

Veteran Benefits and Resources for Hospice and Palliative Care Patients

A Resource Guide for Veterans, Families and Caregivers



Provided by:





All of us at the EagleForce Warrior Foundation enthusiastically support the efforts of the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation and its members to provide this comprehensive guide for Veterans in need of advanced illness or hospice care.

Our Veterans and their families deserve accessible benefit education and support to help ensure Quality, stress-free care in their homes or wherever they wish to reside.

We are proud to play our part.

Cynthia Dinkins

Cynthia Dinkins
Executive Director
EagleForce Warrior Foundation





About Hospice of the Piedmont

Hospice of the Piedmont is a community-based nonprofit hospice that has offered expert care and peaceful resolution to Virginia families for over 40 years. We're here for more than the end. We're here to care for patients and their families as they navigate serious illness and death, and offer grief and bereavement services to the entire community.

About National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation

The National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI) is an organization comprised of 80 not-for-profit hospice organizations, driven by passion and integrity to help people live fully through the end-of-life. Our most important ideas are learned at the bedside, not in the board room. Our members are patient, family and community-focused hospice, palliative care, and advanced illness providers across the country made up of like-minded leaders with expertise and passion for the highest quality, person and family-centered, mission-oriented end-of-life care. For the location of the nearest NPHI member hospice organization outside of the *Hospice of the Piedmont* service area, call 1-844-GET NPHI (1- 844-438-6744).

Introduction

While U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a wide range of commonly-known benefits and services for its Veterans - like health care, education support through the GI Bill, and home loans - they also provide a bevy of lesser-known benefits that were specifically created to help Veterans and their family members, as well as their survivors. The Veteran must provide proof of discharge from the military under conditions other than dishonorable. Also, many of the programs are dependent upon the veteran meeting certain financial eligibility requirements.

- If after reviewing this guide you determine that you may qualify for any of the listed benefits but are unsure; or find the information confusing; or think the task of applying may be too difficult, let your hospice or palliative care team know as they can either assist you in understanding the process or can direct you to someone that can help you navigate the process.
- Appendix B of this document contains a military history checklist you can use to talk to your loved one and document their military service for your family history and provide information that will be useful should you choose to apply for VA benefits.
- **Disclaimer:** NPHI and Hospice of the Piedmont is not responsible for the accuracy of the content in this guide; however, the content was extracted directly from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

Who is considered a Veteran?

Active Duty: Federal law states that a VETERAN is any person, who served honorably on active duty in the armed forces of the United States. (Discharges marked GENERAL or UNDER HONORABLE CONDITIONS also qualify.) Title 38 of the U.S. Code states: that there is no minimum time of service required to be considered a Veteran, so long as you served on active duty.

National Guard and Reserve: Generally, all Reserve and National Guard members discharged or released under conditions that are not dishonorable are eligible for some VA benefits. The length of your service, service commitment and/or your duty status may determine your eligibility for specific benefits. Eligibility requirements for several VA benefits may include a certain length of active service. Legislation signed in 2016 now states that any Guard and Reserve member that has successfully completed a 20 year commitment - even without any Active Duty time - is considered a Veteran.

Note: The above definitions appear relatively simple; however, like most things there are some instances where it may not be simple depending on the individual situation and benefits being considered.



Important Note: In order to pursue any of the benefits or assistance detailed in this guide you must possess official discharge document DD214, or equivalent official discharge document.

If you don't have a copy of your discharge papers, please see www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records. The following website also provides instructions to expedite a replacement DD214 www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/emergencies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Benefits and Services for Veterans and their Families with Limited Income	6
II. Benefits and Services for Veterans and their Families for all Income Levels	8
III. Veteran Burial Benefits	12
IV. Arrears of Pay and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Annuity for Spouses/Families of Retired Military Members	16
V. Assistance in Filing Claims	18
Appendix A: Diseases and/or Conditions Presumptively Qualifying for Disability Benefits	20
Appendix B: Military History Checklist	24
Appendix C: Additional Resources for Veterans and Caregivers	27

Note: Information in this resource guide is current as of January 1, 2025

I.

Benefits and Services for Veterans and Their Families with Limited Income



Veterans' Pension

This benefit is available to limited-income Veterans who:

- received a discharge from the service under conditions other than dishonorable.
- Are age 65 and older or are permanently disabled, who served at least 90 days of active military service with at least one day of service during a period of war (stateside or overseas)
- OR Entered active duty after September 7, 1980; must have served at least 24 months with at least one day during a wartime period (stateside or overseas)
- OR served as an officer on active duty after October 16, 1981, and previously did not serve on active duty for at least 24 months
- OR is a patient in a nursing home for long-term care because of a disability, or is getting social security disability insurance or supplemental security income

To be eligible, your yearly family income and net worth must meet certain limits set by Congress, which changes annually. Net worth is the total of yours and your spouses' assets that include annual income but excludes items such as primary residence and personal vehicle. From December 1, 2024 to November 30, 2025, the net worth limit to be eligible for Veterans Pension benefits is \$159,240. See www.va.gov/pension/eligibility/ for the current annual net worth limitation or more information.



Aid and Attendance Allowance

This little-known benefit can help Veterans and their spouses pay towards in-home care, an assisted living facility, or nursing home care. This allowance is in addition to the Veteran's Pension. To qualify, the Veteran must:

- Be 65 or older (or permanently disabled), have served during wartime and meet certain medical and financial requirements. Spouses also qualify for this benefit if they are currently married to the Veteran or were married to the Veteran at the time of the Veteran's death.
- To qualify medically, the Veteran or their spouse would need assistance with basic everyday living tasks like eating, bathing, or dressing. Blindness or residence at a nursing home or assisted living facility also qualifies.
- **To qualify financially, annual income net worth limit is the same as the Veteran's Pension congressionally set limits (\$159,240 through Nov. 30, 2025).** These income limits, along with Aid and Attendance allowance rates, can be found at www.va.gov/pension/veterans-pension-rates/.

