's food and nutrition experts. RDNs have special training to offer medical nutrition therapy and work as part of the health care team and Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) in treating and preventing disease. RDNs promote healthy lifestyle choices and create personal nutrition plans for individuals of all ages using a Whole Health approach. To contact a dietitian:

- Call your local VA to schedule an appointment
- Ask your local VA about same-day appointment availability
- Ask your VA PACT or health care team for a referral
- Send a secure message via MyHealtheVet by signing in at: www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home

How do I avoid gaining weight or how do I lose weight?

MOVE! is a weight management, health promotion program designed to improve the lives of Veterans. MOVE!'s core ideas—encouraging healthy eating behavior, increasing physical activity, and promoting even small weight losses—are easy to follow and based on the latest nutrition science. With the help of your MOVE! care team, you can reduce health risks, prevent or reverse certain diseases, improve your quality of life, and even live longer! For more information about MOVE! visit www.move.va.gov.

What foods should I eat?

MyPlate is the federal nutrition symbol developed by the USDA that serves as a general healthy eating guide on what to eat from each of the five food groups—fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy. To learn what the right amounts are for you to eat and drink based on your age, sex, height, weight and activity level, get your own MyPlate Plan at www.myplate.gov/myplateplan.

MyPlate encourages simple ways to get started on eating healthy. Download the Start Simple with MyPlate app on your phone to set simple, achievable, daily goals to help you eat healthy or visit www.myplate.gov for more tips and resources to get started today.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

How do I know if I am eligible for SNAP?

You must meet certain income and resource requirements to be eligible for SNAP and receive benefits. If your state agency determines you are eligible to receive SNAP benefits, you will receive benefits backdated to when you submitted your application.

Are there other USDA programs my family and I may be eligible for?

You or your family members may be eligible for assistance through other USDA programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Summer Food Service Program and USDA food distribution programs. Visit the USDA FNS website at www.fns.usda.gov/partnerships/military-veteran-families for a complete listing of nutrition assistance programs that may be available to you.

Helpful Links

USDA SNAP

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>

USDA SNAP E&T

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/et>

VA NFS FOOD INSECURITY:

https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Food_Insecurity.asp

VA NFS RECIPES:

<https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Recipes.asp>

GET HELP FROM A DIETITIAN

https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Get_Help_from_a_Dietitian.asp

WHOLE HEALTH

<https://www.va.gov/wholehealth>

VA MEDICAL CENTER LOCATOR

<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

WIC

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

MYPLATE

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov>

Apply for a Disability Rating



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This guide will help you submit a disability claim and possibly obtain a disability rating. A disability rating could be between 0%–100%. A disability rating may give you access to certain VA benefits, such as compensation and ongoing health care.

A checklist to help you file your disability claim and get your disability rating:

1

PREPARATION

- ☐ Learn about different **types of claims** you can file (refer to next page)
- ☐ **Collect the documents** necessary to file a claim:
 - **Discharge papers (DD214 member-4 or equivalent)**
 - **Military medical records**
 - **VA medical records and hospital reports** related to your disability
 - **Private medical records and hospital reports** related to your disability
- ☐ Submit any medical evidence related to your illness or injury (doctor's reports, X-rays, and medical test results)

GET HELP

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a VA Regional Office. Refer to next page for more information.

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

To find out more about how to get your military service records, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records>

CAN VA HELP OBTAIN PRIVATE MEDICAL RECORDS?

Yes, you can obtain records from private doctors or hospitals yourself or you can sign a release authorizing VA to obtain these records for you.

2

APPLICATION

- ☐ Apply by submitting all documents in **one** of these ways:
 - Submit a claim **online** by visiting <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>
 - Complete a claim form **in-person** at a VA Regional Office

3

REVIEW AND DECISION

- ☐ Visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status> to **track the status** of your claim
- ☐ **Provide more information and documentation** if requested by VA
- ☐ Attend VA medical examination(s) if requested by VA

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The length of time it takes to process a claim depends on:

- The type of claim filed
- How many injuries and disabilities you claimed
- How long it takes for VA to gather supporting evidence
- How many claims were submitted when yours was filed

4

NEXT STEPS

If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:

- ☐ **Review your award letter** to understand your rating
- ☐ **Review the VA benefits handbook** that is sent to you

Information you'll need to know to file your claim and get your disability rating:

Am I eligible for benefits?

You may be eligible for VA disability benefits **if VA finds you have a disease, injury, or condition that resulted from service or was made worse during your military service.**

Common conditions include:

- Hearing loss and ringing in the ears
- Knee, ankle, or back pain or injury
- Post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression
- Traumatic brain injury
- Respiratory disease
- Ulcers
- Loss of range of motion
- Cancer (due to hazardous exposures)

Note: If you believe you have an illness or injury that you believe was caused or made worse by your military service, you should file a claim with VA.

