



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

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Washington, D.C. -- In response to incorrect information distributed by others on the Internet, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is clarifying recent changes regarding veterans' eligibility for health care.

VA is required by law to establish an enrollment system for health-care services to be in place by Oct. 1, 1998. While veterans must be enrolled to receive care, it does not mean that veterans who have not applied for enrollment by that date will lose their eligibility for VA health care. Veterans can apply and be enrolled at the time they are in need of VA health care. Veterans who have received VA health-care services since Oct. 1, 1996, will have an application processed automatically on their behalf.

Applicants will be placed in one of seven enrollment priority groups specified by Congress. Based on the priority they are assigned, the number of other veterans requesting to be enrolled, and the funds available for VA health care, VA will determine how many veterans can be served. Veterans will be notified by mail beginning in late spring whether or not their application for enrollment has been accepted.

After Oct. 1, 1998, some veterans may still be treated without being enrolled. Veterans with service-connected disabilities may be treated for those disabilities, and veterans who were discharged or released from active duty for a disability incurred or aggravated while on active duty may be treated for that disability within the first 12 months after their discharge.

Veterans who are classified as being service-disabled with a rating of 50 percent or greater will continue to be eligible for VA health-care services without making application for enrollment.

While veterans in these categories do not have to be enrolled to be treated, they are encouraged to do so to help VA plan its services and allocate its resources.

Those who are enrolled will be eligible for inpatient and outpatient services, including preventive and primary care. Other services include: diagnosis and treatment; rehabilitation; mental health and substance abuse treatment; home health, respite and hospice care; and drugs and pharmaceuticals in conjunction with VA treatment.

Veterans accepted for enrollment will be eligible to receive care at any of VA's more than 1,100 service sites. While enrollment must be renewed every year, a veteran's enrollment will automatically be renewed unless he or she chooses not to re-enroll, or unless VA resources limit the number of veterans the department can cover. Certain veterans will be asked to provide income information annually in order for VA to properly classify them within the enrollment system, as required by law.

To apply for enrollment, veterans should call, write or visit their nearest VA health-care facility. Most facilities have designated special enrollment coordinators to assist veterans and their families, and to answer any questions they may have.

Note: For additional information, see
[Facts about Enrollment for VA Health Care](#)