For further information on the Aid and Attendance allowance see www.va.gov/pension/aid-attendance-housebound/

Survivors Pension

Survivors Pension is a tax-free, needs-based benefit paid to an unremarried surviving spouse and/or qualifying dependent children of a deceased wartime Veteran. Ex-spouses are not authorized for this benefit. To qualify, the deceased Veteran must:

- Have a yearly family income/net worth below the yearly limit set by Congress to be eligible for Survivors Pension benefits. This annual income and net worth limit is the same as the Veteran's Pension congressionally set limits (\$159,240 through Nov 30, 2025). Note: if you receive a Survivor's Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity it's limit is \$11,380 for Survivors Pension eligibility through Nov 30, 2025. See www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension-rates/ for further details.
- You may be eligible if you are the surviving spouse or dependent child of a Veteran who received a discharge from service under conditions other than dishonorable, had a service-connected disability (see Appendix A for presumptively associated diseases and conditions), or served at least 90 days of active military service with at least one day during a wartime period prior to September 7, 1980. Veterans who entered active duty after September 7, 1980 must have served at least 24 months with at least one day during a wartime period.
- Dependent children may be eligible for Survivors Pension if they are younger than 18 (or between ages 18 and 23 if attending school) or permanently incapable of self-support due to a disability incurred before age 18 and are not married. See www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension/ for more information.

II.

Benefits and Services for Veterans and Their Families for all Income Levels

Disability Benefits for Presumptively Associated Diseases and Conditions

What is "presumptive" Service Connection?

The VA assumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service. If a presumed condition is diagnosed in a Veteran from a specific group experience, he or she may be awarded disability compensation. If you have a presumptive condition, you do not need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumptive. For a list of specific presumed conditions, please see Appendix A or go to <https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/serviceconnected/presumption.pdf>

Veterans in the following groups may qualify for presumptive disability benefits:

- A diagnosis of a chronic disease within one year of active-duty release
- If you served continuously for at least 90 days and are diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) after discharge
- Former prisoners of war
- Vietnam era Veterans
- Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation
- Gulf War and Post 9-11 Veterans

The Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act was signed into law in August 2022 and expands and extends eligibility for VA healthcare and benefits for Veterans who were exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. It added more than 20 new presumptive service connected illnesses related to toxic substance exposure. See Appendix A for a full listing of presumptive conditions and <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/#what-does-it-mean-to-have-a-pr> for further information on the PACT Act.

If you served at Camp Lejeune or MCAS New River, North Carolina for at least 30 days total between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, and were not dishonorably discharged you may be eligible for disability and health care benefits. See Appendix A for a list of medical conditions qualifying for disability benefits.

See www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/camp-lejeune-water-contamination/ for more information regarding Camp Lejeune water contamination health issues.

Patients in Hospice, or their representative with a Power of Attorney (POA) can expedite registration for Presumptive Disability Benefits by:

- Gathering the appropriate documentation (DD 214 discharge paper), official diagnosis with a doctor's authentication, and a hardship letter. Proof of hospice admission satisfies the hardship requirement.
- Calling the National VA Benefits office at 1-800-827-1000 and explaining your situation.
- Faxing requested/required documents to fax number provided by the representative.

Survivor and Dependent Compensation (DIC)

If you're the surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member who meets one of the criteria listed below, you may be able to get a tax-free monetary benefit paid monthly called the VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC). Find out more at www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/. Eligibility:

- Died in the line of duty
- Died from a service-related injury or illness (see the above section and **Appendix A** for presumptively associated diseases and conditions)
- Did not die from a service-related injury or illness but was eligible to receive VA compensation for a service-connected disability rated as totally disabling (meaning the disability made it impossible for the service member to work) for a certain period of time

Note: If you were denied a Blue Water Navy Veteran's service-connected disability claim in the past, you may be eligible for DIC benefits based on the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. As the result this law, Veterans who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are now entitled to a presumption of service connection for illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure.

Eligibility

To determine eligibility for VA DIC as a surviving spouse, child or parent, see eligibility requirements listed on the VA website at www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/.

How do I apply for compensation?

- If you are the surviving spouse or child of a Veteran, fill out an Application for DIC Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits, VA Form 21P-534EZ, found at www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21p-534ez/
- If you are a surviving parent, fill out an Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by Parent(s), VA Form 21P-535, found at www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21p-535/

Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC)

Home-Based Primary Care is a mobile Primary Care Team that provides healthcare services to Veterans who are homebound, have physical/functional impairments, and have complex diseases. An interdisciplinary team (comprised of a primary care provider, a nurse, social worker, pharmacist, registered dietitian, occupational therapist and psychologist/neuropsychologist) provides comprehensive primary care in the Veteran's home environment, assisted living facility, or board and care.

HBPC Eligibility:

- Veteran is actively enrolled in Veteran's Health Administration (VHA)
- Veteran's VA primary care physician provides a referral
- Veteran is elderly and has difficulty attending VA medical appointments
- Veteran has a complex disease process that would benefit from the care of an interdisciplinary team
- Veteran needs can be effectively met in the home environment by routine monthly home visits
- Veteran/caregiver will accept HBPC as their primary care provider
- Veteran's home environment is safe
- Veteran lives within an HBPC service area

HBPC does not include these services:

- Home health aid
- Homemakers, housekeeping services
- Daily nursing care (bathing, for example)
- Acute skilled nursing care (IV infusions for example)

Hospice Benefit

Hospice is a covered benefit for all medically enrolled Veterans. National Hospice policy and standards for VA medical centers include: provision of hospice services in all settings; inpatient hospice beds or access to them in the local community; referral assistance to area community hospices; and an interdisciplinary palliative care consult team. Veterans with Medicare, Medicaid, or other forms of health insurance can use the VA benefit in addition to a private/community hospice. You should discuss this option with your hospice social worker regarding whether there is an advantage to using dual services.

