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Veterans' Benefits

Who is a "veteran"?

The term "Veteran" means any person who served in the active military, naval, or air service during a period of war, and who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. The term "period of war" means any of these.

- August 2, 1990 through a date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation (Persian Gulf War and beyond).
- August 5, 1964 through May 7, 1975 (Vietnam War).
- June 27, 1950 through January 31, 1955 (Korean War).
- December 7, 1941 through December 31, 1946 (World War II).
- April 6, 1917 through November 11, 1918 (World War I).

"Veteran" also means any person who died in active military, naval or air service.

What are Veterans' Benefits?

There are more than 40 Veterans' benefits programs. They are administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). A few of these programs are described below.

GI Education – The VA will pay veterans while they complete high school, go to college, or learn a trade, either on the job or in an apprentice program. Veterans have 10 years after they leave the service to apply.

GI Loans – The VA will guarantee a loan to buy a house. There is no time limit to apply.

Service Connected Disability Benefits – The VA pays monthly payments for disabilities that occurred in, or were increased by, military service. There is no time limit to apply. If a veteran applies within one year of when he/she leaves the service, the veteran can get payments back to the date he/she left the service.

Non-Service Connected Disability Benefits – The VA pays monthly benefits for disabilities that did not result from service, if it is not the result of the veteran's willful misconduct. The disability must keep the veteran from doing any job. The disability must be expected to last for the rest of the veteran's life. There is no time limit to apply.

Medical Care – The VA gives hospital care, outpatient treatment and alcohol and drug treatment. Veterans with service connected problems are treated first. Veterans with non-service connected problems will be treated if hospital care is needed, a hospital bed is available, and the veteran cannot afford to pay. There is no time limit to apply.

GI Insurance – Low cost life insurance is available under four programs: Service Disabled Life Insurance (SDVI), Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI), Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI), and Servicemen’s Group Life Insurance (SGLI). Veterans must apply for SDVI within one year of the date VA finds they are disabled. Veterans must apply for VGLI within 120 days after they leave the service.

Who is eligible for VA benefits?

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active military 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 its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey), or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Current and former members of the selected reserve may be eligible for certain benefits, such as home loan guarantees and education, if they meet time-in-service and other criteria. Men and women veterans with similar service are 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.

Where can I get more information?

The Roanoke Regional Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs serves most of Virginia. It is located at the Poff Federal Building, 210 Franklin Road, S.W., Roanoke, VA. 24011, toll-free 1-800-827-1000.

The Washington, D.C. Regional Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs serves the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church, and the counties of Arlington and Fairfax. It is located at 1722 I Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20421, toll-free 1-800-827-1000.

The Virginia Department of Veteran Services has 19 offices in Virginia. These are in Accomac, Alexandria, Big Stone Gap, Bristol, Cedar Bluff, Charlottesville, Danville, Fairfax, Front Royal, Hampton, Lynchburg, McGuire Medical Center (Richmond), Norfolk, Quantico, Richmond, Roanoke, South Hill, Staunton, and Wytheville. Contact the Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services, 900 E. Main St, Richmond VA 23219, 804-786-0286 for the office near you.

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