

A Guidebook
for
Incarcerated
Veterans
In
Georgia

Forward

This guidebook is an important tool for incarcerated Veterans or newly released Veterans and their families who wish access to VA services. Veterans are encouraged to start following the suggestions offered in this guidebook no later than during the last six months of incarceration. Be aware, laws do vary from state to state; therefore, check your state laws and regulations against this guide. Other state guidebooks are available on the web at www.va.gov/homeless/reentry_guides.asp or request the Re-Entry Specialist to provide a copy.

Agency staff names and addresses, phone numbers and websites addresses change. If you attempt to contact any of the resources in this guidebook and it is not current (incorrect, conflicting, or out of date), please send the discrepancies and updated information, if you have it to:

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- 3) Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. for developing the first incarcerated veteran's guidebook, which has inspired and informed subsequent efforts; and
- 4) any public domain and agency resources included in the guidebook.

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If you are not enrolled in VA Health Care, you are encourage to enroll as soon as you are released.

Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care are covered - Affordable Care Act

Veterans enrolled in VA health care programs have health coverage that meets the new health care law's standard. You do not have to take any additional steps to have health coverage. The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs

GETTING STARTED: Eligibility

General Eligibility

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Generally, men and women veterans with similar service may be entitled to the same VA benefits.

Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees must contact a VA regional office to determine eligibility. VA benefits will not be provided to any veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant.

VA Health Care Benefits - Basic Eligibility

“A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable may qualify for VA health care benefits. Reservists and National Guard members may also qualify for VA health care benefits if they were called to active duty (other than for training only) by a Federal order and completed the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty.

Minimum Duty Requirements: Veterans who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or who entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which they were called to active duty in order to be eligible. **This minimum duty requirement may not apply to Veterans discharged for hardship, early out or a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.**”

Those who are unsure of their Veteran status should apply using VA Form 10-10EZ (VA Application for Health Benefits) and have an eligibility clerk review their status and eligibility for services and benefits.

Completing VA Enrollment

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides eligible Veterans a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) for use at VA Medical Facilities. The VIC protects the privacy of Veterans' sensitive information, as it no longer displays the Social Security Number or Date of Birth on the front of the card. The VIC will only display the Veteran's name, picture, and special eligibility indicators - Service Connected, Purple Heart and Former POW, if applicable, on the front of the card. Only Veterans who are eligible for VA

medical benefits will receive the card.

Each VA has an Enrollment Office sometimes called the Patient Business Office. If you do not have your VA identification card (VIC Card) you can obtain this important ID there. Bring identification to confirm your identity. VA personnel will look-up your enrollment information in the VA database and complete your VA Enrollment by taking your picture for your VIC Identification Card. The card can be mailed to you in approximately five business days or you can return to pick-up your card.

Military Records

Records concerning your service may be very important to have in your possession. At a minimum, all Veterans should have a copy of their separation documents. This usually means a copy of a DD214. There are many copies of the DD214 given to a discharging Veteran, and the one that the VA looks for in most situations while filing for benefits is the 'DD214/Member 4 copy.' This is the copy of the separation paperwork (DD214) that shows the Character of Service, such as if you received an HONORABLE discharge or a lower level of discharge, such as a GENERAL Discharge. It is also known as an UNDELETED copy of the DD214. A 'Member 2 copy' also shows the character of discharge. A DD215 is also accepted and is a corrected or amended discharge document and is issued when the original DD214 had incorrect or missing information. Veterans with service during WWII may have a World War II WD form. The most important information on these documents are the Character of Discharge and the dates you served on active duty.

Requesting Records

A copy of your military records can be requested using either the Standard Form 180 (SF180), or via on-line at www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/index.html. Only the Veteran can make this request or NOK if the Veteran is deceased. Records over 62 years old are public records.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) receives close to 5000 requests for records a day. Nearly half of all the requests are for only a copy of separation documents, which is the required document for Veteran benefits. A small number of requests ask for a copy of a full personnel file.

The National Archives has a standard procedure concerning requests for entire files. NPRC only provides copies of key documents, rather than a copy of every document in a personnel and/or medical file. Personnel documents are not normally needed for benefit requests, therefore, by sending only the key documents, such as only the discharge documents, requests can be responded to between 6 days to a few weeks. Exceptions to this procedure are files more than 62 years old, US Marine Corps files, all

certified legal cases, and all requests from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In these instances, all documents are provided.

The key documents provided from the Personnel File and/or Medical Record, may contain a copy of separation documents and the following information, if it is in the file:

- Military Services Dates
- Character of Service
- Promotions and Reductions
- Duty Stations and Assignments
- Foreign or Sea Service
- Military Schooling and Training
- Awards and Letters of Commendation
- Disciplinary Actions
- Lost Time
- Enlistments Contracts
- Entry and Separation Physical Exams
- Immunizations
- Dental Examinations
- Clinical Summaries/Cover Sheets

If, after receiving an extract of a file, a requester submits a follow-up request for additional information or documents, NPRC will automatically send copies of all the other documents in the file. Follow instructions in any letter NPRC sends to you.

The 1973 Fire at the National Personnel Records Center

Often a Veteran reports they are unable to verify their service because of the 1973 Fire at the NPRC. Since this fire, there has been a great effort toward the re-building of information from the files that were affected by this tragic loss of information. NPRC has reconstructed information from various other resources to provide basic information lost in this fire, and through that effort, verification of service can still be made for many Veterans' service information, even if the information is not complete.

** "Some of the most important records used to supplement damage or lost files included: Veterans Administration (VA) claims files, individual state records, Multiple Name Pay Vouchers (MPV) from the Adjutant General's Office, Selective Service System (SSS) registration records, pay records from the Government Accounting Office (GAO), as well as medical records from military hospitals, entrance and separation x-rays and organizational records."*

Branch	Personnel and Period Affected	Estimated Loss
Army	Personnel discharged November 1, 1912 to January 1, 1960	80%
Air Force	Personnel discharged September 25, 1947 to January 1, 1964 (with names alphabetically after Hubbard, James E.)	75%

* <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/fire-1973.html>

The National Archives and Records Administration has developed NA Form 13055, Request for Information needed to Reconstruct Medical Data for those records destroyed in the 1973 fire. You may inquire about use of that form by writing directly to the National Archives:

**National Personnel Records Center
(Military Personnel Records)
9700 Page Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100**

Less Than Honorable Discharges and Eligibility

Receiving a discharge that is not HONORABLE, does not prohibit you from receiving Veteran benefits. However, the type of discharge you received, the length of service, and even when you served can have an impact on your benefits. Regardless if your character of discharge was not HONORABLE, you can still request benefits and you might be eligible for limited services. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know the extent of the benefits available until a claim for services is requested.

You can request to have your character of discharge reviewed for an increase. If a General Discharge is upgraded to an HONORABLE discharge, it would subsequently increase your available services or benefits that you are eligible to receive. You only have 15 years from the date of your separation to request an upgrade in your discharge character. After 15 years, you can only request a 'Correction of the Records.' Like many applications for benefits and services, a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) may help with completing needed paperwork and it is **STRONGLY** recommended you seek help before pursuing these actions. These requests must be filed on specific

Department of Defense forms which are provided for you in this booklet.

A Correction of Military Records is completed after 15 years from your discharge and is much more difficult to obtain. **Please consult a VSO for more information on this process before attempting to complete the paperwork yourself.** You only receive ONE review on this process, therefore, it should be completed correctly and with all needed information to support your request.

****This is a military review and is not completed by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. The VA does not complete this review and sending your request to the Department of Veteran Affairs, will only delay your review. The address where these are processed are on the instruction pages of the forms.***

VA HEALTH CARE

Incarcerated Veterans do not forfeit their eligibility for medical care; however, current regulations restrict VA from providing hospital and outpatient care to an incarcerated Veteran who is an inmate in an institution of another government agency when that agency has a duty to give the care or services. **VA may provide care once the veteran has been unconditionally released from the penal institution.**

If eligible for veteran's benefits:

We encourage you to enroll in the VA Health Benefits System as soon as you are released. This can be accomplished by completing a VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits. Veterans may complete the form in person at a VA health care facility or at home and mail it to a local VA health care facility for processing. Incarcerated Veterans can complete the form and request the HCRV staff submit to the Enrollment/Eligibility Section at the VA Medical Center. Once enrolled, a Veteran is eligible to receive services at VA facilities anywhere in this nation.

Facilities in Georgia

Atlanta VA Medical Center
1670 Clairmont Road
Decatur, GA 30033
404-321-6111 or 800-944-9726

Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center
1 Freedom Way
Augusta, GA 30904-6285
706-733-0188 or 800-836-5561

Carl Vinson Medical Center
1826 Veterans Boulevard
Dublin, GA 31021
478-272-1210 or 800-595-5229

Albany:	526 West Broad Avenue, 31701; 229-446-9000
Athens:	9249 Highway 29, 30601; 706-227-4534
Austell:	2041 Mesa Valley Way, 30106; 404-329-2222 or 404-321-6111
Brunswick:	1111 Glynco Parkway 31525; 912-261-2355
Columbus:	1310 13 th St, 31906; 706-257-7200
Decatur:	755 Commerce Dr., 2 nd Floor, 30030; 404-417-5200
East Point:	1513 Cleveland Ave., 30344; 404-321-6111 x2600
Kathleen:	2370 S Houston Lake Rd, 31047; 478-224-1309
Lawrenceville:	1970 Riverside Pkwy, 30043; 404-417-1750
Macon:	5398 Thomaston Road, Suite B, 31220; 478-476-8868
Milledgeville:	A Wing 1 st Floor Wheeler Bldg, 2249 Carl Vinson Highway, 478-414-4540
Newnan:	39-A Oak Hill, 30265; 404-321-6111 x2222
Oakwood:	3931 Munday Mill Road, 30566; 404-728-8212
Perry Outreach:	2370 S Houston Lake Road, 31047; 478-224-1309
Rome:	30 Chateau Dr. SE, 30161; 706-235-6581
Savannah:	325 West Montgomery Crossroads, 31406; 912-920-0214

St Mary **205 Lake Shore Point, 31558; 912-510-3420**
Stockbridge: **175 Medical Blvd, 30281; 404-329-2222**
Valdosta: **2841 N Patterson Street, 31602; 229-293-0132**

If ineligible for veteran's benefits, free or low-cost health care may be available from the following sources:

- **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** can tell you where to find health care facilities for the homeless. Check the phone book blue pages under local, city, or county government for the number.
- **National Health Care for the Homeless Council** has a list of health care providers working with homeless people across the nation. For a list of providers in your state, go to www.nhchc.org.
- **Free clinics** are run by many local organizations and communities. Look in the phone book blue pages under "Public Health" to contact local government office for clinics in your area.