Who can file a disability claim?

- Veterans
- Service members preparing to separate from the military
- Surviving family members seeking benefits owed to Veterans on a pending claim
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), attorneys, and claims agents representing claimants

Who can help me?

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at your VA Regional Office.

Accredited representatives are individuals or organizations who are familiar with the process of filing a claim. Many accredited representatives work for VSOs and may provide help free of charge.

Note: It is unlawful for any person or organization to charge a fee for assistance in preparing an application for VA benefits. VA-accredited agents and attorneys may charge fees for assisting with a claim for VA benefits only after VA has made its first decision on the claim.

- To find a representation, visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation>
- To locate **your nearest VA Facility**, visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

How do I file a claim?

- There are several ways to get your claim started. **Review the chart below** to determine what best fits your circumstances. For more information, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file>

WHEN YOU FILE	HOW TO FILE	WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
Pre-discharge More information at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file/pre-discharge-claim	Benefit Delivery at Discharge (BDD)	Filed 180 - 90 days before separation; processed faster than post-discharge claims
Post-discharge More information at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims	Standard	VA can help you gather documents
	Fully-developed	You gather your own documents; processed faster than a standard claim

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

Why is receiving a disability rating important?

If you have a service-connected disability, you may be entitled to additional VA benefits and services, including:

- Disability compensation
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- Level of VA health care coverage
- Increased preference in federal hiring
- VA Home Loan fee exemption
- Specially Adapted Housing Assistance
- To find out more, **visit**, https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/derivative_sc.asp

Note: You can apply for a disability rating anytime throughout your life.

How does my disability rating affect my family?

If you are eligible for disability compensation, you may be paid additional amounts if you have a spouse, dependent child(ren), or dependent parents, and they may be eligible for additional benefits.

- To learn more, **call** us at: 800-827-1000, or visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/disability>

Do you disagree with your VA decision?



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This guide will help you understand how the modernized decision review process enables Veterans to seek faster resolution of their disagreement with a VA decision. The Appeals Modernization Act establishes a decision review process for disagreements with VA decisions that is timely, transparent and fair.

The Decision Review process has changed.

For decisions provided by VA on or after February 19, 2019, you can choose one of three new options to have your disagreement reviewed: as a supplemental claim, through a higher-level review, or by appealing directly to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. If you continuously pursue your claim through one of the decision review lanes, your effective date remains protected. For decisions issued before February 19, 2019, you may have the option to elect into the modernized decision review process.

Option 1: A Supplemental Claim

You are adding or identifying new evidence that is relevant and supports your claim. VA will assist you in gathering the evidence. A reviewer will look at all the evidence and determine whether it changes the decision. You will receive a decision within approximately 125 days from the date you filed your supplemental claim.

Option 2: Higher-Level Review

You want another review of the same evidence by a senior reviewer. The senior reviewer will take another look at the evidence already in your file and determine whether the decision can be changed based on a difference of opinion or an error that VA made. No additional evidence may be submitted, but you and your representative may speak with the reviewer on the phone to tell them why you think the decision should be changed through an informal conference. You will receive a decision within approximately 125 days from the date you filed your higher-level review.

Option 3: Appeal to the Board

This option allows you to appeal directly to a Veterans Law Judge at the Board of Veterans' Appeals. You can choose between three options:

- **Direct Review:** you do not want a Board hearing and do not want to submit any additional evidence in support of your appeal.
- **Evidence Submission:** you want to submit additional evidence in support of your appeal, which you must submit within 90 days from the date your appeal was filed, but you do not want a Board hearing.
- **Hearing with a Veterans Law Judge:** you want a Board hearing and have the opportunity to submit additional evidence in support of your appeal within 90 days after the hearing.

HOW CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON APPEALS MODERNIZATION?

Call 800-827-1000 to speak with a VA representative

Visit us online at <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews> to see what review option is best for you

If you have a VA accredited representative, contact them for more information on appeals modernization

HOW DO I CHECK THE STATUS?

Go to <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status> to check the status of your appeal

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Consult your decision notice letter for the required forms and ways to submit your request for review.

For a **Supplemental Claim**, complete

VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-20-0995-ARE.pdf>

For a **Higher-Level Review**, complete

VA Form 20-0996, Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-20-0996-ARE.pdf>

Send or fax the forms for

Supplemental Claims or Higher-Level Reviews to:

Department of Veterans Affairs

Claims Intake Center

P.O. Box 5235

Janesville, WI 53547-5235

Fax: 844-531-7818

To **Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeal**, complete

VA Form 10182, Decision Review Request: Board Appeal

(Notice of Disagreement)

<https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA10182.pdf>

Send or fax the form to:

Board of Veterans' Appeals

P.O. Box 27063

Washington, DC 20038

Fax: 844-678-8979

Or submit the form **online** at <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/board-appeal>

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

Can someone help me with my request for review?

