



A GUIDEBOOK FOR VETERANS INCARCERATED IN TEXAS

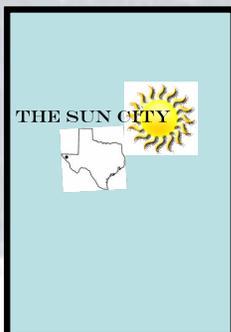
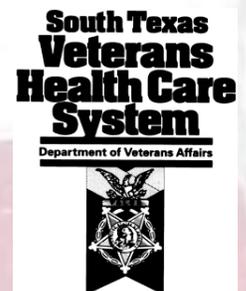
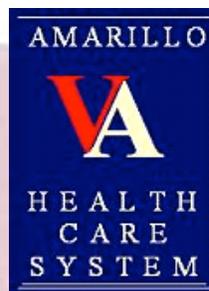


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FORWARD

This handbook can be an important tool. Review all of the programs thoroughly to understand the opportunities available. When these programs are used properly, the benefits can minimize outside pressures you may be confronted when released. These resources may assist you in establishing social acceptance, economic security, and your new place as a productive member of society.

This booklet is a tool for incarcerated Veterans and their families who wish access services to support a new and better way of life. Be aware that this guidebook is designed to assist Veterans incarcerated in the State of Texas, and their families. Laws do vary from state to state; therefore, check your state laws and regulations against this guide. The guidebook may found on the internet at <http://www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/Reentry.asp>

Agency staff names and addresses, phone numbers and website addresses change. If you attempt to contact one of the resources in this guidebook and it is not current, do your best to obtain the current information through phone information or an internet search. To perpetuate the value of this document, we respectfully request that if you discover any incorrect, conflicting, or out-of-date information in this Guidebook, please send any discrepancies and updated information to:

Warren Pearson, warren.pearson@va.gov
Health Care for Reentry Veterans Specialist

We would like to recognize and thank: 1) the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans which provided basic concepts and core information for this guide through its "Planning for Your Release" guide funded by the U.S. Department of Labor; 2) the Veterans Incarcerated Workgroup of Walla Walla, Washington, for the concept of state-specific information in its "Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans" and for allowing the use of its guide as a template for this publication; 3) Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. for developing the first incarcerated Veterans guidebook, which has inspired and informed subsequent efforts; and 4) any public domain and agency resources included in the guidebook.

Information on the National Veterans Reentry Program which includes all state Reentry Guidebooks can be found at:

<http://www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/Reentry.asp>

SECTION I

USING THIS GUIDE AND SEEKING HELP

This guide was developed for you to use 6 months prior to your release and to keep as a reference after your release. It includes addresses, phone numbers, and web sites that you can use to find out about programs and other help available after your release. You may want to ask a friend or family member to help you find the information you need if you do not have phone or internet access. **Keep in mind that this guide does not include all of the services available.** What is available in one area may be different from what is available in another, so be sure to check with local resources to learn about services in your area.

While you are in prison, find out which unit in your facility can help you plan for your release (often the education or transfer unit). Classes may be offered so you can work on skills development and prepare for life after release. **You do not want to risk homelessness once you are released, so take advantage of the opportunities available to you.**

Begin thinking about what specifically you will need upon release. Ask yourself these kinds of questions: Will I need housing? Will I need medical, substance abuse, or mental health care? Do I need to learn a job skill? Do I have any other legal issues, such as child support? How do I restart my VA checks or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Make a list of your needs. Remember that this is just a tool to help you get organized. A sample list might look like this:

- I need a place to live. I need a job.
- I need clothing to wear to work.
- I need to find out what benefits I can get as a Veteran.
- I want to get addictions treatment. I owe child support.

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

Affordable Care Act

Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care are covered

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.

Think about your list as you read this guide. Who do you think can help you with each of your needs? Is there one organization that may be able to work with you, on many different things, or do you need to contact several agencies? Keep track of the steps you take, including the dates and names of people you contact for information or assistance. Although this guide provides *national and state* addresses for many organizations, we recommend you **check your phone book for local, county, and state agencies that know what help is available in your area.** When writing a letter to request information, **be clear.** Keep your letter short, to the point, and write legibly. Include the following information:

- Your name, social security number and contact information.
- A brief statement about your current situation.
- Your specific request.
- What you have done so far (Example: I have written to _____ X _____ organization and they suggested I contact you).
- Any restrictions for mailings (Example: Mail with staples or paper clips will not be accepted by my prison facility).

When contacting an agency for help by mail, email, or phone. It pays to be persistent but polite. Ask questions if information is not clear to you. Remember that many organizations are staffed by volunteers who are eager to help but may not have the answers you are looking for. **If someone cannot help you, ask about who can.**

The Internet can also be helpful to find information about VA benefits and community resources in your area. This guide includes web addresses, when available. If computer access is not available at your facility, you can visit the public library after release. Computer access may also be provided at Workforce and Workforce Affiliate sites, Workforce Development Council member locations, and Employment Security Department offices (referred to as Job Service Centers or Unemployment Offices).

The Department of Veterans Affairs nor any of its employees assumes any legal liability or responsibility of the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any non-VA resources. Information provided regarding non-VA resources, whether expressed or implied, does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the VA or any of its employees.

SECTION II

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. 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. Unfortunately, the VA does not have programs an inmate can parole to.

TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Crisis and other toll-free numbers are often listed in the front cover or first 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.

- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs** — <http://www.va.gov/> or <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/index.html>
 - ✓ Information on Medical Centers: 877-222-8387, or <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>
 - ✓ VA Suicide Hotline - 800-273-TALK (8255) or go to <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
- **Veterans Affairs Regional Offices:**
 - ✓ 6900 Almeda Rd., Houston, TX 77030 Main Number 800-827-1000
701 Clay Ave, Waco TX 76799 Main Number 800-827-1000
 - ✓ Persian Gulf War Helpline: 800-749-8387
- **Focus On Recovery Helpline** - A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 800-888-9383
- **National AIDS Hotline** - Talk to someone who knows about HIV / AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 800-822-7422
- **National Veterans Foundation** – call 888-777-4443 or go to <http://www.nvf.org/>

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 tokens, 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!**

The Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have developed a working definition of chronic homelessness: "an unaccompanied adult homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." This definition is significant because it focuses national attention on those with the greatest needs.