Death Certificate Classification

It is important to collaborate with the healthcare team to establish the correct information to be included on the Death Certificate when a Veteran passes, especially if that Veteran received service-connected disability benefits.

In some cases, the cause of death is directly related to, or "at least as likely as not" to their service-connected injury. This information can be used to establish ongoing benefits to members of the Veteran's family.

Veteran Care Centers

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services State Veterans Homes provide affordable, long-term nursing care for Virginia's Veterans, accepting private insurers, Medicare, and Medicaid. Three Veteran care centers in **Richmond, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach** are first-class facilities designed to enhance quality of life with a clean, caring, and dignified setting appropriate for those who have served our country with honor. One additional care center in **Fauquier County** is under construction with a scheduled opening in 2025. All four care centers are accepting applications for new admissions. Eligibility requirements for admission include an honorable discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces and Virginia residency at time of admission. See <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/healthcare/veteran-skilled-nursing-facilities-state-veterans-homes> for more information and instructions on how to apply for admission. Note that these care centers can have a wait time for admission.

Caregiver Respite

The respite program is offered to veterans who are actively enrolled in the VA through their primary care provider. Qualifying Veterans can receive 30 days of respite for their caregivers each year. See www.va.gov/Geriatrics/docs/Respite_Care.pdf for further information.

Homemaker/Home Health Aide Program (H/HHA)a

H/HHA services enable the Veteran to remain at home with a higher quality of life. These services provide assistance with activities of daily living, which includes bathing, dressing, feeding, ambulation, transfers, and exercises; and assistance with instrumental activities of daily living, which may include light housekeeping, laundry, meal preparation, and grocery shopping. This program is also for Veterans who are isolated, or their caregivers are experiencing a burden. H/HHA services do not include authorization of payment for skilled home health services or adult sitter services. H/HHA services are provided by licensed and accredited private agencies. **H/HHA is available to all Veterans if they are enrolled in the VA standard health medical benefits program and they meet the clinical need for services.** To contact the program, call your local VA and ask for a Homemaker/Home Health Aid Program representative. For more information see www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/Homemaker_and_Home_Health_Aide_Care.asp

VA Caregiver Support Program

The Caregiver Program offers a number of services to eligible Veterans and caregivers. One such program is the **General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)** that provides peer support mentoring, skills training, coaching, telephone support, online programs, and referrals to available resources to caregivers of Veterans. The Veteran must be enrolled in VA health care and be receiving care from a caregiver in order for the caregiver to participate. Caregivers who participate in PGCSS are called General Caregivers. General Caregivers do not need to be a relative or live with the Veteran.

Also available is the **Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)**. PCAFC is for eligible Veterans who have incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975 or on or after September 11, 2001. This program provides resources, education, support, a financial stipend, health insurance, and beneficiary travel to caregivers of eligible Veterans. For further information see <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/health-and-disability/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers/>



III.

Veterans Burial Benefits

Veterans and families can apply for pre-approval for national and state VA cemetery admission. Other U.S. military service members and civilians may be eligible for these benefits. For eligibility requirements see www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/. Unfortunately, funeral or cremation costs are not covered.

Burial Benefits

Regardless of income and assets, these benefits provide eligible Veterans, spouses, and qualified dependents (minor children and, in some cases, unmarried adult dependent children) a free burial at a national or state cemetery, free grave marker, and burial with military honors, which includes presentation of an American flag and playing of taps at funerals/memorials. The VA created [Planning Your Legacy: VA Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit](#) to assist Veterans and their family members in pre-need planning. See <https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/benefits-summary/SummaryofVADependentsandSurvivorsBenefits.pdf>

Burial and Grave Marker Provided at No Cost

National and State Cemeteries:

Regardless of income and assets, the U.S. Department of VA provides all honorably discharged Veterans, spouses, and qualified dependents a free burial and grave marker in any of 142 national cemeteries.

- **VA national cemeteries located in Virginia:** Culpeper National Cemetery, Danville National Cemetery - cremation only, and Quantico National Cemetery in Virginia. See the following website for more information on national cemeteries <https://www.cem.va.gov/cem/cems/listcem.asp>.
- **Arlington National Cemetery:** This cemetery is for Veterans who won top awards, died on active duty, retired from service, and others who qualify are buried here. See www.arlingtoncemetery.mil for further information. Arlington is administered by the Department of the Army.
- **State Veterans cemeteries:** Virginia has three state cemeteries located in Amelia, Pulaski, and Suffolk counties. See www.dvs.virginia.gov/cemeteries for further information.

What the VA Cannot Do:

- Gravesites in a national cemetery cannot be reserved
- A national cemetery typically does not conduct burials on weekends
- National cemeteries cannot place headstones or markers from outside sources
- The national cemetery system cannot enter into contracts or agreements with a local funeral director or mortuary

Burial at Sea

Burial at Sea is a means of final disposition of remains that is performed on United States Navy vessels. The committal ceremony is performed while the ship is deployed. Therefore, family members are not allowed to be present. The commanding officer of the ship assigned to perform the ceremony will notify the family of the date, time, and longitude and latitude once the committal service has been completed. The average amount of wait time for burial at sea, is **12 to 18 months**, once the remains are received at the port of embarkation. Individuals eligible for this program are:

- Active duty members of the uniformed services
- Retirees and Veterans who were honorably discharged
- U.S. civilian marine personnel of the Military Sealift Command
- Dependent family members of active duty personnel, retirees, and Veterans

See www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Support-Services/Casualty/Mortuary-Services/Burial-at-Sea/ for further information on this program, or call the U.S. Navy Mortuary Affairs office at 866-787-0081.