Special Health Information for Veterans:

If you think you may be at risk for AIDS and HIV infection after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested, and seek counseling. Those at highest risk for AIDS and HIV infection are:

- people who share needles or syringes to inject drugs or steroids;
- men who have sex with other men;
- those born to mothers who have HIV
- people who received blood transfusions before 1985;
- anyone who has sex with anyone who is at risk for HIV / AIDS.

Veterans, homeless, and incarcerated people are at high risk for **Hepatitis C** (HCV), a serious disease that can cause cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. If you think you are at risk after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested and seek HCV counseling. You are at risk if:

- you ever used a needle to inject drugs;
- you had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
- you were a health care worker and had contact with blood;
- you were on long-term kidney dialysis;
- your mother had hepatitis C when she gave birth to you.

The Veterans Health Administration also recommends testing if:

- you are a Vietnam-era veteran;
- you have had exposure to blood on your skin;
- you have had multiple sex partners;
- you have tattoos or body piercing;

- you have ever snorted cocaine;
- you have liver disease;
- you have a history of drinking a lot of alcohol;
- you have had an abnormal liver function test.

VA HEALTH CARE COMBAT VETERAN ELIGIBILITY

Enhanced Eligibility for Health Care Benefits:

On January 26, 2008, "Public Law 110-181" titled the "National Defense Authorization Act of 2008" was signed into law. Section 1707 amended Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 1710(e)(3), extending the period of eligibility for health care for veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, (commonly referred to as combat veterans or OEF/OIF veterans). Under the "Combat Veteran" authority, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides cost-free health care services and nursing home care for conditions possibly related to military service and enrollment in Priority Group 6, unless eligible for enrollment in a higher priority to:

- **Currently enrolled veterans and new enrollees who were discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003**, are eligible for the enhanced benefits, for 5 years post discharge.
- **Veterans discharged from active duty before January 28, 2003, who apply for enrollment on or after January 28, 2008**, are eligible for the enhanced benefit until January 27, 2011. Combat veterans, while not required to disclose their income information, may do so to determine their eligibility for a higher priority status, beneficiary travel benefits and exemption of co-pays for care unrelated to their military service.

Who's eligible: Veterans, including activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, and have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Documentation used to determine service in a theater of combat operations:

- Military service documentation that reflects service in a combat theater, or
- Receipt of combat service medals and/or,
- Receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits

Health benefits under the "Combat Veteran" authority:

- Cost-free care and medications provided for conditions potentially related to combat service.
- Enrollment in Priority Group 6 unless eligible for enrollment in a higher priority group.
- Full access to VA's Medical Benefits Package.

Combat Stress Can Remain Even After You Return Home

Even after returning from a theater of combat, stress can significantly interfere with a

veteran's ability to relate to family, friends, and work. It can also affect other areas of daily functioning. The lingering effects of stress can be expressed as hostility, anger, trouble sleeping, and emotional numbing. Often times, work suffers due to absenteeism, fatigue, or impaired concentration. If you feel you may be experiencing any symptoms related to combat stress or military sexual trauma, please contact your nearest VA health care facility.

What happens after the enhanced eligibility period expires:

Veterans who enroll with VA under this authority will continue to be enrolled even after their enhanced eligibility period ends. At the end of their enhanced eligibility period, veterans enrolled in Priority Group 6 may be shifted to Priority Group 7 or 8, depending on their income level, and required to make applicable co-pays.

What about combat veterans who do not enroll during their enhanced eligibility period:

For those veterans who do not enroll during their enhanced eligibility period, eligibility for enrollment and subsequent care is based on other factors such as:

- ✓ A compensable service-connected disability
- ✓ VA pension status
- ✓ Catastrophic disability determination
- ✓ The veteran's financial circumstances.

For this reason, combat veterans are strongly encouraged to apply for enrollment within their enhanced eligibility period, even if no medical care is currently needed.

Co-pays:

Veterans who qualify under this special eligibility are not subject to co-pays for conditions potentially related to their combat service. However, unless otherwise exempted, combat veterans must either disclose their prior year gross household income OR decline to provide their financial information and agree to make applicable co-pays for care or services that the VA determines are clearly unrelated to their military service.

Veterans Choice Program:

Background

On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146) (Choice Act). Technical revisions to the Choice Act were made on September 26, 2014, when the President signed into law the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-175) and on December 16, 2014, when the President signed into law the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Public Law 113-235).

The Choice Act required VA to implement the Veterans Choice Program through an interim final rule, and on November 5, 2014, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published an interim final rulemaking. In that rulemaking, VA adopted a straight-line method for determining eligibility for the Program based on the distance between a Veteran's place of residence and the closest VA medical facility.

On April 24, 2015, VA published a second interim final rule that changed the way VA measures distance for purposes of determining eligibility. VA now considers the distance a Veteran must drive to the nearest VA medical facility, rather than the straight-line or geodesic distance to such a facility. This results in an expansion of eligibility for the Choice Program.

Effective immediately, VA is also changing the mileage calculation for beneficiary travel. The change will ensure consistency in VA's mileage calculations. The beneficiary travel mileage calculation will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route.

Summary

A Veteran who meets threshold eligibility criteria may be eligible for the Choice Program based on the distance from his or her place of residence to the closest VA medical facility. VA previously determined eligibility based on place of residence using a straight-line measure of distance. VA is now using a driving distance measure.

For example: Under the new distance calculation, a Veteran who lives 40 miles or less, measured using a straight-line distance, from the nearest VA medical facility, but who needs to physically drive more than 40 miles to get there would be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. Under the previous straight-line distance calculation, this Veteran would not have been eligible for the Program unless he or she was required to wait for an appointment longer than 30 days from his or her preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by his or her physician.

The expansion in eligibility increases Veterans' access to high quality, timely healthcare. VA looks forward to continued collaboration with Veterans and our partners to ensure the success of the Veterans Choice Program.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: When is this rule change effective?

A: The interim final rule was published in the Federal Register on April 24, 2015, and is effective immediately upon publication.

Q: Why is VA changing this criterion now?

A: The change in criterion to the program will allow more Veterans to access care when and where they want it. VA believes a driving distance calculation is consistent with the law. The Choice Act does not state how distance should be calculated for purposes of determining eligibility based on place of residence. The straight-line measure adopted by the first interim final rule was consistent with language in the legislative history of the Choice Act. .

Q: What mapping tool is used to calculate the 40 miles?

A: VA will use the commercial product that is used by VA's long-established beneficiary travel program. Because different mapping tools use different proprietary programming, the results may vary among products.

Q: Is the distance calculated the same way that is used to calculate mileage for beneficiary travel?

A: The mapping tool for beneficiary travel will now calculate the driving distance using the fastest route rather than the shortest route. This is a change to the beneficiary travel program that will make the distance determinations under the beneficiary travel program consistent with distance calculations under the Veterans Choice Program. The fastest route was chosen as the standard to ensure fairness to Veterans.

Q: Is it still 40 miles from any VA medical facility or is it 40 miles from a VA medical facility that actually provides the care needed?

A: This Choice Act requires VA to measure the distance from the Veteran's residence to the closest VA medical facility, even if that facility does not provide the care that is needed. Absent a statutory change, VA does not have the flexibility to adopt an alternative approach. We are working with Congress to seek possible alternatives.

Q: How does VA plan to notify newly eligible Veterans?

A: All potentially eligible Veterans already received a Veterans Choice Card. VA will send follow-up letters notifying Veterans who are eligible under the revised mileage calculation.

Q: Who can a Veteran call if they have questions about the Veterans Choice Program or do not remember receiving their Veterans Choice Card?

A: If a Veteran does not remember receiving a Veterans Choice Card or has other questions about the Choice Program, they can call (866) 606-8198.

Q: Where can I get more information about the program?

A: Please review the VA Choice website at <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact>

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES & SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

If eligible for veterans' benefits:

Contact the Homeless Veteran Services Coordinator at the local **VA Medical Center** or **Vet Center**. Call 1-877-222-8387 to or go to <http://www.southeast.va.gov/>, to find the medical center nearest you.

If not eligible for veterans' benefits, the following sources may be able to tell you where you can go to get help:

Vet Centers: The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible Veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life. The family members of all Combat Veterans are eligible for Vet Center services as well. Vet Centers can also furnish bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, to include federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel.

