

## **Veteran's Benefits**

### **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits**

#### **MEDICAL / PHARMACY SERVICES**

To receive health care, veterans generally must be enrolled with the VA. Veterans may apply for enrollment at any time. Enrollment may be accomplished by submitting a VA Form 10-10 EZ along with a certified copy of your discharge certificate/DD Form 214 to the VA Regional Hospital. VA Form 10-10 EZ is available at our office or by clicking on the form.

Eligibility: It is strongly suggested that veterans apply for enrollment and let the VA determine eligibility. Veterans should contact the County Director of Veterans Affairs for assistance.

Pharmacy services are available on an outpatient basis to eligible veterans. Depending upon the priority, veteran's may be charged a co-payment.

#### **DISABILITY COMPENSATION**

We assist veterans who are applying for disability compensation for service-connected injuries or illnesses. We can help you organize your claim or reopen an existing claim when your injury or illness worsens. Call to set up an appointment or stop by the office.

#### **PENSION**

Veterans with low incomes who are permanently and totally disabled may be eligible for monetary support if they have 90 days or more of active duty military service. The discharge must be under conditions other than dishonorable. The permanent and total disability must be for reasons other than the veteran's own willful misconduct. Payments are made to qualified veterans to bring their total income, including other retirement and Social Security income, to a level set by Congress. Unreimbursed medical expenses may reduce countable income. Veterans of a period of war who are aged 65 or older and meet service and income requirements are also eligible to receive a pension, regardless of current physical condition. Contact us for assistance.

#### **BURIAL BENEFITS**

##### **Internment in a National Cemetery**

Veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. Spouses and minor children of service members and eligible veterans may also be buried in a national cemetery. Grave sites in national cemeteries cannot be reserved. The funeral director or the next of kin make interment arrangements for an eligible veteran or dependent at the time of need by contacting the national cemetery in which burial is desired. Indiantown Gap National Cemetery is located a short drive from Cumberland County adjacent to Fort Indiantown Gap.

### **Headstones and Markers**

Upon request, VA furnishes headstones and markers at no charge for graves in cemeteries around the world for service members who dies while on active duty and for eligible veterans. VA also provides headstones and markers for spouses and dependents buried in military, state, or national cemeteries, but not for those buried in private cemeteries. When a veteran is buried in a private cemetery, an application for a government-furnished headstone or marker must be made to the VA. The government will ship the headstone or marker free of charge; but will not pay for its placement. Funeral homes can complete and process the application for a headstone and marker at the time arrangements are made or we can assist with the application in the Veterans Affairs office. To check the status of an application for headstone or marker, call 1-800-697-6947.

### **Presidential Memorial Certificates**

Certificates signed by the President of the United States are issued upon request to recognize the military service of honorably discharged deceased veterans. Next of kin, other relatives and friends may request Presidential Memorial Certificates in person at any VA Regional Office or by mail: This is no pre-printed form to complete or time limit for requesting these certificates, but requests should have a copy, not the original, of the deceased veteran's discharge document and clearly indicate to what address the certificate should be sent.

### **Burial Flags**

VA provides a United States flag to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who:

1. served in any war
2. died while on active duty
3. served after January 31, 1955
4. served at least one enlistment or had been discharged or released from active for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty
5. was entitled to retired pay for service in the National Guard or Reserves at the time of death, or would have been entitled to retired pay, but for being under 60 years of age.

Veterans separated from service must have been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Reimbursement of Burial Expenses. VA will pay a burial allowance up to \$2,000 if the veteran's death is service-connected. The person who bore the veteran's burial expenses may claim reimbursement from the VA. There is no time limit for filing reimbursement claims in service-connected death cases. VA will pay a \$300 burial and funeral expense allowance for veterans who, at the time of death, were entitled to receive pension or compensation or would have been entitled to compensation but for receipt of military retirement pay. VA will pay a \$300 plot allowance when a veteran is not buried in a cemetery that is under the U.S. government jurisdiction under the following circumstances:

1. the veteran was discharged from active duty because of disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty
2. the veteran was in receipt of compensation or pension or would have been except for receiving military retirement pay
3. the veteran died in a VA facility

Additional information about burial and memorial benefits may be obtained at any VA national cemetery, regional office or on the internet at [www.cem.va.gov/](http://www.cem.va.gov/).

### **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

Vocational rehabilitation and employment is an employment-oriented program that assists veterans with service-connected disabilities by offering services and assistance to help them prepare for, find and keep suitable employment.