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 <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/index.asp>

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has founded a National Call Center for Homeless Veterans hotline to ensure that homeless Veterans or Veterans at-risk for homelessness have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. National Call Center 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838) or go <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp>

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides assistance with Veterans benefits and 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 877-222-8387 or go to <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> to find the medical center nearest you. Call 800-827-1000 for the nearest VA benefits office.

The Health Care for Reentry Veterans Program (HCRV) operates in all 50 states under the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Administration. The program serves Veterans who are incarcerated in State and Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) correctional facilities. The State of Texas is divided into three Veterans Integrated Service Networks or VISNs: VISNs 16, 17, & 18. Nationwide, there are 21 separate VISNs. Each VISN has a Reentry Specialist who coordinates services within his/her respective Network, as well as with other Reentry Specialists across the nation. In Texas, the Reentry Specialists work in partnership with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Parole/Probation to provide reentry-planning services to eligible Veterans who are incarcerated. **Veterans cannot parole to the HCRV program.** Below are the HCRV Specialists in Texas:

<p>David H Sands, LCSW Healthcare for Reentry Veterans Program Conroe VA Outpatient Clinic 3rd Floor 690 South Loop 336 West Conroe, TX 77304 Cell: 281-808-1135 Fax 936-522-4022 Sands.DavidH@va.gov</p>	<p>Warren Pearson, LCSW Health Care for Reentry Veterans 4800 Memorial Drive # 116B Waco TX 76711 800-423-2111, Ext. 53699 or 254-297-3699 Warren.Pearson@va.gov</p>
	<p>Eileen Callejas, LMSW (10N17/MH) Health Care for Reentry Veterans Fair Haven Clinic 4071 Medical Drive San Antonio, TX 78229 866-560-6773, Ext. 64907 or 210 949-9007 Eileen.callejas@va.gov</p>

Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) provides assistance with Veterans benefits & entitlements information, VA claims process, representation and advocacy, Veterans Homes for those in need of nursing care, and employment assistance through federal funded reintegration projects. Call 800-252-VETS (8387) or go to www.TVC.state.tx.us

National Coalition for the Homeless has a directory of shelters and homeless assistance programs online. This does not list every program in the country, so be sure to check your phone book for local programs. The following are those listed for the State of Texas. Call 800-838-4357 or go to www.nchv.org

HOW CAN YOU GET MORE INFORMATION?

To connect with any of these homeless services, please call VA's toll-free National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) to speak to a trained VA responder. The hotline is available 24/7 and is free. Neither VA registration nor enrollment in VA healthcare or benefits is required to use this service.

When you call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) :

- You will be connected to a trained VA responder.
- The responder will ask a few questions to assess your needs.
- If you're a Veteran, you may be connected with the Homeless Program point of contact at the nearest VA facility.
- Contact information will be requested so staff may follow up.

Housing Assistance

There are many federal housing programs that can support homeless Veterans and their families. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) partner to provide permanent, supportive housing and treatment services for homeless Veterans

The Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program is a joint effort between HUD and VA to move Veterans and their families out of homelessness and into permanent housing. HUD provides housing assistance through its Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) that allows homeless Veterans to rent privately owned housing. VA offers eligible homeless Veterans clinical and supportive services through its health care system in all 50 states.

Directory of Local Homeless Service Organizations

- **Salvation Army** provides services, including shelter and transitional housing, for homeless individuals and families. For local services and information, contact The Salvation Army nearest you or call 800-725-2769 (800-SAL-ARMY) or go to http://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/www_usn_2.nsf
- **United Way** provides a variety of services through local organizations. Check the phone book for a local post or locate local organizations online at <http://liveunited.org/> or dial 2-1-1.
- **Texas Homeless Network** provides a directory of organizations assisting homeless individuals. Call 1-800-531-0828 or go to <http://www.thn.org/>
- **Local churches**, synagogues, mosques, temples, etc. **and community faith-based organizations**, such as 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.

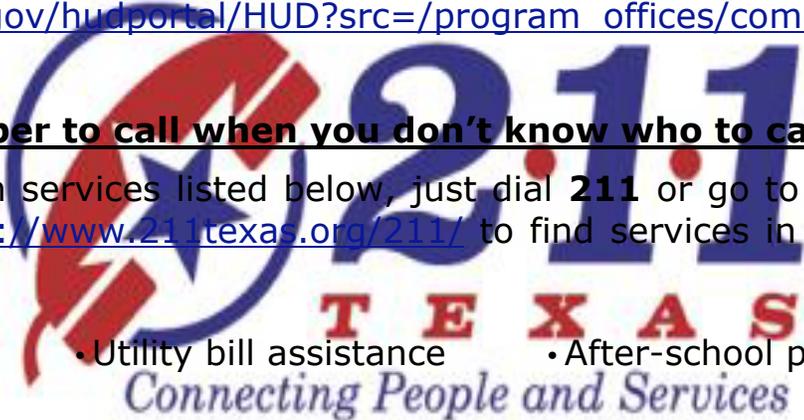
HOUSING

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.

Emergency and Transitional Housing

- 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 http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless
- **2-1-1: The number to call when you don't know who to call.**

If you need help with services listed below, just dial **211** or go to the 2-1-1 Texas website: <https://www.211texas.org/211/> to find services in your area including:

- 
- Food
 - Shelter
 - Rent assistance
 - Utility bill assistance
 - Counseling
 - Child care
 - After-school programs
 - Senior services
 - Disaster relief

Transitional / Supportive Housing

Grant and Per Diem / HUD-VASH - Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> to find the medical center nearest you.