Atlanta Vet Center
1440 Dutch Valley Place, Suite 1100
Atlanta, GA 30324
404-347-7264

Augusta Vet Center
2050 Walton Way
Augusta, GA 30904
706-729-5762

Columbus Vet Center
1824 Victory Drive
Columbus, GA 31901
706-687-4977

Lawrenceville Vet Center
930 River Centre Place
Lawrenceville, GA 30043
404-728-4195

Macon Vet Center
750 Riverside Dr.
Macon, GA 31201
478-477-3813

Marietta Vet Center
40 Dodge Street, Suite 700
Marietta, GA 30060
404-327-4954

Savannah Vet Center
321 Commercial Drive
Savannah, GA 31406
912-961-5800

- ✓ **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill** lists community mental health services providers at: www.nami.org, or call 1-800-950-6264.
- ✓ **National Mental Health Association** offers support groups, rehabilitation,

socialization, and housing services through 340 community organizations located across the country. Call 1-800-969-NMHA, or find a local office online at www.nmha.org.

- ✓ **Georgia’s Department of Behavior Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)** provides treatment and support services to people with behavioral health challenges and addictive diseases, and assists individuals who live with developmental disabilities. Agency’s mission is to provide high-quality health care opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities or behavioral health challenges close to their homes, so they can live a life of independence and recovery and create a sustainable, self-sufficient and resilient life in their community. www.dbhdd.georgia.gov
- ✓ The **National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service** can refer you to local programs. Call 1-800-662-4357.

Dental Care

The eligibility for outpatient dental care is not the same as for most other VA medical benefits. Also, please review the Fact Sheet for the VA Dental Insurance Program.

If you:	You are eligible for:
Have a service-connected compensable dental disability or condition.	Any needed dental care
Are a former prisoner of war.	Any needed dental care.
Have service-connected disabilities rated 100% disabling, or are unemployable and paid at the 100% rate due to service-connected conditions.	Any needed dental care. [Please note: Veterans paid at the 100% rate based on a temporary rating, such as extended hospitalization for a service-connected disability, convalescence or pre-stabilization are not eligible for comprehensive outpatient dental services based on this temporary rating].
Apply for dental care within 180 days of discharge or release (under conditions other than dishonorable) from a period of active duty of 90 days or more during the Persian Gulf War era.	One-time dental care if your DD214 certificate of discharge does not indicate that a complete dental examination and all appropriate dental treatment had been rendered prior to discharge.*
Have a service-connected noncompensable dental condition or disability resulting from combat wounds or service trauma.	Needed care for the service-connected condition(s). A Dental Trauma Rating (VA Form 10-564-D) or VA Regional Office Rating Decision letter (VA Form 10-7131) identifies the tooth/teeth eligible for care.
Have a dental condition clinically determined by VA to be associated with and aggravating a service-connected medical condition.	Dental care to treat the oral conditions that are determined by a VA dental professional to have a direct and material detrimental effect to your service connected medical condition.

<p>Are actively engaged in a 38 USC Chapter 31 vocational rehabilitation program.</p>	<p>Dental care to the extent necessary as determined by a VA dental professional to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make possible your entrance into a rehabilitation program • Achieve the goals of your vocational rehabilitation program • Prevent interruption of your rehabilitation program <p>• Hasten the return to a rehabilitation program if you are in interrupted or leave status</p> <p>• Hasten the return to a rehabilitation program of a Veteran placed in discontinued status because of illness, injury or a dental condition, or</p> <p>• Secure and adjust to employment during the period of employment assistance, or enable you to achieve maximum independence in daily living.</p>
<p>Are receiving VA care or are scheduled for inpatient care and require dental care for a condition complicating a medical condition currently under treatment.</p>	<p>Dental care to treat the oral conditions that are determined by a VA dental professional to complicate your medical condition currently under treatment.</p>
<p>Are an enrolled Veteran who may be homeless and receiving care under VHA Directive 2007-039.</p>	<p>A one-time course of dental care that is determined medically necessary to relieve pain, assist you to gain employment, or treat moderate, severe, or complicated and severe gingival and periodontal conditions.</p>

IB 10-442, April 2013: (http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/publications/IB-10-442_Dental_Benefits_for_Veterans_4_13.pdf)

SEEKING FEDERAL BENEFITS

The Department of Veterans Affairs publishes a booklet called "**Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents**" that describes the types of benefits available and lists the addresses and phone numbers for VA facilities nationwide.

U.S. Dept Of Veterans Affairs - Regional Office

1700 Clairmont Road
Decatur, GA 30033

Call 1-800-827-1000 or find information about benefits at www.vba.va.gov/benefits

Eligibility for VA Benefits During Incarceration

Veterans incarcerated and incarcerated dependents may apply for the same compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) – service connected death benefits – and pension benefits as veterans who are not incarcerated. However, Congress restricts the amount of benefits that may be paid to a veteran or dependent while he or she is incarcerated. These benefits are institutionalized as part of law: 38 U.S.C Sec 5313 (a), 38 C.F.R., Sec. 3.665 (a), (d), which reads as follows:

If a veteran is incarcerated as the result of a “felony” conviction as defined by law: “Any offense punishable by death or imprisonment for a term exceeding one year, unless specifically categorized as a misdemeanor under the law of the prosecuting jurisdiction.”

Then, the amount paid to a veteran incarcerated for a service-connected disability is generally limited by law to the 10 percent disability rate, or half the amount of the ten percent rate if the veteran’s disability rating is 10 percent. (If the veteran is rated before incarceration as 20 percent disabled or higher, he will receive only the amount payable to a 10 percent disabled veteran.) Incarcerated DIC recipients will receive one-half the amount paid to a veteran receiving compensation payments for a 10 percent-rated disability.

A veteran may not receive non-service connected VA pension benefits, or any portion of these benefits, while incarcerated for a felony or misdemeanor. However, his family may receive an apportionment of such benefits under the procedure described above. (See 38 C.F.R. Sec.3.666)

One important requirement for eligibility for VA benefits is that the veteran has to have been issued either an honorable or general discharge, or would have received one if not for re- enlisting. If a veteran had two periods of service, one honorable and the other less than honorable, he may still be eligible for VA benefits based on the honorable period of service.

VA Medical Care can not be provided to veterans in prison, but VA health facilities may provide care to you after your release.

Benefits Payments While Incarcerated

There is a 60-day "grace period" following a conviction when you may still receive full benefits. To avoid an overpayment, it is important that you notify the VARO immediately when you go to prison if you are receiving payments. If you do not notify the VA and receive overpayment, you and your family will lose all financial payments until the debt is paid.

For example, Joe is a veteran who receives a VA pension. He commits a crime, is convicted, and is incarcerated, but doesn't tell the VA right away and keeps getting paid for 6 months. After serving his sentence of 18 months, he is released and applies to the VA to have his pension restarted. He will have an overpayment which must be recovered from the restarted benefits. Until the overpayment is recovered, Joe will have to go without that income.

Your award for compensation or pension benefits should resume from the date you are released, as long as the VA receives notice of release within one year. Form 21-4193, Notice to Department of Veterans Affairs of Veteran or Beneficiary Incarcerated in Penal Institution, available through your counselors should be completed before release, signed by a prison official and submitted to VA Benefits Administration.

Apportionment

Although legally, the veteran can only receive a portion of the full amount payable for his or her disability rating, the remaining balance may be "apportioned to the individual's dependent family". To apply for apportionment, the veteran must send a letter that identifies the veteran and the apportionment claimant and makes it clear they are requesting an apportionment of his VA benefits to the VA Regional Office (VARO) that has jurisdiction over the veteran's case. VA regulations clearly specify this apportionment amount will only go to family members if they can show financial need for such amount.

This applies to the spouse, children, or dependent parents who are involved in the application.

In deciding whether any apportionment is appropriate, the amount of the apportionment, and to whom it will go, the following factors are considered:

- ✓ The family member's income and living expenses;
- ✓ The amount of compensation available to be apportioned;
- ✓ The needs and living expenses of other family members; and
- ✓ Special needs of any of the family members.

For example: a veteran incarcerated rated as 80 percent disability can only receive the amount he or she would get if he or she were 10 percent disabled. However, his or her family may be apportioned up to 70 percent, the difference of the 80 percent rating. (DIC may also be apportioned with similar restrictions.)

There is a 60-day "grace period" following conviction where the veteran, or Dependency or Indemnity Compensation (DIC) recipient, may still receive full benefits. If the veteran continues to receive benefits after the 60-day period, it will result in an "overpayment". The VA considers it to be the recipient's responsibility and fault if this occurs because the recipient failed to notify the VA of his or her incarceration. Attempts to obtain a waiver in these situations of overpayment are often unsuccessful. As a rule, the veteran loses most, if not all, financial benefits until the VA recovers the entire overpayment. It has also been a standard procedure that the family will not be entitled to receive an

apportionment until the debt is completely recovered.

For more information concerning VA debt collection rules that may affect the veteran incarcerated, telephone: 1-800-827-1000 and request a Veterans Service Organization representative or, write to a Veterans Service Organization. One other relevant restriction on veteran's incarcerated eligibility for service connected disability compensation is that: "No total disability rating based on un-employability, may be assigned to an incarcerated veteran".

It is important to remember that most VA decisions, including those on apportionment, can be appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals and, if need be, to the Court of Appeal for Veterans Affairs.

Re-starting Benefits at Release

It is important that each disabled veteran receiving compensation or DIC payments promptly notify the VARO. Regular full benefit payments should begin upon release, providing the VA is notified of the veteran's release, including placement within a community treatment center or halfway house in the community, within one year of release. VARO needs formal notification from the prison of your release in order to re-start benefits. The sooner that document is provided to VARO, the sooner VARO can begin to process your request.