**Eligibility.** A veteran must have a VA-established service-connected disability of at least 10 percent with a serious employment handicap or 20 percent with an employment handicap and be discharged or released from military service under other than dishonorable conditions. A service member pending medical separation from active duty may apply, but the disability rating must be at least 20 percent. **Services.** Depending on an individual's needs, services provided by the VA may include:

1. an evaluation of the individual's abilities, skills and interests
2. assistance finding and maintaining suitable employment
3. vocational counseling and planning
4. training, such as on the job and work experience programs
5. training, such as certificate, two, or four-year college or technical programs
6. supportive rehabilitation services and additional counseling

VA pays the cost of these services and pays a living allowance to veterans who participate in a training program. **Entitlement.** Eligible veterans are evaluated to determine if they need vocational rehabilitation services to help overcome barriers to employment. **Period of Rehabilitation Program.** Generally, veterans must complete a vocational rehabilitation program within 12 years from their separation from military service or within 12 years from the date VA notifies them that they have a compensable service-connected disability. Veterans may be provided up to 48 months of full-time services or their part-time equivalent. **Work Study.** Participants may be paid work-study allowance if they train at the three-quarter or full-time rate. They may elect to be paid in advance a portion of the allowance equal to 40 percent of the total. **Program for Unemployable Veterans.** Veterans awarded 100 percent disability compensation based upon unemployability may still request an evaluation. A veteran who secures employment under the special program will continue to receive 100 percent disability compensation until the veteran has worked continuously for at least 12 months.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty)**

The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) (Active Duty) provides a program of education benefits to honorably discharged veterans who entered active duty for the first time after June 30, 1985. Active duty includes certain full-time reserve and National Guard duty performed after June 30, 1985. To receive the maximum benefit, a participant must serve on active duty for three continuous years. To participate, service members have their military pay reduced by \$100 per month for the first 12 months of active duty. Benefits under this program generally end 10 years from the date of the veteran's last discharge or release from active duty. Participants must have an "honorable" discharge.

### **Montgomery GI Bill (Selected Reserve).**

The MGIB (selected Reserve) provides education benefits to members of the reserve elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, and to members of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard. To be eligible a reservist must:

1. have a six –year obligation to serve in the Selected Reserve signed after June 30, 1985 or, if an officer, agree to serve six years in addition to the original obligation.
2. complete Initial Active Duty for Training (IADT)
3. have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate before applying for benefits
4. remain in good standing in a Selected Reserve unit.

Benefits generally end 10 years from the date the reservist became eligible for the program and end upon separation from the Selected Reserve. If a reservist is separated because of a disability the period may be extended.

### **VA HOME LOAN GUARANTEE**

VA loan guaranties are made to service members, veterans, reservists and unmarried surviving spouses for the purchase of homes, condominiums and manufactured homes and for refinancing loans. VA guarantees part of the total loan, permitting the purchaser to obtain a mortgage with a competitive interest rate, even without a down payment if the lender agrees. The guaranty means the lender is protected against loss if you or a later owner fails to repay the loan. VA requires a down payment on purchase of a manufactured home, and the purchase of a home or condominium if the purchase price exceeds the reasonable value of the property or the loan has a graduated payment feature. Applicants must have a good credit rating, have sufficient income to support the mortgage payments and agree to live in the property. To receive a certificate of eligibility complete VA Form 26-1880. Call us or stop by for assistance. The criteria vary depending upon the period of service. Enders will generally lend up to 4 times your available entitlement without requiring a down payment, provided your income and credit qualify and the property appraises for the asking price.

## **GULF WAR, AGENT ORANGE AND IONIZING RADIATION PROGRAMS**

VA has developed registries to help analyze the type of health conditions being reported by veterans who served in the Gulf War (August 2, 1990 to a date not yet established), claim exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War (between 1962 and 1975), served in Korea in 1968 or 1969, claim exposure to atomic radiation, or were treated with nasopharyngeal (NP) radium during military service. These veterans are provided with free, comprehensive medical examinations, including laboratory and other diagnostic tests deemed necessary by an examining physician to determine health status. Other veterans who may have been exposed to dioxin or other toxic substances in a herbicide or defoliant associated with testing, transporting or spraying of herbicides for military purposes also are eligible to participate in the Agent Orange registry program. Eligible veterans do not have to be enrolled in the VA health care system to participate in registry examinations. Veterans wishing to participate in registry examinations should contact the nearest VA Medical Center.