- **HUD-VASH (VA Supported Housing)** - includes homeless Veterans who usually present with mental health or addiction disorders. However, other homeless Veterans with diminished functional capacity and resultant need for case management are also eligible for the program. Veterans are screened for eligibility and eventually placed in a public housing agency (PHA) appropriate apartment that is within the catchment area of the VA Case Manager. The HUD-VASH Program is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supported Housing (VASH).
- **Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD)** - Temporary Housing- The purpose is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and/or supportive services with the goal of helping homeless Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination.

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."

- **Texas Low Income Housing Information Service** is an organization with the mission of supporting low-income Texans' efforts to have a decent home in a quality neighborhood. Contact them at 508 Powell Street, Austin, TX 78703-5122 or call 512-477-8910, extension 4, or go to <http://www.texashousing.org/>
- **Texas Department of State Health Services**
Contact them at P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347 or call 512-458-7111 or 1-888-963-7111 or go to <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/>

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. Don't wait until you get out to start thinking about what you will do. Start planning now!

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Federal employment in the U.S.A.: WWW.USAJOBS.GOV

- **Veterans Employment Representatives** (Texas Veterans Commission) and **Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist** assigned by the **State Employment**. Go to <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/locations/>
 - **Texas Workforce Commission.** The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is the state government agency charged with overseeing and providing workforce development services to employers and job seekers of Texas. For employers, TWC offers recruiting, retention, training and retraining, and outplacement services as well as valuable information on labor law and labor market statistics. For job seekers, TWC offers career development information, job search resources, training programs, and, as appropriate, unemployment benefits. TWC state office main number Call: 512-463-2222
 - Go to <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/customers/jsemp/job-seekers-employees.html>
 - **Job search websites for ex-felons** - Search for jobs in any city, find employers, post a resume- <http://www.indeed.com/>
<http://www.2ndchances4felons.com/dfw-companies-that-hire-felons.php>
- **Veterans Industries and 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. VA contracts with private industry and 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. For further information, contact the CWT coordinator at the nearest VA at 1-877-822-8387 or go to <http://www.cwt.va.gov/>
- The State of Texas has a **Vocational Rehabilitation** program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. 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" or go to <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/drs/index.shtml>

- **National H.I.R.E. Network** is an information resource for individuals with criminal histories seeking employment. Go to <http://www.hirenetwork.org/>

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) - U.S

Department of Labor

The WOTC is a Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. The maximum tax credit ranges from \$2,400 to \$9,600, depending on the employee hired. Contact: Texas Workforce Commission

101 East 15th Street, Room 202-T

Austin, TX 78778-1442

Phone: 512-305-9602; 800-695-

6879(WOTC info)

Federal Bonding Program – U.S Department of Labor

Bond coverage is provided for any person whose background usually leads employers to question their honesty and deny them a job. The bond is given to the employer free-of-charge, and serves as an incentive to the company to hire a job applicant who is an ex-offender or has some other "risk" factor in their personal background. The employer is then able to get the worker's skills without taking any risk of worker dishonesty on the job.

It insures the employer for any type of stealing by theft, forgery, larceny or embezzlement. It does not cover liability due to poor workmanship, job injuries or work accidents. It is not a bail bond or court bond for the legal system. It is not a contract bond, performance bond or license bond sometimes needed to be self-employed. A total of \$5,000 bond coverage is usually issued, with NO DEDUCTIBLE amount of liability for the employer. Larger bond amounts can possibly be issued if the certified agency issuing the bonds has acquired a special bond package and has determined that larger bond amounts are appropriate.

Individuals Seeking Bonding

The Federal Bonding Program provides fidelity bonding for the first six months of employment for hard-to-place job applicants. If you are seeking bonding services and/or a job you should call the following toll-free number for 1. the location of the workforce office/one-stop center nearest your home and, 2. the telephone number of the State Bonding Coordinator for your state. In those states without a state bonding coordinator, callers will be referred to the nearest career center/ one-stop center for employment assistance.

Call toll free: 1.877.US2.JOBS (1.877.872.5627) www.bonds4jobs.com OR

Contact the Texas Workforce Commission 1-800-453-8140 (within Texas) or 512-463-0834

VA HEALTH CARE

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

Affordable Care Act

Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care are covered

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.

Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> to find the medical center nearest you.

VA Medical Centers:

Amarillo 79106 (6010 Amarillo Blvd. West, 806-355-9703 or 800-687-8262)
Big Spring 79720 (300 Veterans Blvd., 432-263-7361 or 800-472-1365)
Bonham 75418 (1201 E. 9th St., 903-583-2111 or 800-924-8387)
Dallas 75216 (4500 South Lancaster Rd., 214-742-8387 or 800-849-3597)
El Paso 79930 (5001 North Piedras St., 915-564-6100 or 800-672-3782)
Harlingen 78550 (South Texas VA Health Care Center, 2106 Treasure Hills Blvd., 956-366-4500)
Houston 77030 (200 Holcombe Blvd., 713-791-1414 or 800-553-2278)
Kerrville 78028 (3600 Memorial Blvd., 800-896-2020)
San Antonio 78229 (7700 Merton Minter Blvd., 877-469-5300 or 888-686-6350)
Temple 78613 (1901 Veterans Memorial Dr., 254-778-4811 or 800-423-2111)
Waco 76711 (4800 Memorial Dr., 254-297-3000 or 800-423-2111)

Clinics:

Abilene 79602 (4225 Woods Pl., 325-695-3252)
Austin 78744 (7901 Metropolis Drive, 512-823-4000)
Beaumont 77707 (3420 Veterans Cir., 409-981-8550)
Beeville 78102 (302 S. Hillside Dr., 361-358-9912)
Bridgeport 76426 (812 Woodrow Wilson Ray Cir., 940-683-2538)
Brownwood 76801 (2600 Memorial Park Dr., 325-641-0568)
Bryan/College Station 77845 (1651 Rock Prairie Rd., Ste. 100, 979-680-0361)
Cedar Park 78613 (701 Whitestone Blvd., 512-260-1368)
Childress 79201 (1001 Hwy. 83 North, 940-937-8528)
Conroe 77304 800 Riverwood Ct., Ste. 100, 936-522-4000 or 800-553-2278, ext.1949)
Corpus Christi 78405 (5283 Old Brownsville Rd., (855-864-0516)
Dallas, Polk Street Annex Clinic 75224 (4243 S. Polk St., 214-372-8100)
Del Rio 78840 (119 East Academy, 830-774-4094)
Denton 76205 (2223 Colorado Blvd., 940-891-6350)
Fort Worth 76119 (2201 SE Loop 820, 800-443-9672)
Fort Stockton 79735 (501 N. Main, 432-336-0700)
Galveston 77550 (3828 Ave. N, 409-761-3200 or 800-553-2278, ext. 12600)
Granbury 76049 (601 Fall Creek Hwy., 817-326-3902)
Greenville 75407 (4006 Wellington Rd., Ste. 100, 903-450-4788)
Harlingen 78550 (2106 Treasure Hills Blvd., (855-864-0516)

Kingsville 78363 (415 S. 6th Street, 361-592-3237)
La Grange 78945 (890 E. Travis St., 979-968-5878)
Laredo 78041 (6551 Star Court, 956-523-7850, (855-864-0516)
Longview 75601 (1005 N. Eastman Rd., 903-247-8262 or 800-957-8262)
Lubbock 79412 (6104 Ave. Q. South Dr., 806-472-3400)
Lufkin 75904 (2206 N. John Redditt Dr., 936-671-4300 or 800-209-3120)
McAllen 78503 (2101 S. Colonel Rowe Blvd., (855-864-0516))
New Braunfels 78130 (189 E. Austin, Ste. 106, 830-629-3614)
Odessa 79762 (4141 N. Tanglewood, Ste. 201, 432-550-0149)
Palestine 75801 (2000 S. Loop 256, Ste. 124, 903-723-9006)
Paris 75460 (635 Stone Ave., 903-785-9900)
Richmond 77469 (22001 Southwest Freeway, Suite 200, 832-595-7700 or 800-553-2278 X 12800)
San Angelo 76905 (2018 Pulliam, 325-658-6138)
San Antonio 78229 (7400 Merton Minter Blvd., 210-617-5300 or 877-469-5300)
San Antonio 78240 Frank M. Tejada OPC, 5788 Eckhert Rd., 210-699-2100)
San Antonio Dental Clinic 78299 (8410 Data Point, 210-949-8900)
San Antonio 78226 (1831 S. General McMullen, 210-431-4742)
San Antonio/NE 410 78217 (2391 NE Loop 410, Ste., 101, 210-590-0247)
San Antonio/North Central 79232 (17440 Henderson Pass, 210-483-2900)
San Antonio/Northwest 78228 (4318 Woodcock, Ste. 120, 210-736-4051)
San Antonio Greenway 78217 (2455 NE Loop 410 Ste. 100, 210-599-6000)
San Antonio 78222 (4243 E. Southcross, Ste. 206, 210-304-3500)
South Bexar/San Antonio Clinic 78222 (4610 E. Southcross Blvd., Ste. 100, 210-648-1491)
San Antonio 78221 SW Military CBOC 1714 SW Military Dr. San Antonio, TX 210-923-0777
Seguin 78155 (526 E. Court St., 830-629-3614)
Sherman 75090 (3811 US 75 N., 903-478-0477)
Stamford 79553 (1601 N Columbia, 325-695-3252)
Texas City 77591 (9300 Emmett F. Lowry Expressway, Suite 206, 409-986-2900 or 800-553-2278 X 12900)
Tyler 75701 (3414 Golden Rd., 903-590-3050)
Temple VA PACT – Primary Care (4501 S. General Bruce Dr. Ste. 75)
254-778-4811
Uvalde 78801 (3040 E. Main, Suite Z, 830-278-1166)
Victoria 77901 (1908 N. Laurent St., 361-582-7700; refills 800-209-7377)
Wichita Falls 76301 (1800 7th St., 940-723-2373)

Regional Offices:

Houston 77030 (6900 Almeda Rd., statewide, 713-383-1999 or 800-827-1000. Serves counties of Angelina, Aransas, Atascosa, Austin, Bandera, Bee, Bexar, Blanco, Brazoria, Brewster, Brooks, Caldwell, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Colorado, Comal, Crockett, DeWitt, Dimmit, Duval, Edwards, Fort Bend, Frio, Galveston, Gillespie, Goliad, Gonzales, Grimes, Guadalupe, Hardin, Harris, Hays, Hidalgo, Houston, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kendall, Kennedy, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Kleberg, LaSalle, Lavaca, Liberty, Live Oak, McCulloch, McMullen, Mason, Matagorda, Maverick,

Medina, Menard, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Pecos, Polk, Real, Refugio, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Schleicher, Shelby, Starr, Sutton, Terrell, Trinity, Tyler, Uvalde, Val Verde, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Washington, Webb, Wharton, Willacy, Wilson, Zapata, Zavala)

Waco 76799 (One Veterans Plaza, 701 Clay Ave., statewide, 800-827-1000; serves the rest of the state, In Bowie County, Texarkana is served by Little Rock, AR, VA Regional Office, 800-827-1000).

Benefits Offices, phone 800-827-1000:

Abilene 79602 (Taylor County Plaza Bldg., Ste. 103, 400 Oak St.)

Amarillo 79106 (6010 Amarillo Blvd. W.)