Commemorative Urn and Plaque

The urn and plaque can be requested for Veterans whose cremated remains will not be interred. It's important to note that if a family chooses an urn or a plaque to commemorate a Veteran, the VA is prohibited by law from interring that Veteran's remains in a VA national cemetery or from


providing a headstone, marker or medallion for placement in any cemetery. Therefore, families should be certain of their choice. See <https://www.cem.va.gov/urn-plaque/index.asp> for further information.

Grave Markers and Medallions

The VA provides a headstone, columbarium niche cover, or a flat marker for a Veteran's final resting place, whether it is a private or a state/national cemetery, for qualifying Veterans. If a private grave marker is purchased, a medallion for placement on the grave marker can be obtained from the VA. The funeral home can arrange to obtain the grave marker or medallion, or the grave marker and medallion can be requested directly from the VA. See www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/ for Veteran eligibility requirements and more information.

Funeral Allowance and Private Cemetery Burial Allowance

Some Veterans may qualify for up to \$2000 to help cover burial, funeral, and transportation costs if they choose to be buried in a private cemetery. This allowance is limited to individuals who died as a result of a service-connected disability, died while in VA care, or possessed an open claim for VA compensation that would have been approved, or died while receiving a VA pension or was eligible for a VA pension but instead received full military retirement or disability pay. See www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/ for a full description of allowance qualifications.



*“To care for him who shall
have borne the battle and for
his widow and his orphan”*

- Abraham Lincoln

Military Honors

The following military honors are provided to all qualified Veterans:

- The Department of Defense, through the "Honoring Those Who Have Served" program, provides funeral service Honor Teams to include the folding and presentation of the United States burial flag and playing of taps. These are generally scheduled for the Veteran by the funeral home on behalf of the Veteran's family. If the burial is at a VA cemetery, funeral honors can be requested from the VA using VA Form 10-2065.
- One United States Flag is provided through the national VA to drape the casket or accompany the urn; this generally is obtained by the funeral home for the funeral service but can be obtained directly through the VA with a VA Form 27-2008 and copy of the DD214. There is no time limit for flag requests.
- The national VA can provide a Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) to the family of a deceased Veteran. A PMC is an engraved paper certificate signed by the current President. As with other honors, this can be arranged for by the funeral home on behalf of the Veteran's family, or directly through the VA with a VA Form 40-0247 and a copy of the DD214.

Military Medals

For Veterans who wish to obtain replacement military medals or learn of any medals awarded and not previously received, the Veteran or next of kin should complete Standard Form 180 (Request Pertaining to Military Records).

Information that is needed to complete the request:

- Veteran's full name
- Veteran's branch of service, service number, or social security number
- Veteran's exact or approximate dates of service
- Signature of the Veteran, or the Veteran's next of kin, if Veteran is deceased

What information do I need to apply for burial benefits?

- Social Security number
- Date and place of birth
- Military status and service history (like service dates, discharge character, and rank - commonly found on the DD214 or other separation documents)
- Discharge papers (DD214 or other separation documents) **Note:** If you do not have a copy of discharge papers, see www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/. The following website also provides instructions to expedite a replacement DD214. Your Hospice of the Piedmont team may be able to help with this.
- If the Veteran has already passed away, and you are making immediate burial arrangements and do not have a copy of discharge papers, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117. They can help you get your loved one's DD214 or other discharge documents you may need.



IV.

Arrears of Pay and Survivor Benefit Plan Annuity for Spouses/Families of Retired Military Members

If your loved one retired from the military and receives retirement pay, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) is who you will work with to stop retiree pay and start your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity payments as well as obtaining any other compensation owed from retirement services. The DFAS website at www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/ has a tab on its homepage to report a retiree's death, or you can call the DFAS customer care center at 800-321-1080. Upon notification, DFAS will stop monthly retirement payments to prevent overpayment.

After reporting the death to DFAS, you should receive a letter containing the following documents:

- SF1174 Claim for Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Member of the Uniformed Service and instructions
- Annuity account forms DD2656-7 and instructions if the deceased retiree was enrolled in the SBP

What is Arrears of Pay?

Arrears of Pay is a one-time payment made to a beneficiary that includes the pro-rated amount of the deceased retiree's final month's pay and any other money owned you at the time of the retiree's passing. Please see the *How to Claim a Retiree's Arrears of Pay Using the SF1174* fact sheet located at www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/1174RetireeAOP/ for more detailed information.

Filing for Arrears of Pay

The completed SF1174 form and death certificate are required to receive the Arrears of Pay (a direct deposit form is optional). Where to send the SF1174 form and supporting documents? You have three options:

1. Upload a PDF of your completed/signed SF1174 and supporting documents via the AskDFAS online upload tool specifically for the SF1174 on DFAS.mil at <https://corpweb1.dfas.mil/askDFAS/ticketInput.action?subCategoryID=23127>
2. OR, you can fax your forms to: 800-469-6559
3. OR, you can mail your forms to:
Defense Finance and Accounting Service
U.S. Military Retired Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis IN 46249-1200

Survivor's Benefit Plan

If you are the designated beneficiary of a deceased military service member's SBP, there are several documents you will need to fill out to start your SBP payments.

- The DD Form 2656-7 is the Verification of Survivor Annuity form, which, once received by DFAS, starts SBP payments. It can be found at www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd2656-7.pdf
- The IRS W-4P is the Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity form to have federal taxes withheld from the annuity, found at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf
- Direct Deposit forms: either the Fast Start Direct Deposit Form (FMS 2231), OR Direct Deposit Enrollment Form (SF 1199A), OR International Direct Deposit Enrollment Form (SF1199-I).