Seeking Help After Release

If you would like to get benefits or think you have a pending claim before the VA, it is best to get professional help to assist you. Many Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) **have trained staff who can help you with your VA claim and can represent your claim before the VA.** You can contact any VSO listed below to see if there is a service representative near you.

Veteran Service Organizations*

- The American Legion 1-800-433-3318
- American Red Cross 1-877-272-7337
- Disabled American Veterans 1-877-426-2838 or (859) 441-7300
- Paralyzed Veterans of America 1-800-424-8200
- Veterans of Foreign Wars 1-800-VFW-1899
- Vietnam Veterans of America 1-800-882-1316

***This is not a complete listing. Others may be located in the phone book or on the web.**

AM VETS	(803) 255-4277
Disabled American Veterans	(803) 255-4238
National Order of the Purple Heart	(803) 255-4138
Paralyzed Veterans of America	(803) 255-4309
Veterans of Foreign Wars	(803) 255-4303
South Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs	(803) 255-4257

Seeking Benefits On Your Own

Although we encourage you to seek the aid of a service representative, you may choose to apply for VA benefits on your own. You can also apply for certain benefits online at: www.ebenefits.va.gov.

GI Bill/Education Benefits

Beneficiaries incarcerated for other than a felony can receive full monthly benefits, if otherwise entitled. Convicted felons residing in halfway houses (also known as "residential re-entry centers"), or participating in work-release programs also can receive full monthly benefits.

Claimants incarcerated for a felony conviction can be paid only the costs of tuition, fees, and necessary books, equipment, and supplies. VA cannot make payments for tuition, fees, books, equipment, or supplies if another Federal State or local program pays these costs in full. If another government program pays only a part of the cost of tuition, fees, books, equipment, or supplies, VA can authorize the incarcerated claimant payment for the remaining part of the costs.

Overpayment of Benefits during Incarceration

There is a 60-day "grace period" following conviction where the veteran, or Dependency or Indemnity Compensation (DIC) recipient, may still receive full benefits. If the Veteran continues to receive benefits after the 60-day period, it will result in an "overpayment". The VA considers it to be the recipient's responsibility and fault if this occurs because the recipient failed to notify the VA of his or her incarceration. Attempts to obtain a waiver in these situations of overpayment are often unsuccessful. As a rule, the veteran loses most, if not all, financial benefits until the VA recovers the entire overpayment. It has also been a standard procedure that the family will not be entitled to receive an apportionment until the debt is completely recovered.

One other relevant restriction on veteran's incarcerated eligibility for service connected disability compensation is that: "No total disability rating based on un-employability, may be assigned to an incarcerated Veteran." It is important to remember that most VA decisions, including those on apportionment, can be appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals and, if need be, to the Court of Appeal for Veterans Affairs.

All debts must be repaid to VA. VA may assess interest and administrative fees, which will be added to the original amount of the debt until the debt is cleared.

Failure to repay a debt will affect one's credit. Collection of the debt may be turned over to a collection agency, or the debt may be offset by withholding federal income tax refunds or other federal payments, including federal pay and pension.

FAQ on Overpayments

What steps do I need to take to request a waiver of my debt? Is there a specific form I need to use to do so?

To request a waiver, you need to state, in writing, that you want to request “waiver of collection” (use those exact words) and the reasons you feel you should not be held liable for the debt. You should explain the circumstances leading to the overpayment and the steps you took to prevent the overpayment from occurring. You should also complete and return the Financial Status Report* that was enclosed with your notification letter.

Is it possible to make payments on my debt, or set up partial withholding from my benefits in order to repay this debt?

Monthly payments or withholdings from benefits can be accepted if they will clear the debt in a reasonable timeframe. If your proposed repayment plan will take longer than a year to repay your debt, you need to complete and return the Financial Status Report, which was enclosed with your notification letter. *A copy of the Financial Status Report form is located in the appendix.

Submit this form along with your proposed repayment plan by mail or fax to:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Debt Management Center
P.O. Box 11930
St. Paul, MN 55111 1-612-970-5688 (fax)

VA will notify you if your plan is acceptable, and when the withholding will start, or when you should begin making your payments.

I don't understand how I was overpaid. Can you send me an audit of my account?

You can call our toll-free number 1-800-827-0648, or for international callers, 1-612-713-6415 and explain to the operator that you would like an audit for your overpayment. The audit will also include your repayment options.

How to File a VA Claim

If you believe that you have been harmed in any way through your military experience, you have the right to file a claim for treatment and compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). You should consider seeking services from a Veterans Service Organization. They are not lawyers and do not charge for their services, yet they can represent you in your claim to the VA. A short list was provided above. You can submit your claim to any VA Regional Office (VARO) on VA Form 21-256EZ. Assistance of a VSO is encouraged, when possible.

It is the responsibility of claimant to keep their contact information current. It may be a good idea to inform the VA you are incarcerated and request the exam during your incarceration. Compensation and pension exams may require additional planning and coordination for those Veterans incarcerated. Below is a copy of the most current policy information for Examinations for Incarcerated Veterans.

If you would like to pursue filing a claim yourself, and without the aid of a VSO, below are brief descriptions of some forms needed to file for certain VA benefits. Make photocopies of all forms for your records before sending your packet to the VARO nearest you.

Examinations for Incarcerated Veterans

This Fact Sheet provides guidance regarding examinations for incarcerated Veterans.

POLICY

1. Duty to Assist

VA's duty to assist incarcerated Veterans includes providing them with VA examinations when warranted. Court decisions reflect VA's duty to assist includes the duty to provide a medical examination to an incarcerated Veteran when one is required. Further, as stated in VHA Handbook 1601E.01, Compensation and Pension (C&P) Examinations, October 13, 2009, Corrected Copy February 25, 2010, at paragraph 5.b.(1) VHA must provide an examination, when necessary, under the duty to assist provisions of 38 U.S.C. Section 5103A and 38 CFR 3.159 equally to incarcerated Veterans as to non-incarcerated Veterans
vaww1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=2094.

VA must fully comply with the duty to assist by obtaining relevant medical records from the facility where an incarcerated Veteran is held, and work with state or prison officials both in obtaining such records and in providing medical examinations when warranted. VA, through its General Counsel, has indicated that it is fully aware of this responsibility and will concede that the Board of Veterans Appeals may remand for such an examination where the record does not contain evidence of substantial efforts to conduct such examination, including identifying and requesting the assistance of the appropriate state or prison official.

VA is required to provide medical examinations when warranted under the duty to assist, either by arranging for release of an incarcerated Veteran to attend an examination or by making arrangements with the relevant state or prison official to conduct an examination at the facility where the Veteran is incarcerated. Incarcerated Veterans are owed the same duty to assist as non-incarcerated Veterans and VA should tailor its assistance to the circumstances of the confinement of these Veterans. As long as there is evidence of substantial efforts to conduct the C&P examination, the claim will not be returned as a remand, and VHA has supported the claim to the fullest extent possible. An example of a substantial effort is: the C&P clinic documents that they have made multiple attempts and exhausted all possible avenues for obtaining access to the incarcerated Veteran for the examination.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

To be eligible for SSDI, a person must:

- ✓ Have worked and paid Social Security taxes (F.I.C.A.) for enough years to be covered under Social Security. Some of the taxes must have been paid in recent years;
- ✓ Be considered medically disabled; and not be working or working but earning less than the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. Work incentives provide support over a period of years to allow the disability beneficiary to test their ability to work and gradually become self-supporting and independent. In general, a person has at least 4 years to test their ability to work. The person continues to have Medicare coverage during this time.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

To be eligible for SSI based on a medical condition, a person must:

- ✓ Have little or no income or resources (refer to the Glossary on website below for definitions of income and resources);
- ✓ Be considered medically disabled; and initially not be working or working but earning less than the SGA level. Once on the rolls, work activity does not affect a person's continuing eligibility. Work activity does not affect initial or continuing eligibility for a person who is blind. Once a person begins to receive SSI, work activity will not cause SSI to stop as long as the person is still disabled. Even if the person cannot receive SSI checks because of the amount of earnings, eligibility for Medicaid may continue indefinitely. In many cases, if a person loses his/her job or is unable to continue working, he/she can begin receiving checks again without filing a new application.

Social Security Benefits

What happens benefits when I am in prison?

If you are receiving Social Security, your benefits will be suspended if you are admitted for more than 30 continuous days to a jail or prison because you were convicted of a criminal offense. Your benefits can be reinstated starting with the month following the month you are released.

Although you cannot receive monthly Social Security benefits while you are confined, benefits to your spouse or children will continue as long as they remain eligible. If you are receiving SSI, your payments are suspended while you are in prison. Your payments can be reinstated in the month you are released. However, if your confinement lasts for 12 consecutive months or longer, your eligibility for SSI benefits will terminate and you must file a new application for benefits.

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments generally are not payable for months that you are confined to a jail, prison or certain other public institution for commission of a crime. You are not automatically eligible for Social Security or SSI payments when you are released.

How do I file an application if I am in prison?

After you know your release date, notify someone at your facility that you want to start your Social Security of SSI benefits. If your institution has a prerelease agreement with the local Social Security office, it will notify us if you are likely to meet the requirements for SSI or Social Security benefits. (If there is no prerelease agreement, when you know your anticipated release date, contact Social Security to apply for benefits, if you think you may be eligible.) We will obtain an application from you several months before you anticipate release. That way, we can begin processing your application and your benefits can start as soon as possible after your release. If you are filing for benefits based on disability, we will gather medical evidence from your doctors to help us decide whether you are disabled under our rules.