Austin 78741 (2901 Montopolis Dr., Rm. 108)

Corpus Christi 78405 (4646 Corona Dr., Ste. 150)

Dallas 75216 (4500 S. Lancaster Rd.)

El Paso 79930 (5001 Piedras Dr.)

Fort Worth 76104-4856 (300 W. Rosedale St.)

Lubbock 79410 (6104 Ave. Q. S. Dr., Rm. 132)

McAllen 78503 (1009 Toronto Ave.)

San Antonio 78240 (5788 Eckert Rd.)

Temple 76504 (1901 Veterans Memorial Dr., Rm. 5G38 [BRB])

Tyler 75701 (1700 SSE Loop 323, Ste. 310)

Vet Centers:

Amarillo 79109 (3414 Olsen Blvd., Ste E., 806-354-9779)

Austin 78741 (2015 S. IH. 35, Ste. 101, 512-416-1314)

Corpus Christi 78411 (4646 Corona, Ste. 250, 361-854-9961)

Dallas 75231 (10501 N. Central Expressway, Ste. 213, 214-361-5896)

El Paso 79925 (1155 Westmoreland, Ste. 121, 915-772-0013)

Fort Worth 76104 (1305 W. magnolia, Ste. B., 817-921-9095)

Killeen/Harker Heights 76548 (302 Millers Crossing, Ste. 4, 254-953-7100)

Harris County 77014 (14300 Cornerstone Village Dr., #110, 713-578-4002)

Houston 77098 (2990 Richmond Ave., Ste. 325, 713-523-0884)

Houston 77024 (701 N. Post Oak Rd. Ste. 102, 713-682-2288)

Laredo 78041 (6999 McPherson Rd., Ste. 102, 956-723-4680)

Lubbock 79410 (3208 34th St., 806-792-9782)

McAllen 78504 (801 W. Nolana Loop, Ste. 140, 956-631-2147)

Mesquite 75149 (502 West Kearney, Ste. 300, 972-288-8030)

Midland 79705 (2817 W. Loop 250 N, Ste. E., 432-697-8222)

Pantego 76013 (3337 W. Pioneer Pkwy., Northlake Center, 817-274-0981)

San Antonio 78212 (231 W. Cypress St., Ste. 100, 210-472-4025)

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

- **Department of State 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, or go to <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/services.shtm> or dial 2-1-1.
- **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 <http://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.
- **MHMR centers- Contact information can be found in the phone book.** MHMR Centers are local Non-Profit Community Centers specializing in the treatment of and service delivery to individuals with a mental illness within each county. MHMR centers assist individuals with a mental health diagnosis or a developmental disability diagnosis. Staff will work with you, your family, and other community organizations and providers to develop person-centered treatment plans designed to help you achieve your personal goals.

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.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- **The Veterans Crisis Line** connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available.
- **VA Medical Center Specialized PTSD Programs.** The Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Center program operates a system of community based counseling centers. The Vet Centers are staffed by small multi-disciplinary teams of dedicated providers, many of which are combat Veterans themselves. Vet Center staff is available toll-free during normal business hours at 1-800-905-4675 (Eastern) and 1-866-496-8838 (Pacific).
- **Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)**- A natural first question is whether symptoms experienced really are due to PTSD. Stress and trauma cause symptoms that are normal reactions and these symptoms may not be indicative of the full condition of PTSD. Similar symptoms may be due to conditions created by stressors other than trauma (for example, work or financial pressures), medical problems (such as heart conditions or diabetes), or other psychological conditions (such as depression or anxiety). Go to <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/>
- For information on finding Medical Centers in your area, call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>
- 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://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> to find the medical center nearest you.
- **VA Readjustment Counseling Service (Vet Centers)** VA's readjustment counseling is provided at community-based Vet Centers located near Veterans and their families. There is no cost for Vet Center readjustment counseling. Contact your nearest Vet Center through information provided in the Vet Center Directory or listings in your local blue pages. Vet Center staff are available toll-free during normal business hours at 1-800-905-4675 (Eastern) and 1-866-496-8838 (Pacific) or go to <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>

What is readjustment counseling?

Readjustment counseling is wide range of services provided to combat Veterans in the effort to make a satisfying transition from military to civilian life. Services include individual counseling, group counseling, marital and family counseling, bereavement counseling, medical referrals, assistance in applying for VA Benefits, employment counseling, guidance and referral, alcohol/drug assessments, information and referral to community resources, military sexual trauma counseling and referral, and outreach and community education.

Does VA have readjustment counseling for family members?

Family members of combat Veterans have been eligible for Vet Center readjustment counseling services for military related issues since 1979.

Where is counseling offered?

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

- **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill** lists community mental health services providers at <http://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 <http://www.nmha.org/>
- **MHMR (Mental Health Mental Retardation) Community Centers.** Texans with mental illness, mental retardation, substance addictions and developmental disabilities have access to a well-funded, organized system of quality services and support that are responsive to individual choice and managed through a public system of community MHMR centers governed by volunteer trustees appointed by local government officials.

Look in your local phone book "**blue pages**" for the Mental Health & Mental Retardation center near you or call the Austin number for assistance.

Westpark Building 3, Suite 240
8140 N. Mopac Expwy., Austin, TX 78759

Phone: 512-794-9268

E-Mail: office@txcouncil.com

Fax: 512-794-8280

Web: <http://www.txcouncil.com>

SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

VA Medical Center. Contact the Addictions Treatment Center at the local VA Medical Center. Call **1-877-222-8387** to or go to <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> 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:

- **The Federal Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administrations Treatment Referral Routing Service** can refer you to local programs. Call 1-800-662-4357.
- **Texas Department of State Health Services:** <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/sa/findingservices/default.shtm> - This site contains a map to find the outreach, screening and referral provider your area. These community-based programs operate 24-hour hot lines and referral services. For the statewide hotline, call **(877) 9-NO DRUG** (877-966-3784). The call is free.
- **Focus On Recovery Helpline.** A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-888-9383.