Please see the *Start a Survivor Benefit Plan Annuity* fact sheet located at www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/ApplySBP/ for more detailed information.

Filing for SBP

You have three options for submitting your SBP documents:

1. Upload a PDF of your completed/signed DD and supporting documents via the AskDFAS online upload tool specifically for the DD Form 2656-7 on DFAS. mil at <https://corpweb1.dfas.mil/askDFAS/ticketInput.action?subCategoryID=23123>
2. OR, you can fax your forms to: 800-982-8459
3. OR, you can mail your forms to:
U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis IN 46249-1300



If you have questions about starting your SBP annuity, please contact your Branch of Service Retiree Service Organization or call the Customer Care Center at 800-321-1080.

V.

Filing Claims

If You Need Assistance in Filing Claims

There are a lot of benefits for Veterans, and figuring out which forms are required for a VA claim, how to fill them out, and where to send them can be confusing; however, there are agencies ready to assist you. Your hospice team can help connect you to information and agencies that can assist. If you feel you cannot complete the application process on your own, you can appoint an accredited representative to act on your behalf in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for VA benefits (38 U.S.C. 5902, 5903, and 5904).

Proof of Military Service

For benefits application, a copy of discharge papers (form DD214 or other separation documents) and military status and service history like service dates, discharge character, and rank - commonly found on the DD214 or other separation documents - are required. If you do not have a copy of yours or your spouse/parent DD214/discharge papers, see www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/ to obtain a copy. The following website also provides instructions to expedite a replacement DD214 www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies/.

Medical Nexus Letters

It is helpful to include a medical nexus letter with a VA disability claim. This letter establishes the connection between the Veteran's disability and the Veteran's military service. A medical nexus letter helps the VA examiner make a more thorough determination and often helps lead to a successful claim. Veterans are encouraged to work with Veteran Service Officer (see following page) or their physician to obtain a medical nexus letter, which should contain the following information:

- A description of the Veteran's disability with evidence supporting that disability's existence
- Medical evidence to show that the disability was at least as likely as not caused by or exacerbated by the Veteran's military service
- Level of severity of the Veteran's disability and in what ways this impacts the Veteran's quality of life
- Author's qualifications for writing the letter (education, training, experience, length of time providing medical care for the Veteran, etc).



Accredited Representative

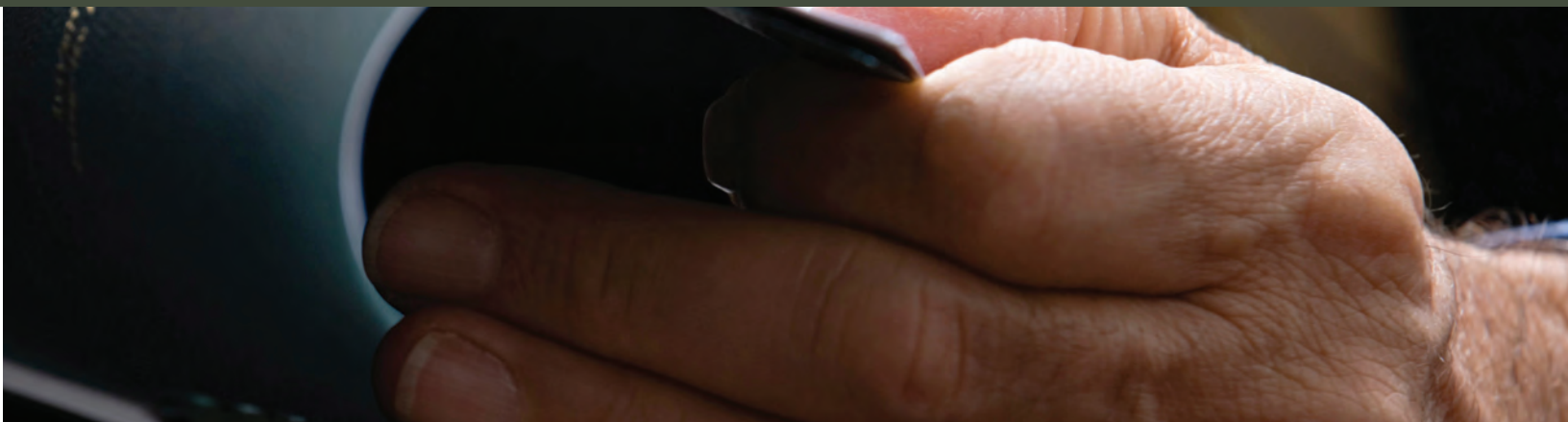
An Accredited Representative is an individual who has undergone a formal training process and is recognized by VA as being capable of assisting claimants with their affairs before VA. Most accredited representatives work for Veteran service organizations (VSOs) such as the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), or the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Accredited representatives may also work for state or county government entities, or may be lawyers or individuals called claims agents, who have completed a certification process with the VA. Recognized organizations and individuals, whether congressionally chartered VSOs, Veteran Service Officers, or VA accredited attorneys or claims agents, can legally represent a Veteran, service member, dependent, or survivor before the VA. Non-recognized organizations and individuals can provide information but cannot be a representative. Further information on types of claims agents is listed as follows:

- **Veterans Service Organizations (VSO):** Most accredited representatives work for VSOs, which are private non-profit groups that advocate on behalf of Veterans and their families. Most VSOs provide their services free of charge, but they may request reimbursement for unusual expenses or ask that you join the organization. VA-recognized VSOs can be named as legal agent for a Veteran or the Veteran's family. Your VSO can help you gather any evidence needed and submit a fully developed claim on your behalf. In addition to assisting Veterans and their families with VA claims, VSOs also sponsor a range of Veteran-centric tasks such as providing transportation to and from VA medical center appointments. **See Appendix C of this document for a list of local accredited VSOs in your service area (current as of 1 January 2025).**
- **Veteran Service Officers:** Veteran service officers are agents who work for the state. They are trained to help Veterans file claims. Their services are free. **A list of local officers can be found in Appendix C of this Guide (current as of 1 January 2025).**
- **Attorneys and Claims Agents:** Attorneys and claims agents must be VA approved to legally represent and file claims for Veterans or their families. They must pass a test and take classes every 1-2 years to keep their license. Unlike VSOs, claims agents and attorneys typically charge a fee for their services.