You can call toll free at **1-800-772-1213** and tell the representative that you are scheduled to be released from a correctional facility and want to ask about receiving benefits. Please have your Social Security number handy. An appointment will be made with your local Social Security office to take your application after you are released.

Restoring SSI and SSDI Benefits After Being Released from Prison

Although an individual may lose his/her benefits during the time of incarceration, benefits can be restored as soon as the individual is released from prison. The procedures for having disability payments reinstated differ slightly according to the type of benefit that an individual was receiving prior to his/her confinement.

Restoring SSI

Depending on the length that an individual expects to be confined, he/she may be able to begin a "pre-release procedure" while still incarcerated. This is completed through a "Pre-Release Agreement" between the jail and the SSA and applies to inmates that have been or expect to be incarcerated for a period of less than one year. Although felony sentences by law carry a prison sentence of more than one year, it is possible that a defendant could be given credit for any time he/she has already served while awaiting trial and/or disposition in their case. An example of a hypothetical situation is as follows:

"John," a SSI recipient of five years, is convicted on felony theft, which in the state of Georgia is theft of property in excess of \$500.00 and is punishable by a possible term of imprisonment of 1-10 years. John was unable to afford bond and as a result spent six months in jail awaiting trial and/or disposition in his matter. John subsequently entered a guilty plea and was sentenced to 15 months in the state penitentiary. At his discretion, the sentencing judge gave John credit for the time he had already served, meaning that John only had nine months remaining. In this particular case, John was able to start the paperwork necessary to reinstate his benefits while incarcerated. Since John was proactive, it is likely that his benefits will start immediately following his release. If John has chosen to wait until his release to start the reinstatement of his benefits, again he would have received payment for any day that he was eligible, but the probability of his checks being delayed would have significantly increased.

Since any SSI award is based on the recipient's income, individuals presently confined need to know what his/her income will be upon release and what resources he/she will have available. In addition, the SSA will need to know what other persons, if any, will be residing with the defendant following their release. On the day a disability claimant is released from confinement, they are encouraged to go directly to their Social Security office with personal identification and proof of their release.

Restoring SSDI

If an individual is receiving SSDI at the time of his/her incarceration, he/she will remain on the rolls during their jail or prison term, regardless of the length of their sentence. Like with SSI, SSDI payments will stop when a claimant is incarcerated and recipients will need to request reinstatement of their benefits when the time comes to be released from prison.

Although there is no pre-release procedure for SSDI as there is for SSI, jails or prisons that have Pre-Release Agreements for SSI can also use the same form to help SSDI recipients get the reinstatement process started. Those inmates unable to obtain a Pre-Release Agreement form should inquire as to whether the prison staff knows how SSDI payments can be restarted upon their release. If all else fails, incarcerated individuals should seek the assistance of their family members who can contact their local Social Security office for more information.

It is against the law for any person convicted of a felony and sentenced to a term of imprisonment to continue to receive social security disability benefits during their period of incarceration. Likewise, it is illegal for someone other than the intended recipient to cash a disability check in the name of another person, specifically under the disguise of the individual in prison.

Medicare

Your eligibility for Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) continues uninterrupted while you are in prison. But Part B Medicare (medical insurance) will terminate if you do not pay your monthly premiums while you are in prison. To start Part B Medicare, you will need to file an application with us during a general enrollment period, which is January through March of each year. If you file during this enrollment period, your Part B eligibility will begin on July 1 of that year. If your Medicaid eligibility was terminated while you were in prison, you will need to contact your local social services office to apply for Medicaid coverage. We can provide a referral form for you to take to the social services office.

REENTRY MYTH

BUSTER!

A Product of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council

On Social Security Benefits

MYTH: Eligibility for Social Security benefits cannot be reinstated when an individual is released from incarceration.

FACT: Social Security benefits are not payable if an individual is convicted of a criminal offense and confined. However, monthly benefits usually can be reinstated after a period of incarceration by contacting Social Security and providing proof of release.

By law, Social Security benefits are not payable to an individual who is convicted of a criminal offense and confined for more than 30 consecutive days. If an individual was getting Social Security benefits prior to confinement, benefits are suspended until he or she is released. Generally, there is no time limit on the period of suspension.

Upon release, benefits can be reinstated without filing a new claim. The individual must request reinstatement and provide proof of release to a Social Security office. Upon provision of the necessary proof, the Social Security office will reinstate benefits quickly.

Social Security cannot reinstate benefits after release if the individual was not receiving benefits before confinement. Instead, the individual must file a claim and be approved before benefits can be paid. For these individuals, Social Security offers a prerelease application procedure, which enables a claim to be filed several months before the scheduled release date. This process allows benefits to start shortly after the individual is released.

Social Security also administers the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program for aged or disabled individuals who have limited income and resources. SSI benefits are suspended if the individual is incarcerated for a full calendar month or more. If the incarceration is 12 months or less, Social Security can reinstate SSI benefits quickly upon release. For incarceration periods greater than 12 months, SSI eligibility is terminated and a new claim must be filed to reestablish eligibility. The prerelease application procedure expedites the provision of SSI benefits after the individual is released.

For More Information:

Social Security's Website
<https://www.ssa.gov/>

What Prisoners Need to Know
<https://www.ssa.gov/otba/10133.html>

Entering the Community after Incarceration – How We Can Help
<https://ssa.gov/pubs/10504.htm#prerelease>

What is a REENTRY MYTH BUSTER?

This Myth Buster is one in a series of fact sheets intended to clarify existing federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Each year, more than 700,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons. Another 9 million cycle through local jails. When reentry fails, the social and economic costs are high – more crime, more victims, more family distress, and more pressure on already-strained state and municipal budgets.

Because reentry intersects with health and housing, education and employment, family, faith, and community well-being, many federal agencies are focusing on initiatives for the reentry population. Under the auspices of the Cabinet-level Interagency Reentry Council, federal agencies are working together to enhance community safety and well-being, assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive citizens, and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

For more information about the Reentry Council, go to: www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/reentry-council

HELP FOR VETERANS

This section includes resources that can help you get back on your feet. Remember to check the phone book for local, county, and state agencies that know what services are available in the area to assist you. **(Call your local United Way or dial 211 for information in your county.)** Some organizations may have waiting lists, require an interview, or have specific rules about whom they serve. It is best if you **start asking about services and requirements now**, so that you will be prepared when you are released. You may even ask if your name can be put on a waiting list when you get closer to your release date.

WHERE TO START

Check the local phone book yellow pages under "Homeless" or "Social Service Organizations" for a list of many local organizations that offer different services, which may include clothing, public transportation assistance, emergency shelter, and more. You may need to contact several agencies to find all the services you need. Services provided by *government* agencies are listed in the blue pages found near the front of the phone book. Check with your local Public Assistance Office to find out what programs are available and what their guidelines are. We have included some guidance below, but your local organizations are your best resources. **Remember, it never hurts to ask!**

- ✓ Every **VA Medical Center** has a **Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinator** who is responsible for helping homeless veterans access VA and community-based care to end homelessness among veterans. The HCHV program provides outreach, clinical assessments and referrals for medical and mental health care, long-term transitional residential assistance, case management and employment assistance with linkage to permanent housing. To locate your nearest HCHV Coordinator call 1-877-222-8387 or go to www1.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=21.
- ✓ **Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office (VARO)** provides assistance with Veterans benefits & entitlements information, VA claims process, representation and advocacy, Trauma (PTSD) counseling, Veterans Homes for those in need of nursing care, and employment assistance through federal funded reintegration projects. Call 1-800-827-1000 or go to www.va.gov.
- ✓ **National Coalition for the Homeless** has a directory of shelters and homeless assistance programs online at <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>. This does not list every program in the country, so be sure to check your phone book for local programs.
- ✓ **Salvation Army** - provides services, including shelter and transitional housing, for homeless individuals and families. For services and information contact: <http://www.salvationarmycarolinas.org/> or check the phone book for local number.

- ✓ **United Way** - provides a variety of services through local organizations. Check the phone book for a local post or locate local organizations online at www.unitedway.org. Additionally, you may dial **211** for assistance with your local United Way office.
- ✓ **Local churches and faith-based organizations**, such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and Volunteers of America, may have a variety of programs to assist you. Find these organizations by calling your county or city Department of Social Services. Check the blue pages of the phone book for the number.

TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Crisis and other toll-free numbers are often listed in the front cover or first few pages of the phone book. You may also want to check under "Social Services" in the blue or yellow pages for hotlines and local numbers.

- ✓ **US Department of Veterans Affairs** — www.va.gov
- ✓ Benefits: 1-800-827-1000,
- ✓ Medical Centers: 1-877-222-8387, or <http://www.southeast.va.gov/>
- ✓ Persian Gulf War Helpline: 1-800-749-8387
- ✓ Iraqi Freedom Veterans should contact the case manager at their local VA Medical Center
- ✓ **Focus On Recovery Helpline** - A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-374-2800 or 1-800-234-1253
- ✓ **National AIDS Hotline** - Talk to someone who knows about HIV / AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 1-800-822-7422
- ✓ **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** — www.nchv.org, 1-800-838-4357
- ✓ **National Suicide Prevention Hotline** 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- ✓ **SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault** – 1-800-260-9293, www.sccadvasa.org
- ✓ **The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)** – 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

HOUSING

It is important to know that you have a place to go when released. The first step in returning to the community is finding a place to stay. This section includes ways to locate emergency shelter, transitional programs, and permanent housing assistance. Transitional or temporary housing can serve as a step toward full independence upon your release. However, there are often waiting lists for housing assistance programs, so you should ask about applying as soon as possible. If you are released and find yourself, homeless, emergency assistance is available.