Yes, VA recognizes and accredits attorneys, claims agents, and Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representatives to assist VA claimants with their benefits claims. VSOs and their representatives are not permitted to charge fees or accept gifts for their services. Only VA-accredited attorneys and claims agents may charge you fees for assisting in a claim for VA benefits, and only after VA has issued an initial decision on the claim and the attorney or claims agent has complied with the power-of-attorney and the fee agreement requirements. For more information on the types of representatives available, or how to change your representative, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/get-help-with-review-request>

Contact your local VA office for assistance with appointing a representative or **visit** <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation>

What happens if I do not submit my request for review on time?

If you do not request a review option of an initial claim decision within the required time limit, you may only seek review through the following options:

- File a supplemental claim along with new and relevant evidence to support your issue(s). Where a supplemental claim is filed after the time limit to seek review of a decision, the effective date for any resulting award of benefits generally will be tied to the date that VA receives the supplemental claim
- File a request for revision of the decision based on a clear and unmistakable error in the decision



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Getting started with Veteran-Owned Small Business Support

This guide will help Veterans get started on establishing a small business as well as qualify for VA contracts targeted for a Veteran-Owned Small Business.

I've never owned a business before and would like to start one. Where do I start?

Visit <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide> for information to assist you in your decision-making process. The steps you will take will depend on how you intend to fund your business.

- ☐ If self-funding will be used, follow these steps:
 - ☐ Determine appropriate location for your business based on local zoning requirements. Zoning requirements can be obtained through your local government office.
 - ☐ While you are there, ask about requirements to obtain a business license.
 - ☐ Check with your Secretary of State office to determine business license requirements.
 - ☐ Write a business plan – see <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/write-your-business-plan>.
 - ☐ Begin operating after all requirements have been met.
- ☐ If loans will be required to get started, determine if you are eligible. Many banks provide SBA Small Business Loan funding or contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) directly by:
 - Calling 800-827-5722.
 - Visiting <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans>.
 - Once you are satisfied and meet the requirements, follow the steps under self-funding as these requirements will also apply to your business model.
 - For information, visit <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/buy-existing-business-or-franchise>.

What other resources are available to me to start my own business?

SBA has several additional resources available to Veterans. The eligibility requirements may vary for each program. Some of the programs are:

Boots to Business: An entrepreneurial education and training program for transitioning Service members and their spouses.

- <https://www.sba.gov/sba-learning-platform/boots-business>

Veteran-Owned Small Business Growth Training Program: An SBA no-cost peer-to-peer training program designed to help Veteran-owned small businesses grow their professional networks.

- https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/SBA_VOSB_Growth_Training_Program_OnePager.pdf

Veterans Business Outreach Center: This program has multiple locations around the country that are designed to provide entrepreneurial development services, such as business training, counseling and resource partner referrals to transitioning Service members, Veterans, National Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses interested in starting or growing a small business.

- <https://www.sba.gov/page/veterans-business-outreach-center-vboc-program>

For more information on these programs and additional SBA Veterans Business Development Resources, visit <https://www.sba.gov/vets>.

WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST ME IN OBTAINING CONTRACTS WITH VA?

OSDBU HOME PAGE

866-584-2344 (Monday – Friday)
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (EST).
<https://www.va.gov/OSDBU/index.asp>

CVE VERIFICATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

<https://www.va.gov/osdbu/verification/assistance>

VERIFICATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

<https://www.va.gov/osdbu/verification/index.asp>

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR VA

<https://www.va.gov/OSDBU/docs/Required-Documents-for-VIP-Application-4Dec2018.pdf>

VERIFICATION ASSISTANCE COUNSELORS

<https://www.va.gov/osdbu/verification/assistance/counselors.asp>

VERIFICATION PROGRAM WEBINARS

https://www.va.gov/osdbu/verification/you_asked_we_listened.asp

VERIFICATION FACT SHEETS

<https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheets.asp>

VENDOR INFORMATION PAGES

<https://www.vetbiz.va.gov/vip>

How can I qualify for contracts with VA?

Eligibility

VA has contracts set aside for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) or Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB). To bid on these contracts, your business must first achieve the SBA's designation as a "verified" SDVOSB or VOSB. The SBA processes applications for SDVOSB or VOSB verification.

Qualification

- Visit <https://www.vetbiz.va.gov/vip/prequal-quiz/> to take the quiz. If the results of your quiz indicate that your business may be eligible, you can then proceed to the formal application process where you will be required to provide additional information and several business documents. After submitting the application, a case manager will be assigned to communicate with you directly throughout the process. By regulation, SBA has 90-days to process a submitted application; however, processing time will be much shorter if your initial application package is complete and you submit timely responses to any requests for additional information.