## **AGENT ORANGE AND OTHER HERBICIDES**

The following diseases are presumed by the VA to be service-related for compensation purposes for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam between Jan 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975:

- chloracne or other acneform disease similar to chloracne
- porphyria cutanea tarda
- soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma)
- Hodgkin's disease
- multiple myeloma
- respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx, trachea)
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- prostate cancer
- acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy
- diabetes mellitus type II
- chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL)

## **GULF WAR VETERANS**

Gulf War veterans who suffer from chronic disabilities resulting from undiagnosed illnesses, medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses (such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia or irritable bowel syndrome) that are defined by a cluster of signs or symptoms, and any diagnosed illness that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines warrants a presumption of service-connection may receive disability compensation. The undiagnosed illnesses must have appeared either during active duty in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War or to a degree of at least ten percent at any time since then through September 30, 2006. The following symptoms are among the manifestations of an undiagnosed illness: fatigue, skin disorders, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, neurologic symptoms, neuropsychological symptoms,

symptoms involving the respiratory system, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal symptoms, cardiovascular symptoms, abnormal weight loss and menstrual disorders. A disability is considered chronic if it has existed for at least six months.

### **VETERANS EXPOSED TO RADIATION**

Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation while on active duty may be eligible for disability compensation if they have disabilities related to that exposure. To determine service-connection, factors considered include amount of radiation exposure, duration of exposure, elapsed time between exposure and the onset of the disease, gender and family history, age at time of exposure, the extent to which a nonservice-related exposure could contribute to disease and the relative sensitivity of exposed tissue. Conditions presumed to be service-connected are all forms of leukemia (Except for chronic lymphocyticleukemia); cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract, bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma, multiple myeloma, lymphomas (other Hodgkin's disease), and primary liver cancer, ( except of cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated).

### **CHAMPVA**

(Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs) CHAMPVA provides reimbursement for most medical expenses – inpatient, outpatient, mental health, prescription medication, skilled nursing care, and durable medical equipment.

To be eligible a person cannot be eligible for TRICARE and must be one of the following:

1. the spouse or child of a veteran who VA has rated as 100% permanently and totally disabled for a service-connected disability;
2. the surviving spouse or child of a veteran who died from a VA-rated service-connected disability, or who, at the time of death , was rated 100% permanently and totally disabled; or
3. the surviving spouse or child of a military member who died in the line of duty, not due to misconduct. In most of these cases, these family members are eligible for TRICARE, not CHAMPVA.

Individuals over the age of 65 must also meet additional CHAMPVA benefits conditions. Individuals who reached the age of 65 before June 5, 2001, and only have MEDICARE Part A, will be eligible for CHAMPVA without having to have MEDICARE Part B coverage; those who have MEDICARE Parts A and B, must keep both parts. Individuals who reached age 65 on or after June 5, 2001, must be enrolled in MEDICARE Parts A and B to be eligible.

For more information, or to apply for CHAMPVA benefits, visit the CHAMPVA Website [www.va.gov/hac/](http://www.va.gov/hac/), or call 1-800-733-8387 or contact the VA Health Administration Center, P.O. Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206.

## **POW**

Former prisoners of war who were imprisoned for at least 30 days are presumed to be eligible for disability compensation if they become at least 10% disabled from diseases associated with POWs. These presumptive diseases are avitaminosis, beriberi heart disease, ischemic heart disease and conditions where the prisoner of war experienced localized edema during captivity, chronic dysentery, helminthiasis, malnutrition (including optic atrophy), pellagra and/or other nutritional deficiencies, psychosis, anxiety states, dysthymic disorder, depressive neurosis, post-traumatic osteoarthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer disease, peripheral neuropathy, residuals of cold injury (including arthritis, neuropathy, and/or skin cancer at the site of the cold injury).

## **DEATH (WIDOW'S) PENSION**

Pensions based on need are available for surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased veterans with wartime service. Spouses must not have remarried and children must be under age 18, or under age 23 if attending a VA-approved school. The veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and must have had 90 days or more of active military service, at least one day of which was during a period of war, or a service-connected disability justifying discharge for disability. Contact us for assistance.

## **DEPENDENCY INDEMNIFICATION COMPENSATION (DIC)**

DIC payments may be available for surviving spouses who have not remarried, unmarried children under 18, helpless children, those between 18 and 23 if attending a VA-approved school, low-income parents of deceased service members or veterans. To be eligible, the deceased must have died from:

1. a disease or injury incurred or aggravated while on active duty or active duty for training
2. an injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty while on inactive duty or
3. a disability compensable by VA

Death cannot be the result of willful misconduct.