The goal of the Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV) Specialist is to provide you resources and support, yet we are unable to impact the decision of the parole and probation boards with any guaranteed housing acceptance. Once you are release from custody, you may apply for any and all applicable housing programs the VA has, but it is not usually an option for direct placement from incarceration.

Once released, the VA does have the following supportive housing programs in our Homeless Clinics that may be of use to you as you re-acclimate to the community:

Grant Per Diem (GPD)

The Grant Per Diem Program is designed to provide temporary housing in the community for homeless or soon to be homeless veterans. Veterans will receive support to work on their individual goals and to obtain permanent housing. The program has 101 beds located in the community. There are three Providers within the community that provide beds for th program: Salvatioin Army has 64 beds, Gateway Center has 46 beds, and the Women Program has 17 beds.

Available health care services may include:

- Medical, Surgical, Psychiatric, Inpatient and Outpatient Care
- Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs, PTSD Program, Coping Skills, Anger Management and Substance Abuse Disorder Program
- Homeless Programs
- Military Sexual Trauma Treatment
- Specialized Women's Medical Care
- Caregiver Support Care
- Nursing Home Care

Income is not necessary for admission into the GPD Program.

Homeless Women Veterans Program (HWVP)

The HWV Program provides case management to homeless women Veterans, with and without children. Veterans who may be in need of treatment for mental health, substance abuse treatment or case management services are accessed and referred to the needed service(s). Veterans are offered temporary housing and support while receiving case management services.

Housing and Urban Development - VA Supportive Housing (HUD/VASH)

HUD/VASH is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supported Housing (VASH). HUD/VASH is not an emergency based housing program and it can take weeks from initial contact until the Veteran is able to move into a rental property. The public housing authority issues vouchers for Veterans to obtain their own apartment. The program does have requirements and eligibility for each participant and not all of those requirements can be listed in this guidebook. The Veteran's rent payments are adjusted to meet their ability to make payments.

Information on eligibility is listed below:

- Must meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness
- Meet income requirements (must have an income)
- Veteran, nor any family members that reside with them may be on lifetime Sex Offender Registry
- Vouchers must be available
- Must agree to case management services

How to apply for a HUD/VASH Voucher: *The Veteran should apply at the VA Hospital nearest them with the Homeless Clinic. If you are closest to a VA Community Clinic, you may apply with them, but only if there is a homeless clinic HUD/VASH social worker available at that location.*

Domiciliary Care Program

The Domiciliary Care Program is the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) oldest health care program. Established through legislation passed in the late 1860's, the Domiciliary purpose was to provide a home for disabled volunteer soldiers of the Civil War. Domiciliary care was initially established to provide services to economically-disadvantaged Veterans, and it remains committed to serving that group. The Domiciliary has evolved from a "Soldiers' Home" to become an active clinical rehabilitation and treatment program for male and female Veterans. Domiciliary care is an integral component of VHA's mental health continuum of care.

These programs provide a residential treatment level of care for a general Veteran population including co-morbid medical, psychiatric, SUD, PTSD, and homelessness. General Doms provide a 24/7 structured and supportive residential environment as a part of the rehabilitative treatment regime.

Emergency and Transitional Housing

The best idea is to never need emergency shelter and work closely with the DOC counseling staff as you make a community re-entry plan. If you need emergency shelter, you can find it several ways. One is to look in the local yellow pages under mission or shelter.

✓ To find out if there are homeless veteran service providers in your area, call 1-800-VET-HELP, write to NCHV, 333 1/2 Pennsylvania Ave., 8E Washington, DC 20003-1148, or go to www.nchv.org.

Look in the phone book **yellow pages** under "Social Service Organizations" for local shelters or organizations that may be able to help.

Look in the phone book **blue pages** under local, city, or county government Department of Social Services or "Human Services" or call the County Commissioner's Office for information about local low-income housing coalitions or homeless advocacy groups who may know what is available.

✓ To find a list of emergency shelters for men, women and families in every state, check the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** online at www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm.

Long-term or Permanent Housing

Public housing waiting lists can be long, but the length of time can vary from place to place. Even if you are not sure where you want to live yet, apply to get on the waiting list so that you have as many options as possible. To learn how to apply, contact the local housing authority listed in the phone book blue pages under "Local Government, Public Housing Authority." **Note: Anyone charged with a felony within the last five (5) years will not be eligible for public housing or Section 8.**

FINDING & KEEPING A JOB

Finding a job may be hard and can seem overwhelming, but it is possible and very important! When released you may find that you are completely starting over. You should ask for job counseling and training while incarcerated so you are prepared to work when released. **Do not wait** until you get out to start thinking about what you will do. **Start planning now!**

Preparing for your Job Search

Regardless of the skill level of the job you seek, a resume is a powerful and useful tool in the search for job. Any resume you can prepare BEFORE you release from incarceration, will enable you to be that much closer to securing employment when you are released.

Even if the job you are applying for does not ask for a resume, the document can still be a good tool to help complete applications. If an employer tells you to "leave your name and number at the front desk," the resume is your 'calling card' and works much better than a scratch sheet of paper or a 'yellow-sticky note' with your name written on it. A basic resume can help you remember:

- Education information
Certifications (Certified Electrician, Certified Diesel Mechanic, etc...)
- Work history (You should cover not less than 5 years of employment history)
- Special skills
(driving fork-lifts, typing skills, language skills, computer skills)
- Veteran service dates

Talk to your Reentry Specialist at your correctional facility to see samples of resume styles and options. Also discuss the disclosure of criminal history and how it can be handled, either in a resume or at a job interview. There is no one right answer to this disclosure, so it is best your reentry class discuss this topic and the different ways to approach it.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

✓ **Workforce Centers** provide all the information, technology and services business needs to thrive; and job seekers need to achieve successful careers. They represent a unique concept in the labor market - everything in one place. Work Source Center Services are delivered to customers in a variety of ways, including:

- o Self-directed efforts, such as kiosks or via the Internet
- o Group programs and activities, such as workshops
- o One-on-one consultations
- o Training programs and business consultations

✓ **Workforce Affiliates** serve special populations and are electronically linked to the system. All affiliates offer self-service resource rooms and job search activities.

Services for job seekers include:

- o Free use of computers, copiers, phones, faxes and other career resources
- o Internet access to jobs
- o Job referral and placement
- o Classes on how to get and keep a job
- o Information on the fastest growing jobs and wages
- o Referral to training and other community services
- o Access to Unemployment Insurance
- o Translation services

✓ **Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist** assigned by the **State Employment Security Department** to help veterans find and keep jobs. LVERs are located with the local One Stop Center. DVOP Specialists work under the supervision of the LVER to develop job and training opportunities for veterans with service-connected disabilities, linking veterans with employers and making sure follow-up services are provided. To find a LVER or DVOP near you, visit your state employment service office listed in the phone book blue pages under "State Government, Employment Security Commission," or go to www.sces.org.

✓ **Work Opportunity Tax Credit**

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) can save an employer as much as \$2,400 in

taxes when they hire a worker who historically has had a hard time landing a job. And it's easy. All an employer has to do is hire a qualified worker, fill out the Pre-Screening Notice (8850) and Individual Characteristics Form (9061) and drop them in the mail within 21 calendar days from the start date of employment. An ex-felon who has a hiring date, which is not more than one year after the last date on which they were convicted or released from prison, and is a member of an economically **disadvantaged family is qualified for WOTC.**

An employer can get a tax break of 40 percent up to first \$6,000 of the wages paid to a qualified worker who worked at least 400 hours during the first year of employment. That adds up to a \$2,400 tax credit for filling a job they planned to fill anyway. However, if the new employee only works 120 to 399 hours an employer can still receive a credit of up to 25 percent of the qualified first year wages up to \$6,000. This allows a credit amount up to \$1,500.

The Employment Security Department is the "Right Connection" to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. If an employer wants more information and forms, they can call the WOTC Unit at 1-800-669-9271, or contact their local Workforce Center.

National H.I.R.E. Network: Established by the Legal Action Center, the National Helping Individuals with criminal records Re-enter through Employment Network is both a national clearinghouse for information and an advocate for policy change.

The goal of the **National H.I.R.E. Network** is to increase the number and quality of job opportunities available to people with criminal records by changing public policies, employment practices and public opinion. The National H.I.R.E. Network also provides training and technical assistance to agencies working to improve the employment prospects for people with criminal records. www.hirenetwork.org

✓ **Bonding Program**

Purpose—Bonding is a unique and innovative tool for marketing an applicant to an employer. As an employer incentive, it conveys a businesslike approach. The employer gets the worker's skills, abilities and knowledge without taking risk of potential employee dishonesty. There are **no forms** or other papers for the employer to sign, and **no processing** to delay matters – **the insurance can be put into effect instantly**. The **bond insurance can apply to any job** and covers any employee dishonesty that occurs on or away from the employer's work facility. Full or part-time employees' paid wages (with federal taxes automatically deducted from pay) can be bonded; these Fidelity Bonds cannot cover self-employment.

Why bonding is needed -Job seekers who have in the past committed a fraudulent or dishonest act, or who have demonstrated other past behavior which casts doubt upon their credibility or honesty, often experience a special barrier to gaining employment due to their personal backgrounds. Such persons are routinely classified as "at-risk" job applicants when their past life experience raises an obstacle to their future ability to secure employment. More specifically, *employers view these applicants as being potentially untrustworthy workers*. This fear is further heightened by the fact that Fidelity Bond insurance commercially purchased by employers to protect against employee dishonesty usually will not cover those at risk – these persons are designated by insurance companies as being "NOT BONDABLE." As a result, at risk job applicants are routinely denied employment. **Ex-offenders**, including anyone with a record of arrest, conviction, or imprisonment, and anyone who has ever been on probation or parole, are at-risk job applicants. Others, similarly at risk and NOT BONDABLE **are ex-addicts** (persons with a history of alcohol and drug abuse), persons having a **poor credit record**, or who have declared bankruptcy, **economically disadvantaged persons who lack a work history**, and individuals who were **dishonorably discharged** from the military. Other job seekers also can be classified as at-risk if bonding can eliminate the barrier to their employment.