Verification Process

The verification process for SDVOSB and VOSB consists of validating Veteran eligibility, ownership, and control of the small business. VA will perform this verification free of charge. Many Veterans successfully achieve verification without outside assistance. Nonetheless, SBA provides an array of no-cost support services to help applicants, which includes webinars and a nationwide network of Verification Assistance Counselors who are trained by SBA to help Veterans better understand eligibility requirements and navigate the application process. Verified businesses are listed on the Vendor Information Pages (VIP).

What are the steps to start the verification process?

Follow the steps below to begin the verification process:

- Create a user account in the System for Award Management registry at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM>.
- Create a DS logon Premium Account (Veterans) at <https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil> or an ID.me account (non-Veterans and representatives) at <https://api.id.me/en/registration/new>.
- Create a Vendor Information Page account at <https://www.vip.vetbiz.va.gov/>, select "Apply for Verification".
- Gather the required documents as guided by the matrix located at <https://www.va.gov/OSDBU/docs/Required-Documents-for-VIP-Application-4Dec2018.pdf>.
- Upload the required documents and submit a complete application (fully executed with all supporting documentation).

For assistance with your application, contact a local Verification Assistance Counselor at <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/verification/assistance/counselors.asp>. You can also contact the OSDBU Help Desk at 866-584-2344.

What is the Direct Access Program?

One mission of OSDBU is to serve as an advocate for U.S. Government purchases using the procurement-ready VOSB process. This is enabled by providing VOSBs opportunities to attend Direct Access Program (DAP) events. DAP events provide unique opportunities for firms to build partnerships, maximize networking, and gain access to Procurement Decision Makers (PDMs) through structured events. A PDM represents a program office's interest in acquiring professional services or products to support VA's primary customer, our nation's Veterans. A DAP event may entail a PDM from VA, another government agency or industry informing the audience about an upcoming procurement opportunity. Upcoming and new events are added periodically at <https://vetbiz.va.gov/events>.

Who is the Strategic Outreach and Communications Team?

The Strategic Outreach and Communication team provides VOSBs and firms in other socioeconomic categories training designed specifically for small businesses, including:

- **Doing Business with VA** at <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/dbwva.asp> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ic2crKR6bWE&feature=youtu.be>.
- **Procurement Readiness Training Guide** at https://www.va.gov/osdbu/docs/procurementReadiness_FULL.pdf.
- **On-Demand Training** at <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/soc/learning-sessions.asp>.

Small Business Liaisons (SBL) are located nationwide to offer advice to Veteran-owned and other small businesses on doing business with VA. To see the list of VA SBLs, visit <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/about/contacts.asp#sbl>.

If I'm already open for business who can assist me with selling to the Federal government?

A Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) can help with the required documentation and registration to bid on government contracts. Find the nearest PTAC at <http://www.aptac-us.org>.



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Get started with VA Pension & Fiduciary Benefits

This guide will help you understand and identify benefits available to help wartime Veterans, surviving spouses, unmarried dependent children and parents.

What types of pension benefits are available?

Pension benefits are needs-based benefits paid to wartime Veterans with financial needs and their survivors. Pension eligible housebound Veterans and survivors may also receive additional monetary benefits. Benefits you may want to explore include:

- Veterans Pension
- VA Survivors Pension
- VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC)
- Burial and Plot-Interment Allowance

Who is eligible for a Veterans Pension?

You may be eligible if you meet the following requirements:

- Did not receive a dishonorable discharge
- Yearly family income and net worth does not exceed the limits set by Congress
- The Veteran served at least 90 days on active duty with at least one day during wartime
- Additionally, one of the following must be true:
 - The Veteran began on active duty before September 8, 1980, **or**
 - The Veteran began active duty as an enlisted Service member after September 7, 1980, and served at least 24 months or the full period called or ordered to active duty (with some exceptions), **or**
 - The Veteran began active duty as an officer after October 16, 1981, and had not previously served on active duty for at least 24 months, and served at least 24 months or the full period called or ordered to active duty (with some exceptions).
- Finally, one of the following must also hold true:
 - The Veteran is at least 65 years old, **or**
 - Has a non-service-connected permanent and total disability, **or**
 - Is a patient in a nursing home for long-term care due to a disability, **or**
 - Receives Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income

How can I apply for a Veterans Pension?

- Apply online at <https://www.va.gov/pension/application/527EZ/introduction>
- Complete and mail application—VA Form 21P-527EZ

WHAT QUALIFIES AS AN ELIGIBLE WARTIME PERIOD?