Refer to <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search> to find a VA approved VSO, attorney or claims agent.

If you are seeking representation from a VSO, you can download a blank copy of the 21-22 form at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22-ARE.pdf (*Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative*). Fill out and mail or hand deliver it to the VSO that you selected. If the VSO agrees to assist you with your claim, that organization will then submit it to the VA regional office on your behalf.

If you are seeking representation from an attorney or claim's agent, you can download a blank copy of the 21-22a form at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22A-ARE.pdf. Fill out a copy of the VA Form 21-22a and mail or hand deliver it to the attorney or claims agent that you selected. That individual will then submit the form to the VA regional office on your behalf.



APPENDIX A:

Diseases and/or Conditions Presumptively Qualifying for Disability Benefits

What are "Presumptive" Conditions?

The VA presumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service. This is because of the unique circumstances of each Veteran's military service. If a presumed condition is diagnosed in a Veteran in a certain group, they can be awarded disability compensation.

If you are diagnosed with a chronic disease within one year of active duty release, you should apply for disability compensation. Examples of chronic disease include: arthritis, diabetes or hypertension.

Or, if you served continuously for at least 90 days and are diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) after discharge, you can establish service connection for the disease.

If you have a presumptive condition, you do not need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumptive.

Veterans in the following groups may qualify for presumptive disability benefits:

- **Former prisoners of war who have a condition that is at least 10 percent disabling**
- **Vietnam Era Veterans: If you were exposed to Agent Orange or served in the following locations, you may have a presumptive condition:**
 - Served in the Republic of Vietnam or on a territorial vessel operating within 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975
 - Any U.S. or Royal Thailand operating base between Jan. 9, 1962, through June 30, 1976
 - Laos from Dec. 1, 1965 through Sep. 30, 1969
 - Certain areas of Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16-30, 1969
 - Guam or American Samoa including territorial waters from Jan. 9, 1962 through July 31, 1980
 - Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from Jan. 1, 1972 through Sep. 30, 1977



Presumptive Disability Benefits (Continued)

- **Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation and who experienced one of the following:**
 - Participated in atmospheric nuclear testing
 - Were prisoners of war in Hiroshima or Nagasaki during WWII or served in occupation forces through July 1, 1946
 - Served before Jan. 1, 1974, at Amchitka Island, Alaska
 - Served before Feb. 1, 1992, at gaseous diffusion plants in Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio or Oak Ridge, Tennessee for at least 250 days
 - Served in the cleanup of Enewetak Atoll from Jan. 1, 1977 through Dec. 31, 1980
 - Served in the cleanup of the Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of Palomares, Spain from Jan. 17, 1966 through March 31, 1967
 - Served in the response to the fire onboard an Air Force B52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons near Thule Air Force Base in Greenland from Jan. 21, 1968 through Sept. 25, 1985
- **Gulf War and Post 9-11 Veterans: Presumptive conditions for Gulf War and Post-9/11 Veterans depends on when and where you served. See charts on the following pages for specific details. Note that PACT Act presumptive medical conditions due to exposure to burn pits and other toxins are included in these charts.**
- **Camp Lejeune Veterans serving at Camp Lejeune or Marine Corps Air Station New River for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987. See www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/camp-lejeune-water-contamination/ for more information regarding Camp Lejeune water contamination health issues.**



See the table below for specific presumed conditions for these groups:

Former Prisoners of War	Vietnam Veterans	Atomic Veterans	Gulf War Veterans
<p>Imprisoned for any length of time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychosis Any anxiety state Dysthymic disorder Organic residuals of frostbite Post-traumatic osteoarthritis Heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease Stroke and the residual effects Osteoporosis, when the Veteran has PTSD <p>Imprisoned-for-at- least 30 days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beriberi Chronic dysentery Helminthiasis Malnutrition (including optic atrophy) Pellagra Other nutrition deficiencies Irritable bowel syndrome Peptic ulcer Peripheral neuropathy Liver cirrhosis Avitaminosis Osteoporosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AL amyloidosis B-cell leukemia Chronic lymphocytic leukemia Multiple myeloma Type 2 diabetes Hodgkin's disease Ischemic heart disease Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma Parkinson's disease Prostate cancer Respiratory cancers Soft-tissue sarcoma (not including osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma) Bladder Cancer Hypothyroidism Hypertension Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) <p>The following conditions, if they become greater than 10 percent debilitating within a year of exposure to an herbicide agent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy Chloracne or other similar acneform disease Porphyria cutanea tarda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All forms of leukemia, except chronic lymphocytic leukemia Cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract, brain, bone, lung, colon or ovary Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma Multiple myeloma Lymphomas, other than Hodgkin's disease Primary liver cancer, except if there are indications of cirrhosis or hepatitis B 	<p>If you served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, Afghanistan, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, or Jordan, during the Persian Gulf War and have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic fatigue syndrome Fibromyalgia Irritable bowel syndrome Any diagnosed or undiagnosed illness that warrants a presumption of service connection, as determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs <p>Signs or symptoms of an undiagnosed illness include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatigue Skin symptoms Headaches Muscle pain Joint pain Neurological symptoms Sleep disturbance GI symptoms Cardiovascular symptoms Weight loss Menstrual disorders