✓ The VA's **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment** services help veterans with service-connected disabilities by providing job training and counseling to those who have an employment handicap. Services include help finding a job, on-the-job training, job development, and vocational training. If you are not eligible for these services, a VA counselor may help you find other options, goals, or programs. Contact your VA Regional Office (VARO) at 1-800-827-1000, or go to www.vba.va.gov.

✓ Through its **Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) programs**, the VA offers structured work opportunities and supervised therapeutic housing for at-risk and homeless veterans with physical, mental health and addictions problems. The CWT program partners with the public sector for work by these veterans, who learn job skills, re-learn successful work habits, and regain a sense of self-esteem. Veterans are paid for their work and given assistance with employment in the community. In South Carolina, the VA currently has CWT Programs located at **WJB Dorn VAMC in Columbia at (803) 776-4000 x7445/7697 and Ralph Johnson VAMC in Charleston at (843) 577-5011 x7953**.

CWT/Transitional Work Program:

Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Work (CWT/TW) is a pre-employment vocational assessment program that operates in the VA medical center and community. CWT/TW participants are screened by vocational rehabilitation staff and matched to a work assignment for a limited time as is clinically appropriate. CWT/TW functions like a “real” job, is supervised by work site staff, and places the same job expectations and demands on the veteran that are experienced by other non-CWT workers in the company. Every CWT/TW participant has an Individual Treatment or Service Plan and is case managed by a VA Vocational Specialist. Each participating veteran must be physician referred to PSR vocational services and should have some type of mental or physical disability. As such, veterans enrolled in PSR vocational programs are not considered employees of the VA or participating company and receive none of the traditional employee benefits. There are no direct government entitlements that subsidize the veteran’s earnings in CWT/TW programs.

CWT/Supported Employment Program:

The Compensated Work Therapy/Supported Employment (CWT/SE) program consists of competitive employment with therapeutic supports. The focus of CWT/SE is to assist veterans with psychosis and other serious mental illness gain access to meaningful gainful employment. Veterans unable to participate in CWT/SE due to complex treatment demands may engage at a full and part time level utilizing various adaptations to customized employment and/or community- based transitional work as the primary model. CWT/SE may continue indefinitely but generally participation and supports are phased out after the veteran is able to function independently and it is deemed clinically appropriate. The implementation of Public Law 108-170, the *Veterans Health Care, Capital Asset, and Business Improvement Act of 2003*, section 104, “Enhancement of Rehabilitative Services,” expands rehabilitation services provided by the CWT program as authorized under 38 U.S.C. 1718. This law allows CWT to provide job development, job placement, supported employment, and community services to veterans. These services commonly describe a clinical model of vocational rehabilitation termed Supported Employment that helps individuals with serious mental illness engage in competitive employment in the community.

CWT and VA Benefits:

Participation in the Incentive Therapy, or CWT Transitional or Support Employment programs cannot be used to reduce, deny, or discontinue VA compensation or pension. Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 1718(g), a veteran's participation in or receipt of a distribution as a result of participation in an activity carried out under 38 U.S.C. 1718 may not be considered as a basis for denial or discontinuance of a rating of total disability for the purposes of compensation or pension based on the veterans inability to secure or follow a substantially gainful occupation as a result of disability. Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 1718(g) (1) and (g) (2), 38 CFR 342(b) (4) (ii), 38 CFR 3.343(c) (1), and 38 C.F.R. 4.16(a) neither participation in, nor the receipt of remuneration as a result of participation in, a therapeutic or rehabilitation activity under 38 U.S.C. 1718 shall be considered evidence

of employability. Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 1718(g) (3) and 38 CFR 3.272(l), for the purposes of 38 U.S.C. chapter 15, Pension For Non-Service- Connected Disability, a distribution of funds and a payment made to a veteran under a program of rehabilitative services authorized by 38 U.S.C. 1718, are considered to be a donation from a public or private relief or welfare organization, and are not included in determining annual income.

Non-Service Connected Pension:

For some veterans receiving a non-service connected pension, an Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) must be completed annually. The EVR Instructions (VA Form 21-0510) details the process for reporting income. Incentive Therapy and/or CWT income should be specifically reported.

Service-Connected Disability Compensation and Individual Un-employability:

There are two ways for a veteran to achieve a total disability rating. The first possibility is to qualify for a 100 percent rating under the rating schedule set forth in part 4 of 38 C.F.R. The second possibility is to meet the standards of the regulations governing "individual unemployability" (IU). IU exists as a concept to cover the situation in which a service connected disability makes the veteran unemployable, even though an average person with a similar impairment could secure and retain substantial gainful employment. Since the rating schedule focuses on the average person, the concept of IU is necessary to take into account circumstances such as education and past employment history that are peculiar to the claimant and to implement "the established policy of the Department of Veterans' Affairs that all veterans who are unable to secure and follow a substantially gainful occupation by reason of service-connected disabilities shall be rated totally disabled. For some veterans receiving service- connected compensation at the 100 percent level based Individual Unemployability, an Employment Questionnaire (VA Form 21-4140-1) must be completed annually (see website). Incentive Therapy and/or CWT employment should be reported on the Employment Questionnaire, and the type of employment should be specified.

The State of South Carolina has a **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. Incarcerated veterans may request that the Chaplain at your institution, set up a meeting with the VR representative before release. If an appointment cannot be obtained prior to release, apply for these services immediately after your release. Look in the phone book blue pages under "Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)," then "Vocational Rehabilitation," or search the Internet for "Vocational Rehabilitation" (www.scrd.net).

How working affects Veterans financial benefits?

- ✓ **Service Connected (SC) Compensation:** A service-connected disability is an entitlement program that once received is guaranteed for life REGARDLESS OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS. The only exception to this employment status rule involves an individual who has IU (Individual Unemployability) who is paid at 100%, but in actuality is NOT 100% SC. A vet sometimes receives IU after an exhaustive

investigation and verification of their inability to work as a result of their high SC plus environmental and/or burden on community resources (high uses of public funding such as section 8 or other state/local resources). If a Veteran with IU works in the community (outside CWT/SE), the difference in their 100% and their actual SC% money will be reduced. The math is complicated, but a vet can find out exactly how much money they will lose by working, either by contacting the VA at 1 (800) 827-1000 or else hear this directly by Veteran Service representatives (VSR) at VARO.

- ✓ **Non-Service Connected (NSC) Pension:** NSC is an eligibility (unlike entitlement) program based on both needs of individual vets, as well as their year(s) in service. They must either have served during a wartime era, or have a severe disability which renders them unemployable based on medical records to that affect. Sometimes a veteran will choose to take the Non-Service Connected Pension (NSC) if it pays them more than a low SC compensation (10-30%) will pay. If a vet chooses to receive the NSC pension (as opposed to a low SC disability compensation such as 10-20%), then working in the community (taking a real job) their NSC pension will be reduced dollar for dollar, but their SC% check will automatically be reinstated. There are currently no incentives to return to work in the community with the NSC Pension. If a veteran works more than 20 hours per week, even at minimum wage, they would earn more than they would by maintaining the pension. VACO has recently acquiesced to allow vets to work in the community if they are participating in our new supported employment programs, but vets must be involved in CWT/SE in order to remain exempt. Therefore, the same protection will apply for these vets that the CWT/IT programs offer. See website for the applicable law:
<http://vaww1.va.gov/vitraining>

FINANCIAL HELP

- ✓ If you are unemployed with little or no income, you may be able to get **food stamps**. A person may normally qualify for \$85 to \$100 worth of food stamps per month. Call the toll-free information number at 1-800-221-5689, or find a list of food stamp hotlines for each state at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contact_info/hotlines.htm. You can also contact the local Department of Human Services, many drop-in shelters, or legal aid services to ask for an application. **NOTE: Individuals who have a federal or state felony conviction for possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance which the individual committed after August 22, 1996 are ineligible for food stamps.**
- ✓ **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has a program called Emergency Food and Shelter Program to help prevent homelessness. Contact the local Office of the Mayor or United Way to ask who awards this money in your area and what the rules are.

LEGAL HELP

Veteran status issues:

- ✓ You should talk to a **Veterans Advocate Service Officer** for help with discharge upgrades, seeking benefits, and filing a VA claim (call 1-800-562-2308 for the nearest Service Officer).

Other legal issues:

- ✓ Most law is state-specific. Most common legal problems are governed by the law in the state where you live or where the problem occurred. When looking for legal help, make sure that information you find applies to your state, or that the lawyer or other service provider is qualified to work in your state.
- ✓ The **American Bar Association** has a web site with guidelines about free legal services and links to directories of legal aid offices and pro-bono programs. Go to: www.abanet.org
- ✓ **Legal Services or Legal Aid offices** have staff lawyers to provide free legal help to poor clients. The lawyers are usually experts in the types of problems that poor clients often have. Look in the yellow pages for a local Legal Aid office or check online for the program, nearest you. Go to www.rinlsc.gov/rinboard/rguide/pdirl.htm.
- ✓ **Pine Tree Legal Assistance** has an online list of organizations across the nation that provides free legal help to clients who qualify. Go to www.ptla.org/legal-services-links.
- ✓ Lawyers in private practice sometimes volunteer in "pro-bono" programs to take cases for poor clients free of charge. Check the yellow pages to contact your **Local Bar Association** to learn if there is a pro-bono program in your community, or go to www.sctbar.org.
- ✓ The Ask-A-Lawyer Program coordinates volunteer lawyers for televised phone banks and Web chats in an effort to assist the public with its legal questions. During each event, phone banks are aired on evening news programs to encourage the

public to call in with questions. Lawyers also respond to questions via the Internet.