FINANCIAL HELP

- **Temporary Financial Assistance.** The American Legion provides Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) from its national headquarters to help maintain a stable environment for children of Veterans. To obtain an application, look in the phone book to contact a local post, or contact the National Headquarters to find the post nearest you.
- **Food Stamps.** If you are unemployed with little or no income, you might receive food stamps. In 2015, the maximum benefits a single adult can receive is \$194 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 <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>. You can also contact the local Department of Human Services, many drop-in shelters, or legal aid services to ask for an application.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** benefits can be applied for before your release, even though you won't receive the benefits until after you are released. Food Stamps can be applied for together with SSI. Normally, it takes about three months to review an application, so apply well before your release date. It is best to get help filling out the

application. For detailed information or assistance, call 1-800-772-1213, or your local social security administration office listed in the phone book blue pages, or go to <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/index.htm>

- **2-1-1** — The phone number 211 will reach an information and referral service in your local area. They have listings of assistance providers such as churches, non-profits, etc. that may be able to provide financial, legal or housing assistance. Simply dial 211.

LEGAL HELP

The Department of Veterans Affairs does not provide legal services for personal reasons. **DISCLAIMER:** *VA assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the organizations whose names appear on this list. This referral does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by VA.*

Veteran status issues:

- You should talk to a **Veterans 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:

- **Lone Star Legal Aid** (800-354-1889) has an online list of offices in Texas that provide free legal help to clients who qualify. Go to <http://www.lonestarlegal.org/>
- Legal Services Corporation's Web site lists local legal service providers: www.statesidelegal.org/findinghelp.
- **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. http://www.americanbar.org/groups/bar_services/resources/state_local_bar_associations.html
- **American Bar Association's Project Home Front.** Go to (http://www.americanbar.org/portals/public_resources/aba_home_front.html).
- **Legal Services Corporation.** Go to <http://www.statesidelegal.org/>
- **Texas Legal Aid Finder** website is provided by Texas Housing. Go to <http://www.texashousing.org/>

WOMEN VETERANS

Most VA **Medical Centers** and readjustment offices have a designated Women Veterans Coordinator to assist women Veterans in accessing VA benefit programs and healthcare services. Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> to find the medical center nearest you.

- **Department of Veterans Affairs** has a designated Women Veterans Coordinator to help women Veterans. Call the VA Health Benefits Call Center toll free at 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>. The VA Homeless Program has also launched a 24/7 National Call Center for Homeless Veterans staffed by VA counselors trained to help homeless Veterans or Veterans at-risk for homelessness: 1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838).
- **Women in Crisis.** Many women in prison have similar histories, problems, and personal issues. Go to <http://www.wics.org/>. If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, call 911 or 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433,) and never leave the person alone.

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

The Office of the Attorney General recognizes that most people need a little time to get on their feet after being released from prison. The Attorney General's Office may be able to temporarily postpone certain enforcement actions if you provide our office with evidence that you are looking for a job and providing some support to your child.

Contact Information: P.O. Box 12017, Austin, TX 78711-2017

Website: <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/about/index.shtml>

E-mail: child.support@oag.state.tx.us

For more information about child support services, please call the **Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Division** at 1-800-252-8014 or contact the child support office nearest you:

Austin/Travis County	512-514-7000
Dallas/Tarrant County	972-339-3100
El Paso	915-779-2388
Houston/Harris County	713-243-7100
Lubbock	806-765-0094
McAllen	956-682-5581
San Antonio/Bexar County	210-841-8450
Tyler	903-595-6900

GOODWILL SERVICES

Assessment: Matching people's skills, talents, aptitudes and abilities.

Skills Training: Currently there is a skilled labor shortage across America. Goodwill offers an array of skills training opportunities.

Job Readiness Training: Many people have been out of the workforce for a long time and need training to include interviewing, problem solving, time management, work etiquette, interpersonal skills and basic job retention skills.

Job Placement: Goodwill offers an array of placement services including resources for finding employment, interviewing classes, resume preparation and job search support groups. Goodwill is dedicated to matching people with the right skills to the right job.

Job Retention: Goodwill's offer long-term follow-up, mentoring, job coaching and counseling services to ensure job retention. Goodwill also focuses upon career advancement, to help the employee and employer both derive the most benefit.

Support Services: Employability is often dependent upon reliable transportation, childcare, affordable housing and a stable home life. In collaboration with other local community organizations, Goodwill offers support services to ensure the success of every person. Counseling, literacy training, ESL classes etc. are a part of the "whatever it takes to be successful" philosophy, which is incorporated into the support services network.

For information about the Goodwill services in your community, contact the local Goodwill Corporate office below.

<i>ABILENE</i> Goodwill Industries of West Texas 2200 N. First Street Abilene, TX. 79603-7401 325-676-7925	<i>AUSTIN</i> Goodwill Industries of Central Texas 1015 Norwood Park Blvd. Austin, TX. 78753 512-637-7100	<i>BEAUMONT</i> Goodwill Industries of SE Texas and SW Louisiana P.O. Box 3963 Beaumont, TX. 77704 409-838-9911
<i>CORPUS CHRISTI</i> South Texas Goodwill 2961 South Port Avenue Corpus Christi, TX. 78405-2098	<i>DALLAS</i> Goodwill Industries of Dallas 3020 N. Westmoreland Road Dallas, Texas 75212 214-638-2800	<i>EL PASO</i> Goodwill Industries of El Paso 9611 Acer Ave. El Paso, TX. 79925 915-778-1858
<i>FORT WORTH</i> Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth P.O. Box 15520 Fort Worth, Texas 76119 817-332-7866	<i>HOUSTON</i> Goodwill Industries of Houston 1140 West Loop North Houston, TX. 77055 713-692-6221	<i>LUBBOCK</i> Goodwill Industries of Northwest Texas 715 28th Street Lubbock, TX. 79404 806-744-8419
<i>LUFKIN</i> Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas 301 Hill Street Lufkin, TX. 75904 936-632-8838	<i>SAN ANTONIO</i> Goodwill Industries of San Antonio 406 W. Commerce St. San Antonio, TX. 78207 210-924-8581	<i>SHERMAN</i> Goodwill Industries of Northeast Texas 2206 E. Lamar St. Sherman, TX. 75090 903-893-3145
<i>TYLER</i> Goodwill Industries of East Texas 409 W. Locust St. Tyler, TX. 75702 903-593-8438	<i>WACO</i> Heart of Texas Goodwill Industries 1700 South New Road Waco, TX. 76711 254-753-7337	

SECTION III

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. Write the VA Regional Office (VARO) to request a copy.

U.S. DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - REGIONAL OFFICES

Houston VARO

6900 Almeda Road
Houston, Texas 77030

Waco VARO

One Veterans Plaza
701 Clay Avenue
Waco, Texas 76799

Call 1-800-827-1000 or find information about benefits at -
<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>

The TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION (TVC) serves veterans, their dependents and survivors, in all matters pertaining to Veterans' benefits and rights. It is the designated agency of the State of Texas to represent the State and its Veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The TVC represents Veterans in filing VA disability claims, during VA appeals processes and assisting dependents with survivor benefits. Veterans County Service Officers are trained by the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Contact a Texas Veterans County Service Officer in your area to assist you with services relating to VA benefits.

Veterans' HOTLINE: 1-800-252-VETS (8387) (In-State Only)

Local Benefits Info Line: 512-463-5538 Hotline Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Mailing Address:

Texas Veterans Commission
P.O. Box 12277
Austin, Texas 78711-2277
512-463-6564
(FAX) 512-475-2395

Office Location:

Stephen F. Austin Building, Ste. 620
1700 N. Congress
Austin, TX 78701
Email: info@tvc.state.tx.us
Web: www.tvc.state.tx.us

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 cannot be provided to Veterans in prison, but VA health facilities may provide care to you after your release. Contact 1-877-222-8387 to find the medical center or clinic nearest you.

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 VA Regional Office (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. The VA considers it to be the Veteran's responsibility and fault if this occurs because the Veteran failed to notify the VA of his or her incarceration. Attempts to obtain a waiver in these situations of overpayment are often unsuccessful.

For example: Joe is a Veteran who receives a VA pension. He commits a crime, is convicted and incarcerated, but does not 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 reinstated. He will have an overpayment that must be recovered from the reinstated 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

Legally, a Veteran can only receive a portion of the full amount payable for his or her disability rating while incarcerated, but the remaining balance may be “apportioned to the individual’s dependent family”. This means your dependant family members (spouse, children, or dependent parents) may be able to receive part of your benefits while you are incarcerated. VA regulations clearly specify an apportionment amount will only go to family members if they can show financial need.

To apply for apportionment, you must send a letter to the VA Regional Office (VARO) that identifies yourself as the Veteran and your spouse, children and/or parent as dependents. Also, you will need to fill out VA Form 21-0788 <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0788-ARE.pdf> and forward to your nearest regional office. 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: Tom is rated as 80 percent disability (80% service connected). While incarcerated he can only receive the amount he would get if he was 10 percent disabled (10% service connected). However, his family may be apportioned up to 70 percent, the difference of the 80 percent rating. (80% service connected minus 10% service connected = 70% service connected. The 70% goes to Tom’s family.)

There is a 60-day “grace period” following conviction where the Veteran or dependent family members (also called Dependency or Indemnity Compensation (DIC) recipients) 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 Veteran’s responsibility and fault if this occurs because the Veteran 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.

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

The VA Regional Office (VARO) needs formal notification from the prison of your release in order to re-start benefits. Take your prison release papers in person to the VARO, benefits counselor at the VA Hospital or clinic, or Veterans County Service Officer. The sooner that documentation is provided to the VARO, the sooner the VARO can begin to process your request. Your award for compensation or pension benefits should resume from the date you are released, as long as the VA receives notice of your release within one year.

30 Day Head Start Thirty days before you release from incarceration you can complete Form 21-4193 (Notice to Department of Veterans Affairs of Veteran or Beneficiary Incarcerated in Penal Institution) have it signed by a prison official, and submit to the VA Regional Office. Add a short letter asking for this option and write *According to the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Administration's Veterans Benefits Manual M21-1MR, Part III Subpart v, Chapter 8 dated March 26, 2009, a veteran can have restoration of the full benefits made prospectively if notification of release from incarceration is received from an official source within 30 days before the date of release from incarceration.*

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. Write your local VA Regional Office or apply for certain benefits online at <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>. Below are brief descriptions of forms needed to file for certain VA benefits. Be sure you use a return address where mail will get to you as quickly as possible. Make photocopies of all forms for your records before sending your packet to the VARO nearest you. Mail your DD-214 and the following forms to the VARO nearest your release.

U.S. DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - REGIONAL OFFICES

Houston VARO 6900 Almeda Road Houston, Texas 77030

Waco VARO One Veterans Plaza 701 Clay Avenue Waco, Texas 76799

- **VA Form 21-526** - Application for Compensation and/or Pension - must be filed to apply for compensation or pension and can use 21-526EZ for faster processing.
- **VA form 21-527** - Application for Pension only and can use 21-527EZ for faster processing.
- **VA Form 21-4138** - Statement in Support of Claim - General form to explain why you deserve the benefits you are asking for because of your disability or disorder, status of your claim, and other correspondence.
- **VA Form 21-4142** - Authorization for Release of Information - If you have received medical or mental health care that may be relevant to your claim from anyone other than a VA facility, you need to fill out a VA Form 21-4142, giving permission for release of medical records to the VA.
- **VA Form 10-10EZ** - Application for Health Benefits - is used by the VA to determine if you can receive medical benefits. Complete the form and bring it with you to the VA medical facility where you will seek evaluation for treatment. Have your (Undeleted) DD-214.
- **VA Form 28-1900** - Disabled Veterans Application for Vocational Rehabilitation - is needed to apply for the vocational rehabilitation program to help Veterans who were disabled during their service reach maximum independence in daily living, to learn the skills needed to get a job, and to find and keep a job.
- **VA Form 3288** - Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant'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.

CHECKLIST

Using This Guide

- Ask about classes or resources to help you plan for your release.
- Make a list of your needs.
- Make a list of who may be able to help you.
- Write letters and/or contact organizations by phone or email.
- Write down the steps you take so that you do not repeat them.

Just for Veterans

- Know where to call toll-free for help.
- Contact organizations about what services they have to offer.
- Think about your housing needs and gather information about what is available locally.
- Learn about job resources and create a plan to find a job.
- Learn about health issues and what services are available.
- Learn about the resources available for substance abuse and mental health treatment in your area.
- Learn about your options to get financial help.
- Begin to take care of other legal issues.
- Learn about homeless Veterans services.
- Learn about resources for women Veterans.
- If you are not currently receiving benefits, find out if you can or should be.
- If you are receiving benefits, notify the VA when you go to prison to avoid an overpayment.
- Contact a Veteran service representative to represent you and help you file a claim.
- Apply for apportionment so that some of the money withheld may be given to eligible family members.

VA Disability Compensation

Disability Compensation is a tax free monetary benefit paid to Veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. Compensation may also be paid for post-service disabilities that are considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service. Generally, the degrees of disability specified are also designed to compensate for considerable loss of working time from exacerbations or illnesses.

Disability compensation is a monthly tax-free benefit paid to Veterans who are at least 10% disabled because of injuries or diseases that were incurred in or aggravated during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training. A disability can apply to physical conditions, such as a chronic knee condition, as well as a mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

How to Apply for VA Disability Compensation

Online (eBenefits), by U.S. Mail, In person at VA Regional Office or VA Benefits Representative located at a VA Hospital or Clinic, an accredited agent such as Veterans County Service Officer (See page 20)

Education Benefits in Texas Hazlewood Act

Veteran Eligibility

What are the Veteran's eligibility requirements?

1. Entered the military service from Texas, or Home of Record at the time of entry into active duty was Texas, or was a Texas resident at the time of entry into military service
2. Served more than 180 days* of federal military service- excluding Initial Entry Training
3. Received an Honorable Discharge or General Discharge under Honorable Conditions
4. Exhausted GI Bill benefits if eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100% rate
5. Reside in Texas during term of enrollment
6. Provide DD214 or equivalent supporting documentation
7. Meet the GPA requirement of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy in a degree or certificate program as determined by the institution's financial aid policy and, as an undergraduate student, not be considered to have attempted an excessive amount of credit hours.

*Unless otherwise permanently disabled or killed while on Active Duty prior to serving 180 days of federal military service.

Legacy- Transfer of Hazlewood benefit to child

1. Veteran must qualify for the Hazlewood Exemption
2. Provide death certificate if Veteran is deceased
3. Recipient must be the biological child, stepchild, adopted child, or claimed as dependent for current or previous tax year on IRS 1040
4. Recipient must be 25 years old or younger on first day of class
5. Must meet the GPA requirement of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy in a degree or certificate program as determined by the institution's financial aid policy and, as an undergraduate student, not be considered to have attempted an excessive amount of credit hours.
6. Recipient must meet the institution's resident tuition requirements
7. Provide DD214 or equivalent supporting documentation

A Veteran must: Apply and be accepted to a **Texas public** college or university of his/her choice. Go to www.applytexas.org to apply or use your institution's application for admission.

Eligible Institutions for the Hazlewood Act

The Hazlewood Act is available only for use at a **Texas public** college or university. The schools listed under **Independent (Private) Institutions** do **NOT** qualify for this exemption. Veterans can learn a trade at certain Texas public colleges or universities. Texas State Technical College has a number of programs and serves Texas through eleven campuses in Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Fort Bend County, Harlingen, Ingleside, Marshall, North Texas, Sweetwater, Waco and Williamson County.

Hazlewood Act for Spouse/Child

Spouses and dependent children of eligible Active Duty, Reserve, and Texas National Guard who died in the line of duty or as a result of injury or illness directly related to military service, are missing in action, or who became totally disabled for purposes of employability as a result of a service-related injury or illness are entitled to each receive a 150 credit hours exemption. **For more details on the Hazlewood Act contact the Texas Veterans Commission at 877-898-3833 or education@tvc.texas.gov or P.O. Box 12277 Austin, TX 78711-2277**

Department Name(s)	Toll Free VA contact Number(s)
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RESOURCE WEB SITES

U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs - <http://www.va.gov/>

Veterans Health Administration - <http://www.va.gov/health/default.asp>

Veterans Benefits Administration - <http://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>

Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors Online Edition-
http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans - <http://www.nchv.org/index.cfm>

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) - <http://www.vfw.org/>

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) - <http://www.dav.org/>

Vietnam Veterans of America - <http://www.vva.org/>

National Center for PTSD - <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

GI Bill - <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

American Legion - <http://www.legion.org/>

AMVETS - <http://www.amvets.org/>

Social Security Administration - <http://www.ssa.gov/>

Department of Labor – <http://www.dol.gov>

National Toll-Free Contact Center. Live assistance is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time by calling, 1-866-4-USA-DOL (1-866-487-2365), [TTY](http://www.va.gov).

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

Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care are covered

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.

The Department of Veterans Affairs nor any of its employees assumes any legal liability or responsibility of the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any non-VA resources. Information provided regarding non-VA recourses, whether expressed or implied, does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the VA or any of its employees.