- *World War II*
12/7/1941 to 12/31/1946
- *Korean conflict*
6/27/1950 to 1/31/1955
- *Vietnam War era*
11/1/1955 to 5/7/1975 for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period.
8/5/1964 to 5/7/1975 for Veterans who served outside the Republic of Vietnam)
- *Gulf War*
8/2/1990 through a future date to be set by law or Presidential proclamation

WHERE IS MY NEAREST VA REGIONAL OFFICE?

<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

WHERE CAN I MAIL MY APPLICATION FOR A PENSION?

Department of Veterans Affairs
Pension Intake Center
P.O. Box 5365
Janesville, WI 53547-5365

What is VA Survivors Pension or the VA DIC Program?

- VA Survivors Pension offers monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth requirements set by Congress, **or**
- A surviving spouse, child or parent of a Service member who died in the line of duty, or the survivor of a Veteran whose death was due to a service-related injury or illness may be able to receive the VA DIC tax-free monetary benefit.

What is the Burial and Plot Interment Allowance and how can I apply?

VA burial allowances are flat-rate monetary benefits that help cover eligible Veterans' burial and funeral costs. You can apply:

- Online at <https://www.va.gov/burials-and-memorials/application/530/claimant-information> **or**
- Complete and mail application – VA Form 21P-530EZ

What is the fiduciary program?

The fiduciary program provides oversight of VA's most vulnerable beneficiaries, who are unable to manage VA benefits on their own. This may be due to injury, disease, advanced age or youth. VA appoints fiduciaries who manage VA benefits for these beneficiaries. VA also conducts oversight of VA-appointed fiduciaries to ensure VA beneficiaries' needs are met.

Individuals interested in serving as a fiduciary can submit a request to the nearest VA Regional Office or by calling 800-827-1000. You will need to supply the beneficiary's name and VA file number, along with your name and contact information.

For more information, visit: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY>.

What are Aid and Attendance (A&A) or Housebound (HB) allowance benefits?

A&A and HB allowances add payments to the amount of your monthly VA pension. You may be eligible for benefits if you meet one of the following:

- You need another person to help you perform daily activities, like bathing, feeding and dressing **or**
- You must stay in bed or spend a large portion of the day in bed due to illness **or**
- You are a patient in a nursing home due to the loss of mental or physical abilities related to your disability **or**
- Your eyesight is limited (even with glasses or contact lenses, you only have 5/200 or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to five degrees or less)

You can apply for A&A and HB benefits in two ways:

- Fill out VA Form 21-2680 (Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance) and mail it to the Pension Management Center (PMC) for your state. You can have your doctor fill out the examination information section.
 - If you are in a nursing home, you'll also need to fill out VA Form 21-0779 (Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance).
- Apply in person at a VA Regional Office near you.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

What are the rates for the Veterans Pension, Survivors Pension, A&A and HB allowance?

Veteran Pension Benefit Rates

<https://www.va.gov/pension/veterans-pension-rates> or visit:

Survivors Pension Benefit Rates

<https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension-rates>

Who is eligible for the VA Survivors Pension Program?

A surviving spouse may be eligible for this benefit if:

- You haven't remarried after the Veteran's death, **and**
- The deceased Veteran didn't receive a dishonorable discharge

Children of a deceased wartime Veteran may also be eligible. Learn more at:

<https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension>

Can I get A&A and HB allowance benefits at the same time?

No, you can't receive A&A and HB allowance benefits at the same time.

Where can I get more information about the VA Survivors Pension or the VA DIC Program?

VA Survivors Pension: <https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension>

VA DIC: <https://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation>

Can I get assistance with filing a claim for a benefit?

Yes, you can work with an accredited representative (attorney, claims agent, or a Veterans Service Organization) who can assist with applying for VA pension benefits. To find out more about accredited representatives and how they can help, go to:

<https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim>

Apply for VA Survivor Benefits



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Choose **VA**

This guide will help you identify VA Survivor benefits and services you may be eligible for after your Veteran loved one has passed. It provides information about available VA survivor benefits and programs, contacts, required forms, the application process, and where to find assistance.

A checklist to help Veteran spouses and dependents apply for survivor benefits:

1

PREPARATION

- ☐ Learn about different **types of survivor benefits and services** you and your family members may be eligible for (see next page for list)
- ☐ Collect the documents that may be helpful to apply for survivor benefits:
 - Discharge papers (DD214 member-4 or equivalent)
 - Veteran's death certificate (copy)
 - Proof of your relationship to Veteran (marriage certificate, birth certificates)

2

APPLICATION

- ☐ Apply by submitting all required documents, to include the applicable VA Form and the Veteran's death certificate, to the required servicing location (see next page for more information) in one of these ways:
 - **Mail** to the appropriate VA office that serves your state. You can find the VA mailing addresses at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/maillingaddresses.asp>
 - Work with an accredited representative (Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative, attorney, or claims agent). You can find an accredited representative at: <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation>
 - Go directly to your VA Regional Office for assistance. You can find your local regional office at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>
 - For VA Life Insurance claims, **call** 800-669-8477

3

NEXT STEPS

- ☐ Visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status> to track the status of your claim
- ☐ Provide more information and documentation if requested by VA
- ☐ If approved, take steps to access your awarded benefits

WHERE CAN I FIND A VETERAN'S SEPARATION DOCUMENTS?