WOMEN VETERANS

- ✓ Most VA **Medical Centers, Regional Offices and Vet Centers** have a designated Women Veterans Coordinator to assist women veterans in accessing VA benefit programs and healthcare services. Veterans may call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.southeast.va.gov/>, to find the medical center nearest you.
 - **Women Veteran Hotline** responds to question about women Veterans and their available benefits and services and resources. It is aimed at increasing women Veterans' knowledge of VA services . **1-855 VA WOMAN or 1-855-829-6636.**
 - **The Center for Women Veterans**, 810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20420, 1-800-827-1000, <http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>
 - Many women in prison had similar histories, problems, and personal issues before their arrest and conviction. Mentors with **Women in Community Service (WICS)** help women preparing to leave prison and those who are just getting back into society. WICS' prison programs help women think about their behavior, gain job skills, and build self-esteem. Contact the U.S. DOL, Job Corps at 1-800-283-9427 or go to www.wics.org to find the nearest WICS program.

New VA burial benefits in effect

The Veterans Administration has recently improved monetary burial benefits for both service-related and non-service related deaths to simplify the program and pay eligible survivors more quickly and efficiently.

New regulations authorize VA to pay - without a written application - most eligible surviving spouses basic monetary burial benefits at the maximum amount authorized in law through automated systems, rather than reimbursing them for actual costs incurred.

Currently, VA pays for burial and funeral expenses on a reimbursement basis, which requires survivors to submit receipts for relatively small one-time payments that VA generally pays at the maximum amount permitted by law. Now, the VA can pay at a flat rate, burial and plot or interment allowances, enabling VA to automate payment of burial benefits to most eligible surviving spouses and more efficiently process other burial benefit claims.

The burial allowance for a non-service connected death is \$300, and up to \$2,000 for a death connected with military service. For non-service connected death, several

categories determine the amount of burial and funeral expense that will be paid. For example, VA will pay up to \$700, if hospitalized by VA at time of death, or \$300, if not hospitalized by VA, and a \$700 plot-interment allowance if not buried in a national cemetery).

The time period in which the death occurred also determines the benefit that will be paid. For deaths that occurred between Dec. 1, 2001 and Sept. 30, 2011, VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial-funeral expenses and a \$300 plot-interment allowance. For deaths that occurred between April 1, 1988 and Sept. 30, 2011, VA will pay \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses - for veterans hospitalized by the VA at the time of death.

Eligibility requirements include the following criteria:

- You paid for a veteran's burial or funeral, AND
- You have not been reimbursed by another government agency or some other source, such as the deceased veteran's employer, AND
- The Veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable, AND
- The Veteran died because of a service-related disability, OR
- The Veteran was receiving VA pension or compensation at the time of death, OR
- The Veteran was entitled to receive VA pension or compensation, but decided not to reduce his-her military retirement or disability pay, OR
- the Veteran died while hospitalized by VA, or while receiving care under VA contract at a non-VA facility, OR
- The Veteran died while traveling under proper authorization and at VA expense to or from a specified place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care, OR
- The Veteran had an original or reopened claim pending at the time of death and has been found entitled to compensation or pension from a date prior to the date of death, OR
- The Veteran died on or after October 9, 1996, while a patient at a VA-approved state nursing home.

To apply for this benefit, the survivor will need to provide an acceptable proof of death, receipted bills or statement of account from the funeral home or cemetery owner.

Additionally, VA Form 21-530, Application for Burial Allowance, must be completed and submitted. The form and instructions are available at

<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21P-530-ARE.pdf>.

Resource - Internet Sites

American Bar Association	www.abanet.org
The American Legion - Dept of SC	www.scarolinalegion.org/
Compensated Work Therapy Programs	www.va.gov/health/cwt
Cooperative Ministry	www.coopmin.org
Department of Housing and Urban Development	www.hud.gov/h
Food Stamps	www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contactinfo/hotlines.htm
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill	www.nami.org
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans_	www.nchv.org
National Health Care for the Homeless Council	www.nhchc.org
National Mental Health Association	www.nmha.org
Pine Tree Legal Assistance	www.ptla.org/links/services.htm
Salvation Army	www.uss.salvationarmy.org
Social Security Administration	www.ssa.gov/
Local Bar Association	www.sctbar.org
South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault	www.sccadvasa.org
South Carolina Dept of Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Services	www.daodas.state.sc.us/web
South Carolina Security Commission	www.sces.org
South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation	www.scvrd.net
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi
United Way	www.unitedway.org
US Dept of Veterans Affairs (USDVA)	www.va.gov/
Veterans Benefits	www/vba.va.gov
Veterans Health Administration – VISN 7	www.southeast.va.gov/

VETERANS BENEFITS TIMETABLE
Information for Veterans Recently Separated from Active Military Service

BENEFITS AND SERVICES		TIME LIMIT	WHERE TO APPLY
Disability Compensation: VA pays monthly compensation to veterans for disabilities incurred or aggravated during military service. This benefit is not subject to Federal or State income tax. Entitlement is established from the date of separation if the claim is filed within one year from separation. Generally, military retirement pay is reduced by any VA compensation received. Income from Special Separation Benefits (SSB) and Voluntary Separation Incentives (VSI) affects the amount of VA compensation paid.		None	Any VA office or call 1-800-827-1000 or file at www.va.gov
Disability Pension: This income-based benefit is paid to veterans with honorable war-time service who are permanently and totally disabled due to non service-connected disabilities or who are 65 or older.		None	
Medical: VA provides a wide range of health care services to veterans including treatment for military sexual trauma, and for conditions possibly related to exposure to Agent Orange, ionizing radiation, and other environmental hazards in the Persian Gulf. Generally, veterans must be enrolled in VA's Health Care System to receive care.		None	Any VA medical facility or call 1-877-222-8387 or file at www.va.gov
Combat Veterans: VA provides free health care for veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, for any illness possibly related to their service in that theater.	If discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003	Five years from date of discharge from active duty	
	If discharged from active duty before January 28, 2003, and were not enrolled as of January 28, 2008	Until January 27, 2011	
Dental: Veterans may receive one-time dental treatment if they were not provided treatment within 90 days before separation from active duty. The time limit does not apply to veterans with dental conditions resulting from service-connected wounds or injuries.		180 days from separation	
Education and Training: Up to 36 months of benefits for:	Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty (Chapter 30)	10 years from release from last period of active duty. Limited extensions available.	Any VA office or call 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551) or file at www.gibill.va.gov
	OR Post- 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)	15 years from last discharge or separation. Limited extensions	

<p style="text-align: center;">OR Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserve (Chapter - 1606)</p>	<p>14 years from the date of eligibility for the program, or until released from the Selected Reserve or National Guard, whichever occurs first. Some extensions available if activated.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">OR Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP/Chapter 1607)</p>	<p>No time limit as long as individual remains in the same level of the Ready Reserve from which called to active duty. There are exceptions for discharge due to disability or transfer from the IRR to the Selected Reserve. REAP participants who separated from the Selected Reserve after completing their service contract under other than dishonorable conditions are now eligible for REAP benefits for 10 years after they are separated from the Selected Reserve.</p>	
<p>Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment: VA helps veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find and keep suitable employment. For veterans with serious service-connected disabilities, VA also offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. Some of the services offered are: job search, vocational evaluation, career exploration, vocational training, education training and rehabilitation service.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Generally 12 years from VA notice to veteran of at least a 10 percent disability rating.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Any VA office or call 1-800-827-1000 or file at www.va.gov</p>
<p>Home Loan: Veterans with qualifying service are eligible for VA home loan services including guaranteed loans for the purchase of a home, manufactured home, manufactured home and lot, certain types of condominiums, or to build, repair, and improve homes. Certain disabled veterans can receive grants to have their homes specially adapted to their needs. Native Americans living on Trust Land may qualify for a direct home loan.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">None</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Any VA office or call 1-800-827-1000</p>

APPENDIX

Forms

VA Form 10-10EZ	Application for Health Benefits
SF 180	Request Pertaining to Military Records
DD Form 149	Application for Correction of Military Record
DD Form 293	Application for the Review of Discharge
VA Form 5655	Financial Status Report
VA Form 21-526EZ	Application for Compensation or Pension- must be filed to apply for compensation or pension. Mail your DD-214 and the following forms to the VARO nearest your release destination.
VA Form 21-4138	Statement in Support of Claim - lets you explain why you deserve the benefits you are asking for because of your disability or disorder. It is best to have an experienced service representative help you complete the form.
VA Form 3288	Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Individual's Records
VA Form 70-3288	Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Individual's Records - is used to get records relevant to your claim from VA facilities (regional offices, medical centers, outpatient clinics, and vet centers). Request a fee waiver under section 38 C.F.R. Sec.1.526 (h), which requires the VARO to provide a veteran with one set of his or her records free of charge.

If you have never had medical treatment at a Veterans Medical Center, then this form would not be needed. VA facilities are NOT associated with military treatment facilities and the VA hospital would not have your military medical records.

FACT SHEETS

Incarcerated Veterans: Can a Veteran Receive VA Benefits While in Prison?

VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP)