

Veteran's Benefits Explained

In addition to the pensions and benefits to which you may be entitled because of both public and private employment, you may also be eligible for certain benefits based on your military service.

The following is a summary of veteran's benefits and what you need to know about them:

- [Major Veteran Benefit Programs](#)
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Major Veteran Benefit Programs

The **Department of Veterans Administration** operates a number of programs providing financial, medical and other assistance to veterans. For Americans who received an honorable or general discharge, there are **4 major benefit programs**:

- [Disability compensation](#)
- [Veteran's pension programs](#)
- [Free or low-cost medical care through VA hospitals and medical facilities](#)
- [Education Programs](#)

There are also benefit programs concerning:

- Housing and Home Loan Guarantees
- Job Training
- Small Businesses and business loans (Through Small Business Administration)
- Counseling
- Burials and Memorials
- Franchise Opportunities (Vet Fran)
- [PTSD Support \(National Center for PTSD Website\)](#)

PTSD Support

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a disorder that occurs after a life-threatening event, such as personal assault, natural disaster, or military combat. The affects of PTSD can be debilitating with symptoms ranging from severe nightmares and flashbacks to insomnia and increasing social isolation. It is common for servicemembers to deal with post-combat depression, insomnia, nightmares and family issues; however, it's the duration and intensity that differentiates PTSD. Each military branch has programs for its servicemembers, and the Department of Veterans Affairs offers free counseling sessions. For more information on PTSD or VA assistance, go to the [National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder website](#).

Important Documents:

If you are applying for a VA benefit for the first time you must submit a copy of your service discharge form (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form), which documents your service dates and type of discharge, or give your full name, military service number, branch and dates of service.

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Your service discharge form should be kept in a safe location accessible to the veteran and next of kin or designated representative. Your preference regarding burial in a national cemetery and use of a headstone provided by VA should be documented and kept with this information.

The following documents will be needed for claims processing related to a veteran's death: (1) veteran's marriage certificate for claims of a surviving spouse or children; (2) veteran's death certificate if the veteran did not die in a VA health care facility; (3) children's birth certificates or adoption papers to determine children's benefits; (4) veteran's birth certificate to determine parents' benefits.

VA Benefits Eligibility:

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based on discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, the Environmental Services Administration or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Current and former members of the Selected Reserve:

You may be eligible for certain benefits, such as home loan guarantees and education, if you meet the time-in-service and other criteria.

Honorable and general discharges qualify a veteran for most VA benefits. Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees may be eligible for certain VA benefits. VA regional offices can clarify the eligibility of prisoners, parolees and individuals with multiple discharges issued under differing conditions.

Application:

Veterans and their family members who wish to contact the Department regarding a claim, benefits, or services, may fill out question forms on the website (<http://www.va.gov>), or call VA Toll-Free:

- (800) 827-1000 - Phone
- (800) 827-4833 - TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf)

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