

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white plastic pill bottle with a yellow cap. The bottle is tilted, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of light colors.

Basic Eligibility Enrollment

Defining a Veteran for VA Health Care Benefits

- **A veteran is a person who served in the active military, naval or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable**
- **Former Reservists may be eligible for VA health care benefits if they served full-time and for operational or support (excludes training) purposes**
- **Former National Guard members may be eligible for care or enrollment if mobilized by a Federal order**

Character of Discharge

- **Veterans with Honorable, General or Under Honorable Conditions character of discharge are eligible for VA health care benefits *as long as minimum duty requirements are met***
- **Veterans given Other than Honorable (OTH) discharges and those upgraded from OTH to General *require VARO review and decision* before routine care may be provided**

Minimum Duty Requirements

- **Persons enlisting in the Armed Forces after 9/7/80 (enlisted), or who entered on active duty after 10/16/81 (officers), are not eligible for VHA benefits unless they completed:**
 - **24 months continuous active service,**
or
 - **the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty**

Excluded from the Minimum Duty Requirements

38 USC 5303A - Minimum active duty requirements do not apply to persons discharged or released from active duty for:

- Early out**
 - 21 of 24 month tour**
- Hardship**
- Disability that was incurred or aggravated in line of duty Or veterans with compensable SC disability**

Minimum Duty Exclusion - Early Out

- **VARO confirmation of separation under 10 U.S.C. 1171 (early out) is needed if DD - 214 narrative shows:**
 - **Convenience for the government**
- **VARO confirmation not required**
 - **Unit inactivation**
 - **Separation from medical holding detachment/company**
 - **Physical disqualification for duty in Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)**
 - **Overseas returnee**
 - **Expiration of Term of Service/Completion of Required Service**

Hardship - Parenthood or Dependency

- Parenthood or Dependency *may be considered a hardship depending upon the separation authority.*
 - Under Army Regulation, Chapter 5, AR 635-200 Parenthood or Dependency is not an exception because it is a discharge for the convenience of the Government for an individual that is not complying with Army policies, rules and regulations.
- Parenthood or Dependency *is a hardship* for Army Personnel if discharge is under authority of Chapter 6, AR 635-200.
 - The need to take care of a family member is causing a hardship to the extent it is interfering with normal duties.

Before Enrollment

- **Eligibility determinations were made locally.**
- **Hospitalization was the major health benefit, limited opt care**
- **Health care administered “by benefit” to control costs**
- **VA changed in response to:**
 - **Changes in medical practice,**
 - **Funding methods (DRGs, VERA)**

VA Health Care Enrollment

- **The Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996 (PL 104-262) enacted 10/1/96**
- **Law required implementation of an annual enrollment system**
 - **Enrollment is managed in accordance with 8 specified priorities - 1 is the highest priority**
 - **Medical Benefits Package available to all enrollees – a standard enhanced health benefits plan**
 - **Benefits administered “by person” to control costs**

Priority Groups

- **Priority Group 1**

- Rated service-connected disability is 50% or more
- Unemployable due to VA service-connection

- **Priority Group 2**

- Rated service-connected disability is 30% or 40%

Priority Groups

■ Priority Group 3

- Veterans who are Former Prisoners of War (POWs)
- Veterans awarded a Purple Heart medal
- Veterans whose discharge was for a disability that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty
- Veterans with VA-rated service-connected disabilities 10% or 20% disabling
- Veterans awarded special eligibility classification under Title 38, U.S.C., Section 1151, “benefits for individuals disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation”
- * Veterans awarded the Medal Of Honor (MOH)

Note: *Indicate recent change

Priority Groups

■ Priority Group 4

- Receiving aid and attendance or housebound benefits
- Determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled

■ Priority Group 5

- NSC and 0% Non-compensable SC veterans with income and net worth below established VA Means Test thresholds
- Veterans in receipt of VA pension benefits
- Veterans eligible for Medicaid benefits

Priority Groups

■ Priority Group 6

- World War I veterans
- Compensable 0% service-connected veterans
- Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during atmospheric testing or during the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Project 112/SHAD participants
- *Veterans of Persian Gulf War (Aug 2, 1990 – Nov 11, 1998)
- *Veterans exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange while serving in the Republic of Vietnam between 1962 and 1975
- Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998

Note: *Indicate recent change

Priority Groups

- **Priority Group 7**

- **Veterans with income and/or net worth above the VA national income threshold and income below the geographic income threshold who agree to pay copays**

NOTE: When the National Defense Authorization Act went into effect the sub-priorities for PG7 were discontinued.

Priority Groups

- **Priority Group 8**

- Veterans who agree to pay specified copayments with income and/or net worth above the VA Means Test threshold and the Geographic Means Test Income threshold
 - Sub-priority a & b: Noncompensable 0% SC veterans enrolled as of January 16, 2003 and who have remained enrolled since that date, continuous enrollment rules, or 10% expanded enrollment
 - Sub-priority c & d: NSC veterans enrolled as of January 16, 2003 and who have remained enrolled since that date, continuous enrollment rules, or 10% expanded enrollment

Priority Groups

- **Priority Group 8**

- Veterans who agree to pay specified copayments with income and/or net worth above the VA Means Test threshold and the Geographic Means Test Income threshold
 - Sub-priority e: Noncompensable 0% SC veterans applying for enrollment after January 16, 2003
 - Sub-priority g: NSC veterans applying for enrollment after January 16, 2003

Enrollment Decision

- **VA published regulation 38 CFR 17.36**
 - **Established new PG7 and PG8 sub-priorities for veterans not enrolled as of January 16, 2003**
 - **Continuous Enrollment rules applies only to those veterans who applied for enrollment after January 16, 2003**
 - **On 1/17/2003, veterans who were not in an enrolled status or requested disenrollment, their enrollment was suspended and placed in PG8 e or g**
 - **When a record is determined to be PG8 VistA invokes the CE rules to determine the appropriate sub-priority**

Enrollment Facts

- **Continuous Enrollment**
 - Once enrolled, always enrolled
- **Registration vs. Enrollment**
 - Registration occurs at the medical center
 - Enrollment occurs at the HEC
- **Ineligible vs. Rejected**
 - Ineligible means no qualifying period of service
 - notification by facility or refuse to pay a copay
 - Rejected means qualifying period of service but income over the threshold or no income information provided – notification by HEC

Eligibility Updates via HEC

Why?

- **Uniformity across the system**
- **Misinterpretations of proof of military service documents and administrative errors**
- **Responsible for performing a second level review of all eligibility**
- **Once verified by VAMC staff, HEC is responsible for all future updates**

BENEFICIARY TRAVEL (BT)



BT Eligibility Criteria

- Veterans must meet BT eligibility criteria for travel at VA expense
- 30 percent or more Service Connected for travel related to any condition
- 20 percent or less for travel related to any Service Connected condition
- VA transplant centers and VA authorized Non-VA transplant care (VHA Directive 2001-027)
- Travel for C&P exam/deficiency lab/EKG, x-ray, etc.
- Receiving a VA Pension for all conditions (38 U.S.C. §1521)
- Annual income below annual rate of pension for all conditions (38 U.S.C. §1521)

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

- **BT is authorized in advance when:**
 - Scheduled for an Opt appointment in VISTA and is seen for the appointment
 - Scheduled for admission and is admitted to the VA facility
- **If services not scheduled, not an emergency & did not include SM**
 - VA will not approve round-trip payment
 - Will approve payment for return trip if VA actually provided care or services
 - Will not approve if visit was to obtain Rxs or supplies
- **BT at CBOCs**
 - Parent facility must develop local BT guidelines for remote facilities

Mileage Determination

- VA reimburses all eligible veterans travel at \$41.5 cents per mile
 - There is a deductible of \$3 each one way/\$6 round trip/cap of \$18
 - The cap is met in a calendar month after 6 one way trips or 3 round trips
 - Mileage is determined from the veterans' residence (38 CFR 70.30b)
 - Determine mileage using tools that gives the veteran the better benefit:
 - The Vista BT package using the BT Dashboard with Bing Maps
 - No PO Boxes can be used to determine mileage reimbursement
 - Facility can request documentation (38 CFR 70.20e)
- BT is intended to **Assist** with transportation from place of residence to the closest VA facility that can provide needed care

How to Apply for Beneficiary Travel

How to apply

- Claimant must apply either orally or in writing within 30 calendar days after completing BT
- Date of application for BT:
 - Postmark date (mailed)
 - Date of submission (hand carried, electronic means or orally)

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a glass of orange juice. The hand is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, with fingers wrapped around the glass. The glass is filled with a vibrant orange liquid. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light. The overall mood is bright and fresh.

Questions?