DIC payments may also be authorized for survivors of veterans who were totally service-connected disabled when they died, even though their service-connected disabilities did not cause their deaths. The survivors qualify if:

1. the veteran was continuously rated totally disabled for a period of 10 or more years immediately preceding death
2. the veteran was so rated for a period of at least five years from the date of military discharge
3. the veteran was a former prisoner of war who died after September 30, 1999 and who was continuously rated totally disabled for a period of at least one year immediately preceding death

The veterans discharge must be under conditions other than dishonorable. Contact us for assistance.

## **HOUSEBOUND/AID and ATTENDANCE**

Veterans and surviving spouses who are patients in nursing home or assisted living facilities and determined by the VA to be in need of regular aid and attendance of another person or are permanently housebound, may be entitled to additional benefits. Eligibility is based upon need. Contact us for assistance.

## **Pennsylvania Veterans Benefits**

### **EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

Veterans' emergency assistance provides financial aid in an emergency on a temporary basis (not to exceed a three month period) to veterans, their widows, infant children, or dependents who reside in Pennsylvania for the necessities of life (food, dairy, fuel & clothing). An honorably discharged veteran must have served in the Armed Forces of the United States during established war service dates or during peacetime hostile fire or terrorist attack as determined by the Department of Military Affairs. Upon recent death of a veteran, his widow or orphan children are eligible provided the veteran would have qualified prior to his/her death. Contact us for application and assistance.

### **EDUCATIONAL GRATUITY**

Payment of Educational Gratuities are for children of honorably discharged veterans who have been certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as having wartime service-connected disabilities rated as totally and permanently disabling or children of veterans who die or died in service during a period of war or armed conflict. Children must be between the ages of sixteen (16) through twenty-three (23), living within this Commonwealth five (5) years prior to the application and must attend a school within this Commonwealth to be eligible for this Educational Gratuity. Contact us for application and assistance.

### **REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION**

Any honorably discharged veteran who is a resident of the Commonwealth shall be exempt from the payment of all real estate taxes levied upon any building, including the land upon which it stands, occupied by him as his principal dwelling, provided that as a result of wartime military service the veteran has a 100% service-connected disability rating by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; that such dwelling is owned by him solely or jointly with his spouse (an estate by the entirety) and the FINANCIAL NEED for exemption from payment of real estate taxes has been determined by the State Veterans Commission. Upon death of the qualified veteran, the exemption passes on to the unmarried surviving spouse if the need can be shown. Contact us for application and assistance.

### **BLIND VETERANS' PENSION**

Provides for a pension for a person who served in the military or naval forces of the United States or a women's organization officially connected therewith, who gave the Commonwealth as his/her place of residence when entering the military and while performing duties connected with the service, suffered an injury or incurred a disease which resulted in loss of vision so that the visual acuity with the best correcting lens is 3/60 or 10/200 or equivalent, or less normal vision in the better eye. Less normal vision than 3/60 or 10/200, or equivalent includes circumstances where the widest diameter of the visual field of the better eye has contracted to such an extent that it subtends an angular distance of not greater than 20 degrees. The term does not include a person separated from the military or naval forces of the United States or a women's organization officially connected therewith under other than honorable conditions. Contact us for application and assistance.

### **PARALYZED VETERANS' PENSION**

Provides for a pension for any person separated under honorable conditions from the Armed Forces of the United States, who gave the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as his/her place of residence at time of entering the military or naval forces of the United States. Veterans qualify for the pension if they suffered an injury or disease resulting in the loss or loss of use of two or more extremities (arms/hands or legs/feet) during an established period of war or armed conflict or as a result of hostilities during combat-related activities in peacetime. Contact us for application and assistance.

### **STATE VETERANS HOMES**

Pennsylvania operates seven Veterans Homes throughout the Commonwealth. Veterans must have served in the Armed Forces of the United States or Pennsylvania Military Forces, and have been released from service under honorable conditions. The veteran must be a bona fide resident of this Commonwealth upon making application. Applications are processed on a "first come, first serve" basis. For information or application contact us, one the following homes, or Department of Military and Veterans Affairs directly:

Hollidaysburg Veterans Home  
P.O. Box 319  
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-0319  
Tel: 814-696-5260

Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home  
560 E. Third Street  
Erie, PA 16512-6239  
Tel: 814-871-4531

Southeastern Veterans Center  
One Veterans Drive  
Spring City, PA 19475-1230  
Tel: 610-948-2400

Gino J. Merli Veterans Center  
401 Penn Avenue  
Scranton, PA 18530-1239  
Tel: 570-961-4300

Southwestern Veterans Center  
7060 Highland Drive  
Pittsburg, PA 15206-1259  
Tel: 412-665-6707

Delaware Valley Veterans Home  
2701 Southampton Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19154-1205  
Tel: 215-965-0301

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Tel: 717-861-8906

### **SCOTLAND SCHOOL FOR VETERANS CHILDREN**

To be eligible for admission to Scotland School for Veterans Children the following requirements must be met: 1. the natural, adopted, stepparent, grandparent parent's sibling must be an honorably discharged veteran from the military or have died while on active duty 2. parents of the child must have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a continuous period of three years immediately prior to the time of application 3. children must be ages 6 thru 15 in order to be admitted For further information concerning admission contact: Director of Admissions Scotland School for Veterans' Children 3583 Scotland Road Scotland, PA 17254-0900 Tel: 717-264-7187, ext. 699

### **GRANTS FOR VETERANS AND POW/MIA DEPENDENTS**

Please call toll free: 1-800-692-7435 for information.

### **CIVIL SERVICE PREFERENCE**

For information, please contact the: Civil Service Commission P.O. Box 569  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0569 Tel: 717-787-6039

### **BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS**

Records are available free of charge to veterans. For information please contact: Division of Vital Records Central Building, Ste. 401 101 S. Mercer St. New Castle, PA 16101 Tel: 724-656-3100 <http://www.state.pa.us/> or, for same day service, Pennsylvania Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Records, State Office Bldg., 100 Lackawanna Ave., Scranton, PA, 18503, Phone: (570) 963-4595.

### **VEHICLE REGISTRATION FOR SEVERELY DISABLED VETERANS**

Applications for any special license plates/parking placards can be obtained from the County Director of Veterans Affairs, any state Bureau for Veterans Affairs Office, or by calling the Department of Transportation at 800-932-4600.

Applications may also be obtained via the internet at <http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/forms/index.shtml>.

### **VETERANS EMPLOYMENT**

Veterans' employment representatives are located throughout the Commonwealth at CareerLink Job Centers to assist with job counseling and placement information. The CareerLink Job Centers are located in Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton, Pa.

### **FREE FISHING AND HUNTING LICENSES FOR CERTAIN DISABLED VETERANS**

Certain disabled veterans are eligible for free fishing and hunting licenses. Application can be made at the Luzerne County Treasurer's Office in the County Courthouse in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Luzerne County Veterans Benefits

### **BURIAL ALLOWANCE**

Luzerne County provides a burial allowance of \$100.00 to veterans and spouses of deceased veterans who are legal residents of the county at the time of death. Location of burial may be outside the county. Veterans must have served during a period of wartime and possess an honorable discharge. Application must be made within one year of death unless the veteran died while in the service, in this instance application can be made anytime after death. Generally, Funeral Home Directors assist with the application at the time funeral arrangements are being made. Contact us for assistance.

### **GRAVE FLAGS and FLAG HOLDERS**

Luzerne County provides grave flag holders and an American Flag for graves of deceased veterans who at the time of death are legal residents of Luzerne County and are buried in the county, regardless of where they died. Grave flag holders designate the war/wartime of the veteran's service. The County decorates each grave with an American Flag in time for Memorial Day. The flags must remain on the graves until the first working day after July 4th.

### **HEADSTONE and PLACEMENT**

Luzerne County provides the base for the Federal Bronze Marker. Also a \$10.00 deliverer allowance and a \$10.00 installation allowance for both Bronze or Granite Federal Headstones. This is coordinated through the Funeral Home Directors or you can contact our office for assistance.

### **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE RECORDS**

Luzerne County issues certified copies of marriage, and divorce records at no cost to disabled wartime veterans or members of the armed forces, of any war or armed conflict in which the United States has been, is now or shall hereafter be engaged, or by or on behalf of any dependent of any such veteran, or member of the armed forces. No cost certified copies are provided to obtain veteran benefits.

### **DISCHARGE CERTIFICATES**

Luzerne County Recorder of Deeds records Discharge Certificates and DD Form 214 Discharge Certificates at no cost to the veteran. Certified copies may be obtained at no cost when needed. Veterans are encouraged to record their discharge with the Recorder of Deeds to insure safekeeping and availability when required to receive veterans' benefits.

### **MILITARY BURIAL HONORS**

Military burial honors are provided at no cost to the veterans family. The Federal Government provides honors. Arrangements for the Honor Guard are coordinated through the Funeral Home Directors.