To find Veteran separation documents or other separation documents of your loved one, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records>.

Surviving family members should make duplicate copies of all documents and retain them for their personal files before mailing them to a processing center.

Information a spouse or dependents will need to know to file a claim and receive the survivor benefits they may be eligible for:

How would a spouse or dependents know if they are eligible for VA survivor benefits?

Surviving family members can access detailed information to determine if they are eligible for survivor benefits that may be available by:

- Visiting <https://www.va.gov/survivors> or <https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits>
- Contacting VBA directly at 800-827-1000
- Contacting the Office of Survivors Assistance at 202-461-1077

What benefits and services are available for surviving family members?

These are the benefits and services that may be available to eligible spouses and dependent family members:

BENEFITS

- ☐ Interment in a National Cemetery
- ☐ Memorialization and Legacy Programs (https://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Planning_Legacy_Booklet.pdf)
- ☐ Financial Burial Benefits (VA Form 21P-530)
- ☐ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA Form 21P-534EZ)
- ☐ Parents' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA Form 21P-535)
- ☐ VA Survivors Pension (VA Form 21P-534EZ)
- ☐ Dependent's Educational Assistance Program (VA Form 22-5490)
- ☐ Fry Education Scholarship
- ☐ VA Home Loan Benefits
- ☐ Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)

SERVICES

- ☐ VA Bereavement Counseling is available at Vet Centers and VA Medical Center Clergy Services. Visit www.va.gov/find-locations to find the center nearest to you. You can also contact bereavement counseling services by calling 202-461-6530 or by emailing vetcenter.bereavement@va.gov. You can also **call, text, or chat** for help at the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and press 1, text 838255, or chat at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat>.
- ☐ Educational and Personalized Career Planning and Guidance (VA Form 28-8832)
- ☐ Beneficiary Financial Counseling Service. Beneficiaries can receive services for two years from date of payment at no charge.

Visit <https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits> for more information or **call** 800-827-1000.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

As a surviving spouse am I eligible for health care?

VA offers CHAMPVA health care coverage to family members who meet specific eligibility criteria. CHAMPVA is a comprehensive health care program through which VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries in a similar manner to Medicaid and TRICARE. For more information, **call** 800-myVA411 (800-698-2411) or **visit** <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/dependents/champva>.

What is the difference between Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and the Survivor Benefit Program (SBP)?

DIC is an entitlement benefit paid to eligible survivors (spouse, unmarried child or possibly parent) of certain deceased Service members and Veterans that meet specific criteria. DIC is managed by VA. To learn more about DIC, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation>.

SBP is a voluntary annuity program offered for purchase to Service members as a retirement benefit for family members and is managed by the Department of Defense (DoD). Service members who die on active duty and who have never contributed to SBP are automatically covered. Participation in this program is voluntary, and not all Service members opt to participate. To learn more about SBP, **visit** <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary>.

Where can I find information about Burial Benefits?

Planning Your Legacy: A Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/docs/VASurvivorsKit.pdf> and at https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/index.asp

Apply for Education Benefits



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

ChooseVA

This guide will help you apply for VA Education Benefits, which include the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill, other educational assistance programs, on-the-job training, and career counseling.

A checklist to help you apply for VA Education Benefits:

1

RESEARCH

- ☐ Decide which type of education benefit you want to use
- ☐ Learn about schools that offer VA-approved programs by using the GI Bill Comparison Tool (<https://www.va.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool>) to:
 - Determine your out-of-pocket costs for each school
 - Compare school statistics (graduation and loan repayment rates)

HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT IS BEST FOR ME?

VA provides personalized career planning and guidance to help you decide how best to use your education benefits to support your career goals.

Visit <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling>

2

PREPARATION

- ☐ Apply to the program that is best for you
- ☐ Collect the following information
 - **Discharge papers (DD214 member-4 or equivalent)**
 - **Orders**, if activated from the Guard or the Reserves

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

Visit <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records> to request a copy of your DD214 records.