See the table below for specific presumed conditions for these groups:

Post 9-11 Veterans	Gulf War and Post 9-11 Vets	Gulf War and Post 9-11 Vets	Camp Lejeune or MCAS New River
<p>If you served in the *Southwest Asia Theater of operations or in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001 and:</p> <p>Manifest one of the following infectious diseases to a degree of 10% or more within 1 year of separation. Specific conditions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brucellosis • Campylobacter jejuni • Coxiella burnetii (Q fever) • Nontyphoid Salmonella • Shigella • West Nile Virus • Malaria (or when accepted treatises indicate the incubation period began during a qualifying period of service) <p>Manifest to a degree of 10% or more at any time after separation. Specific conditions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mycobacterium tuberculosis • Visceral leishmaniasis <p>* The Southwest Asia theater of operations refers to Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the airspace above these locations</p>	<p>If you served any amount of time in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, or Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from Sep. 19, 2001 to the present or the *Southwest Asia theater of operations from Aug. 2, 1990 to the present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx • Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea • Adenocarcinoma of the trachea • Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea • Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung • Large cell carcinoma of the lung • Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung • Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung • Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung 	<p>If you served on or after Sep. 11, 2001 in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, or Yemen or if you served in the *Southwest Asia theater of operations or Somalia on or after Aug. 2, 1990</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain cancer of any type • Gastrointestinal cancer of any type • Head cancer of any type • Kidney cancer • Lymphatic cancer/lymphoma of any type • Melanoma • Neck cancer of any type • Pancreatic cancer • Reproductive cancer of any time • Respiratory cancer of any type • Asthma that was diagnosed after service • Chronic bronchitis • Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) • Chronic Rhinitis • Chronic sinusitis • Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis • Emphysema • Granulomatous disease • Interstitial lung disease (ILD) • Pleuritis • Pulmonary fibrosis • Sarcoidosis 	<p>If you served at Camp Lejeune or Marine Corps Air Station New River for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Leukemia • Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes • Bladder cancer • Kidney cancer • Liver cancer • Multiple Myeloma • Non-Hodgkins lymphoma • Parkinson's disease

APPENDIX B:

Military History Checklist

General Information

Full name (last, first, middle):

.....
.....
.....

Did the Veteran serve under a maiden name or other name (alias)? If Yes, list the other name(s) here:

.....
.....

Do you have a copy of Veteran's DD214 discharge papers?

Yes No

Does the Veteran have any immediate family members that served or are serving in the military?

Yes No

If Yes, please list here:

.....
.....
.....

Would you like to talk with someone about VA benefits you or your family might be eligible to receive?

Yes No

If yes, please notify your Hospice Team. Is there a specific benefit where more information/help is desired?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Military Background

In which branch of the military did the Veteran serve?

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- Marines
- Coast Guard
- Reservist or National Guard member
- Merchant Marines during WWII
- Other
-

What are the Veteran's dates of service (date entered and date left service):

.....
.....

What is the highest rank the Veteran attained:

.....
.....

In which war era or period of service did the Veteran serve?

- WWII (12/7/41 to 12/31/46)
- Korea (6/27/50 to 1/31/55)
- Cold War
- Vietnam (8/5/64 to 5/7/75 and 2/28/61 for Veterans who served "in country" (in Vietnam)
- Gulf War
- Post 9-11
- Other

Did the Veteran serve on active duty?

- Yes No

Did the Veteran's service include combat, dangerous or traumatic assignments?

- Yes No

Comments:
.....
.....
.....

Was the Veteran a prisoner of war?

- Yes No

Comments:
.....
.....

What was the Veteran's job in the service (e.g. engineering, infantry, communications, maintenance, construction, medical field, other)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What military bases and/or places did the Veteran serve?

.....

List any specific missions, operations or projects that the Veteran served in:

.....

.....

Did the Veteran earn a military award? If yes, mark the award(s) below:

- Medal of honor
- Distinguished Service Cross
- Navy Cross
- Air Force Cross
- Silver Star
- Purple Heart
- Bronze Star *(note if the Bronze Star includes "V" device for valour)*

List other awards here:.....

.....

.....

Overall, how does the Veteran view their experience in the military?

.....

.....

Do any memories particularly stand out? (See "notes" page at the back of the guide for additional space.)

.....

.....

.....

VA Benefits Information

Is the Veteran enrolled in VA?

Yes No

Does the Veteran receive any VA benefits?

Yes No

If yes, which benefits?

.....

.....

Does the Veteran have a service-connected condition (see Appendix A for a list of presumptive service-connected conditions)?

Yes No

If yes, what is the condition?

.....

.....

Does the Veteran get his/her medications from the VA?

Yes No

Does the Veteran go to a VA hospital or clinic for services? If so, what is the hospital and/or clinic's name?

.....

.....

What is the name and contact information of the Veteran's VA physician or Primary Care Provider?

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX C:

Additional Resources for Veterans and Caregivers

General: A good place to learn about all types of Veterans' benefits is at the online at www.ebenefits.va.gov or www.vba.va.gov or, contact your regional Department of Veterans Services office or local Veterans' service organization where you can get personalized help and assistance in filing claims.

