

November 2015

# Puerto Rico

# And the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

## General Information

The [Department of Veterans Affairs](http://www.va.gov/) (VA) offers a wide variety of programs and services for the nation’s 22 million veterans and continues to emphasize three long-term goals: increasing access to VA benefits and services, reducing the claims backlog, and eliminating veterans’ homelessness. In addition, VA has placed renewed emphasis on rebuilding trust with America’s veterans, improving service delivery, and transforming the agency to empower veterans to more easily navigate VA and access their earned care and benefits.

### Increasing Access

In 2014, about 9.1 million veterans were enrolled in [VA health care](http://www.va.gov/health/). With additional staff and expanded hours of operation, nearly 118,000 more participants received health care than the previous year. In 2014, more than 4.3 million veterans and survivors received [VA disability compensation or pensions](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/) totaling more than $60 billion. The same year, more than a million recipients participated in VA’s [GI Bill®](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/get_started.asp) and [other educational programs](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/education_programs.asp) with expenditures totaling nearly $12.4 billion. More than 123,000 trainees participated in VA’s [vocational rehabilitation](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm) activities in 2014, and nationally, some 6.4 million lives were insured through [life insurance](http://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/) policies valued at more than $1.2 trillion. More than 125,000 veterans and family members were buried in VA’s [national cemeteries](http://www.cem.va.gov/index.asp) and nearly 355,000 headstones and markers were provided for veterans’ graves worldwide.

### Reducing the Claims Backlog

Since 2011, VA has undergone the most significant transformation in its history to improve the delivery of VA benefits. In 2014, VA completed a record-breaking 1.32 million claims – over 150,000 more than 2013 – the fifth year in a row of more than one million completed disability claims. By the end of 2014, VA had reduced the disability claims backlog to 242,000 – a 60 percent reduction from its peak of 611,000 in March 2013 – and veterans waited, on average, 119 fewer days for a claims decision. By transforming to an electronic processing environment, using mandatory overtime, and through other innovative initiatives, VA continued to make dramatic reductions to the backlog in 2015.

### Eliminating Homelessness

Since 2010, more than 360,000 veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through support provided by VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). VA, along with HUD and hundreds of community organizations across the country have reduced the estimated number of homeless veterans by more than 36 percent since 2010. VA’s [joint program with HUD](http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp) has provided housing vouchers for more than 79,000 veterans; VA is expanding other successful programs such as [Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp) to prevent tens of thousands of veterans and their families from becoming homeless each year.

### General Information – Puerto Rico (Fiscal year 2014 data)

* *Number of veterans: 93,240*
* *VA expenditures in Puerto Rico: $1.6 billion*
	+ *Compensation and pensions: $816.5 million*
	+ *Medical and construction programs: $657 million*
	+ *Insurance and indemnities: $2.8 million*
	+ *General operating expenses: $22 million*
* *Number of veterans receiving disability compensation or pension payments: 34,624*
* *Number of Puerto Ricans using GI Bill® or other VA education benefits: 7,240*
* *Number of home loans in Puerto Rico backed by VA guarantees: 1,441*
* *Value of Puerto Rico home loans guaranteed by VA: $219 million*
* *Number of VA life insurance policies held by Puerto Rico residents: 3,386*
* *Value of VA life insurance policies held by Puerto Rico residents: $35 million*
* *Number of Puerto Rico participants in VA vocational rehabilitation: 684*
* *Number of veterans buried in Puerto Rico’s VA national cemeteries: 1,710*
* *Number of headstones and markers provided for graves of Puerto Rico veterans and survivors: 3,378*

## Health Care

One of the most visible of all VA benefits is [health care](http://www1.va.gov/health/index.asp). VA provides health care services to veterans at 1,588 locations. VA also operates 300 Vet Centers and 70 Mobile Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling to veterans and their families. Veterans can access outpatient care at 1,207 locations, acute inpatient (hospital) care at 144 locations, community living centers at 134 locations and residential rehabilitation at 114 locations. In 2014, VA treated more than six million patients during 92 million outpatient visits and nearly 707,000 inpatient admissions. Another 1.3 million received [care in local communities](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/), funded by VA.  New technologies are expanding access to care.  For example, [VA telehealth programs](http://www.telehealth.va.gov/) – the largest and most comprehensive in the nation – are turning veterans’ homes and communities into preferred sites of care.  In 2014, VA’s telehealth programs provided care to more than 717,000 veterans in more than 2.1 million episodes of care.  Outreach using mobile health clinics and [rural health care](http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/) partnerships continues to expand access to veterans in rural areas.

### Health Care - Puerto Rico

* *Inpatient admissions, statewide, fiscal year 2014:*
* [*San Juan*](http://www.caribbean.va.gov)*: 10,494*
* *Outpatient visits, statewide, fiscal year 2014: More than 1 million*
* *Puerto Rico veterans authorized for VA-funded care in the community:  17,983*
* *Outpatient clinic locations*

Arecibo

Ceiba

Comerio

Guayama

Mayaguez

Ponce

Utuado

Vieques

* *Veterans* [*Readjustment Counseling*](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/Vet_Center_Services.asp) *Centers**(Vet Centers)* [*Locations*](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter.asp?isFlash=0)*:*

*Arecibo*

*Ponce*

*Rio Piedras*

## Disabilities and Pensions

Not all military service-related issues end when people are [discharged from active duty](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal).  In 2014, VA paid $58.4 billion in disability compensation benefits to 3.9 million veterans for medical conditions incurred or aggravated during their active military service.  Additionally, VA paid an estimated $5.2 billion in pension benefits to 521,000 low-income, wartime veterans and survivors in 2014.  Veterans and survivors who are eligible for VA pension benefits and are housebound or require the [aid and attendance](http://www.benefits.va.gov/PENSION/aid_attendance_housebound.asp) of another person may also be eligible to receive additional monetary amounts.

### Disabilities and Pensions - Puerto Rico (Fiscal year 2014 data)

* *Number of veterans receiving monthly disability compensation: 25,380*
* *Number of VA pensions to veterans in Puerto Rico: 9,244*
* *Number of disability claims processed: 13,616*

## Memorial Affairs

Most men and women who served in the military are [eligible for burial](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/burial_benefits/eligible.asp) in a VA national cemetery, as are their spouses and dependent children.  VA manages the country’s [network of national cemeteries](http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/listcem.asp) with approximately 3.4 million [gravesites](http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/) at 133 national cemeteries in 40 states and Puerto Rico, as well as in 33 soldier’s lots and monument sites.  In 2014, more than 125,000 veterans and dependents were buried in VA's national cemeteries. Additionally, VA provided more than 355,000 [headstones and markers](http://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/index.asp) and over 618,000 [Presidential Memorial Certificates](http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.asp) to the loved ones of deceased veterans.  VA also has provided funding for the creation of 95 [state veterans cemeteries](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/grants/veterans_cemeteries.asp) since the [Veterans Cemetery Grants Program](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/grants/veterans_cemeteries.asp) began in 1978. In 2014, more than 32,000 burials were conducted in state cemeteries.

### Memorial Affairs – Puerto Rico (Fiscal year 2014 data)

* *National cemetery burials in Puerto Rico:*
* [*Puerto Rico National Cemetery*](http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/puertorico.asp)*: 1,710*
* *Headstones and markers provided (statewide): 3,378*
* *Presidential Memorial Certificates issued (statewide): 1,455*

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