3

APPLICATION

- ☐ Apply by submitting all documents in one of these ways:
- ☐ Submit your application **online** by visiting <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply>
 - Complete an application **in-person** at a VA Regional Office
 - Work with your school's VA certifying official (this person is usually in the Registrar or Financial Aid office **at the school of your choice**)

4

DECISION

- ☐ For further information about your benefit, **call** the Education Call Center 888-442-4551

Information you'll need to know to apply for education benefits:

Am I eligible for VA education benefits?

Your eligibility depends on a number of factors, including length and era of service, type of discharge, and time since separation. It's difficult to summarize eligibility, because requirements are different for each type of GI Bill. Refer to the table below and **visit** <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits> to learn more about eligibility.

Note: Work with VA to find out if you are eligible for education benefits as soon as possible. Not all Veterans are eligible.

Do I have to use education benefits for college?

You can use the GI Bill for more than just academic programs, such as advanced training and certifications in your area of expertise. Examples include:

- Work Study
- On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeships
- Co-op Training
- Non-College Degree Programs
- Entrepreneurship Training
- Flight Training
- National Tests (SAT, GRE)
- Licensing and Certifications

What are the different types of education benefits?

The GI Bill is the umbrella term for many VA Educational Benefits programs. Review the chart below to determine which GI Bill benefit you should apply for. This is only a basic summary—these are NOT the only eligibility criteria.

BENEFIT TYPE	BASIC ELIGIBILITY	WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
Post-9/11 GI Bill	Qualifying active service on or after 9/11/2001	Payment for 40%-100% of tuition; stipend for housing and books
Montgomery GI Bill—Active Duty	Qualifying active service, high school diploma or GED	Monthly stipend for tuition and fees (refer to rates table online)*
Montgomery GI Bill—Selected Reserve	Six-year commitment to Selected Reserve (usable only while serving)	Monthly stipend for tuition and fees (refer to rates table online)*
Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance	Spouse or dependent of a qualifying Veteran	Monthly stipend for tuition and fees (refer to rates table online)*

*To find the rates for monthly stipends, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/education/benefit-rates>

Where is my nearest VA Regional Office?

- To locate **your nearest VA Facility**, visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

What is the Yellow Ribbon Program?

The Yellow Ribbon Program helps cover costs that are not covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, such as higher tuition at private colleges or those paying out-of-state tuition.

- **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11/yellow-ribbon-program> to learn more

How does my disability rating affect my benefits?

Additional benefits, including personalized job training and academic counseling, may be available for Veterans with disability ratings of at least 10%. These programs are separate from the GI Bill and must be applied for separately.

- **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling> to learn more

Can I transfer my Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to my family?

Service members may be eligible to transfer up to 36 months of benefits to eligible dependents. This is a military retention benefit administered individually by each military service. For Veterans who have transferred entitlement prior to separating from service, VA provides the benefits to the eligible dependents.

- **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/education/transfer-post-9-11-gi-bill-benefits> to learn more

Are survivors and dependents eligible for benefits?

Dependents or survivors of a Veteran may be eligible for educational assistance through a GI Bill program if one of the following applies to the Veteran:

- Died while on active duty, or
 - Is a prisoner of war or missing in action, or
 - Died or is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability, or
 - Is hospitalized or receiving outpatient treatment for a service-connected permanent and total disability and is likely to be discharged for that disability
- **Visit** <https://www.va.gov/education/survivor-dependent-benefits> to learn more

Apply for Burial in a VA National Cemetery and for Memorial Products



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Choose **VA**

This guide will help you apply for burial in a VA national cemetery, a government-furnished headstone, marker, or medallion for burial in a private cemetery, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a burial flag for a loved one.

Apply for VA Burial and Memorial Products:

1

PREPARATION

- ☐ Decide whether burial will be in a VA national cemetery, state or tribal Veterans' cemetery or a private cemetery and desired memorial products
- ☐ For burial in a VA national cemetery, a private cemetery (for a headstone, marker, or medallion) or for a Presidential Memorial Certificate, collect the following information and submit it with your application.
 - **Discharge document(s) (DD214 member-4** or equivalent)
 - **Orders**, if activated by Executive Federal Order from the National Guard or Reserves
 - **Pre-need determination approval letter** (if previously completed)

2

APPLICATION

- ☐ **Apply** for burial in a VA national cemetery by:
 - **Faxing** discharge document(s) to 866-900-6417, or
 - **Scanning** discharge document(s) to NCA.Scheduling@va.gov, or
 - **Calling** the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117
- ☐ **Apply** for a government-furnished **headstone, marker or medallion** for placement in a private cemetery by submitting a:
 - **VA Form 40-1330**, Claim for Standard Government Headstone or Marker, or
 - **VA Form 40-1330M**, Claim for Government Medallion for Placement in a Private Cemetery
- ☐ **Apply for a Presidential Memorial Certificate** by submitting a:
 - **VA Form 40-0247**, Presidential Memorial Certificate Request Form
- ☐ **Apply for a burial flag** by submitting a:
 - **VA Form 27-2008**, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes
- ☐ Forms are available at: https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits

3

DECISION

- ☐ For more **information** or to find out the **status** of your claim, **call** the:
 - National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117 (for burial in a VA national cemetery), daily, M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. EST, and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
 - Applicant Assistance Unit (for government-furnished headstones, markers, and medallions) at 800-697-6947, M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.
 - Presidential Memorial Certificates at 202-632-7300, M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST.