Virginia Department of Veterans Services Regional Services Offices in Hospice of the Piedmont's Support Area (current as of January 1, 2025)

1. For the counties of **Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Orange; the city of Charlottesville:**

Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services
1430 Rolkin Court, Suite 202
Charlottesville, VA 22911
434-529-6431
Fax: 434-328-8993
http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/fieldoffice_charlottesville.shtml

Service Representatives:

Jeannette Flint: Jeannette.flint@dvs.virginia.gov
Rene Sanchez: Rene.Sanchez@dvs.virginia.gov

2. for the county of **Augusta** (and also Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, and Rockingham):

Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services
Greenbrier Office Complex
Building 1, Suite 17B
1600 North Coalter Street
Staunton, VA 24401
Phone: 540-332-8900
Fax: 540-332-7841
http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/fieldoffice_staunton.shtml

Service Representatives:

Brandon Csady: Brandon.Csady@dvs.virginia.gov
Marlyn Cullen: marlyn.cullen@dvs.virginia.gov
Jeremy Etienne: Jeremy.Etienne@dvs.virginia.gov

3. for the county of **Buckingham** (and also Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, Cumberland, and Prince Edward; the cities of Bedford, Madison Heights, and Lynchburg):

Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services
519 Leesville Road, Suite A
Lynchburg, VA 24502
(434) 582-5102
Fax: (434) 582-5104
<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/locations/lynchburg-field-office/>

Service Representatives:

Felicia Linthicum: Felicia.Linthicum@dvs.virginia.gov
Janice Benejan: janice.benejan@dvs.virginia.gov

APPENDIX C:

Additional Resources for Veterans and Caregivers

4. for the county of **Culpeper** (and also Caroline, King George, Prince William, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland; the cities of Fredericksburg):

Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services
Quantico Marine Corps Base
Education Center
3089 Roan Street
Quantico, VA 22134
(703) 630-2810
Fax: (703) 630-2872
<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/locations/quantico-field-office/>

Service Representatives:

Johnnie Bourque: johnnie.bourque@dvs.virginia.gov
Neasha Horton: neasha.horton@dvs.virginia.gov
Chandler Tapley: chandler.tapley@dvs.virginia.gov

5. For the counties of **Fauquier, Rappahannock** (and also Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren; the city of Winchester):

Virginia Dept. of Veterans Services
1516 N Shenandoah Avenue
Front Royal, VA 22630
(540) 551-8909
Fax: (540) 660-8620
<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/locations/strasburg-field-office/>

Service Representatives

Christie Monahan: christie.monahan@dvs.virginia.gov
Nathan Reiger: Nathan.Reiger@dvs.virginia.gov

Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS)

VVFS is operated statewide by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and provides outreach, connection, and support to veterans and their families as they address the challenges of military service, transition, deployments, post traumatic stress, or other behavioral health concerns as well as traumatic brain and physical injuries.

Statewide Toll Free Number: 1-877-285-1299

<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/benefits-services/veteran-and-family-support>

1. Central Region Representatives - HOP counties served: Albemarle, Augusta, Buckingham, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Nelson, Orange:

Ben Shaw, Regional Director, 804-690-3217
Stephanie Gaines, Asst. Regional Director, 804-489-6098
Andre Miller, Regional Coordinator, 804-839-1172

2. North Region Representatives - HOP counties served: Fauquier, Madison, Rappahannock:

Jennifer Sztalkoper, Regional Director, 540-471-4804
Briana Robinson, Asst. Regional Manager, 571-235-6583
James Custodio, Regional Coordinator, 571-235-8308

APPENDIX C:

Additional Resources for Veterans and Caregivers

Known Veteran Service Organizations With Accredited Veteran's Service Officers in Hospice of the Piedmont's Area of Operations (current as of January 1, 2025)

American Legion Post 74, Charlottesville-Albemarle

www.LegionPost74.com

3025 Louisa Rd, Keswick, VA 22947

Telephone: 434-977-1050

Accredited Service Officer: Gary Hegemier (434 962-4076)

Email: legionpost74@legionpost74.com

American Legion Post 55, Fredericksburg

Telephone: 540-538-0171

Accredited Service Officer: Rita Chandler

Email: alserviceofficer@gmail.com

American Legion Post 330 - Culpeper

14222 Rixeyville Rd, Culpeper, VA 22701

Telephone: 540-825-9835

Accredited Service Officer: Megan Kimball Kate

Email: american.legion.330@gmail.com

DAV Charlottesville Chapter #33

P.O. Box 6816, Charlottesville, VA 22906

Telephone: (434) 226-0222

Accredited Service Officer: Delton L. Everton

Email: DAVCHAPTER33@outlook.com

VFW Post 8169

2977 West River Road

Scottsville, Virginia 24590

Telephone : (434) 960-2050

Accredited Service Officer: Ben L. Hudson

Email: contact@vfw8169.org

To search for an accredited representative in your area go
to [www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/
find-rep/](http://www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/find-rep/)

APPENDIX C:

Additional Resources for Veterans and Caregivers

Veterans Crisis Line

If a Veteran is in crisis, the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The crisis line is a phone, online chat, and text-messaging service free to all Veterans. It is staffed by caring, trained VA responders, many of whom are Veterans themselves. They can help with problems such as chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, and homelessness.

The Veterans Crisis Line is also available to a Veteran's family, friends, and caregivers to help them ensure their loved one gets the care they need. Veterans Crisis Line responders can also refer calls to Suicide Prevention Coordinators (available at each VA Medical Center), who will follow up with the Veteran and organize the care they may need.

Contact numbers:

- Veteran Crisis Line: **Dial 988, then press 1**
- Online Crisis Chat Line: www.veteranscrisisline.net
- Text Crisis Line: **838255**

Other Resources

1. VA benefits helpline: **800-827-1000**
2. Online VA Benefits: www.ebenefits.va.gov
3. General VA Benefits Information
www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets.asp
4. Requesting DD-214
www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/
5. Military Personnel Records Request
www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html
6. Health Benefits/Means Test/Income Threshold
www.va.gov/health-care/income-limits/introduction
7. Application for VA Health Benefits
www.1010ez.med.va.gov/