I WANT TO BE BURIED IN A STATE OR TRIBAL VETERANS' CEMETERY

State and tribal Veterans' cemeteries may have different requirements to apply for burial. Please contact the cemetery for eligibility and other information.

WHAT IS A PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE?

A Presidential Memorial Certificate is an engraved paper certificate signed by the current President, honoring the memory of the deceased Veteran.

WHERE DO I SEND THE FORMS?

Headstones, markers, medallions and Presidential Memorial Certificates, please: **scan and upload** the form to: access.va.gov, or **fax** the form to: 800-455-7143, or **mail** the form to: NCA FP Evidence Intake Center, PO BOX 5237, Janesville, WI 53547

Burial flags:

Visit your nearest VA Regional Office, or a U.S. Post Office. Your funeral director may also assist.

Information you'll need to know to apply for burial and memorial products:

Am I eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery or a memorial product?

Veterans, Service members, spouses and dependents may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery and a memorial product if they meet one of the requirements listed below:

- A Veteran who did not receive a dishonorable discharge, or
- A Service member who died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty for training, or
- The spouse or minor child of a Veteran, even if the Veteran died first, or
- The unmarried adult dependent child of a Veteran, or
- In some cases, National Guard or Reserve members

Note: Spouses and dependents are not eligible to receive a Presidential Memorial Certificate or burial flag and are not eligible to receive a headstone, marker or medallion if buried in a private cemetery.

FOR BURIAL AT A VA NATIONAL CEMETERY

Can I plan ahead for my burial in a VA national cemetery?

Yes, first and foremost, you should inform family members about your desires for your burial. VA has a program that can assist by confirming eligibility for burial in a national cemetery. Anyone can apply for the pre-need eligibility determination by completing a **VA Form 40-10007** and submitting it to the address on the form. This program is particularly helpful for those who are uncertain of their eligibility because they do not understand the eligibility requirements, are concerned that their type of service or their character of service (discharge type) would not meet the requirement or do not have access to their discharge documents. Veterans, spouses, retirees, National Guard and Reserve members are encouraged to apply. However, Pre-need eligibility is not required.

What will a funeral director do?

A funeral director will assist the family by gathering and providing the documents needed by VA, calling the National Cemetery Scheduling Office to schedule the burial, acquiring a burial flag, requesting Military Funeral Honors from the Department of Defense, and serving as a liaison between the family and VA for burial matters.

Are military funeral honors provided at a VA national cemetery?

Yes, but they must be requested in advance. The Department of Defense is responsible for providing military funeral honors at VA national cemeteries. Funeral Directors usually request military funeral honors on behalf of Veterans' families.

Veterans Service Organizations may assist in the provision of military funeral honors. VA national cemetery staff may also assist in coordinating military funeral honors.

FOR BURIAL IN A PRIVATE CEMETERY

Can a government headstone or marker be provided if a private headstone or marker is already on the grave?

If the Veteran died on or after November 1, 1990, is buried in a private cemetery, and the gravesite is marked with a privately-purchased headstone or marker, the Veteran is eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker for placement on the same gravesite.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

What does burial in a VA national cemetery include?

Eligible Veterans, Service members or family members receive certain burial benefits at no cost. These burial benefits include:

- A gravesite in any of VA's 155 national cemeteries with available space,
- Opening and closing of the grave,
- A grave liner,
- A headstone or marker (no application needed),
- A Presidential Memorial Certificate (no application needed), and
- Perpetual (ongoing) care of the gravesite.

What if I don't have the discharge document(s)?

It is helpful if you are able to provide the discharge document(s). This will reduce delays and ensure VA has the most accurate military information for inscribing the headstone or marker. However, if you do not have the Veteran's discharge document(s), **VA will help** obtain the information needed to determine eligibility.

Where is my nearest VA national cemetery, and state and tribal Veterans cemeteries?

To locate your nearest cemetery, visit: <https://www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery>.

Do I have to pay for a headstone, marker, or medallion?

No, you do not have to pay for the headstone, marker or medallion itself, but some private cemeteries charge a setting or installation fee. Please contact the cemetery for more information.

For forms and additional information, visit <https://www.cem.va.gov>