

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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The Department of Veterans Affairs operates programs to benefit veterans and members of their families. Benefits include compensation payments for disabilities or death related to military service; pensions; education and rehabilitation; home loan guaranty; burial; and a medical care program incorporating nursing homes, clinics, and medical centers.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was established as an executive department by the Department of Veterans Affairs Act (38 U.S.C. 201

note). It is comprised of three organizations that administer veterans programs: the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits

Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration. Each organization has field facilities and a central office component. Staff offices support the overall function of the Department and its Administrations.

Activities

Advisory Committee Management

Office The Advisory Committee Management Office serves as the coordinating office for the Department's 25 Federal advisory committees. It is responsible for establishing clear and uniform goals, standards, and procedures for advisory committee activities. It is also responsible for ensuring that VA advisory committee operations are in compliance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction The Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) is a multifunctional organization responsible for directing the acquisition, logistics, construction, and leasing functions within the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Executive Director, OALC, is also the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Cemeteries The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is responsible for the management and oversight of more than 128 national cemeteries in the United States and Puerto Rico, as well as 33 soldiers' lots, Confederate cemeteries, and other monument sites. Burial in a national cemetery is available to eligible veterans and their eligible spouses and dependent children. At no cost to the family, a national cemetery burial includes the gravesite, graveliner, opening and closing of the grave, headstone or marker, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine. If a veteran is buried in a private cemetery, anywhere in the world, NCA will provide a headstone or marker. NCA's State Cemetery Grants Program provides funds to State and tribal governments to establish, expand, or improve State-operated veterans' cemeteries. NCA issues Presidential Memorial Certificates to recognize the service of honorably discharged service members or veterans.

Center for Minority Veterans The Center for Minority Veterans (CMV), established by Public Law 103-446 (108 Stat. 4645), promotes the use of VA benefits, programs, and services by and assesses the needs of minority veterans. The CMV focuses on the unique and special needs of African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, which include American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives.

Center for Women Veterans The Center for Women Veterans (CWV), established by Public Law 103-446 (108 Stat. 4645), reports to the Secretary's Office and oversees the Department's programs for women veterans. The CWV Director serves as the primary advisor to the Secretary on all matters related to policies, legislation, programs, issues, and initiatives affecting women veterans. The CWV ensures that women veterans receive benefits and services on par with male veterans; VA programs are responsive to gender-specific needs of women veterans; outreach is performed to improve women veterans' awareness of services, benefits, and eligibility criteria; and women veterans are treated with dignity and respect.

Health Services The Veterans Health Administration provides hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary care, and outpatient medical and dental care to eligible veterans of military service in the Armed Forces. It conducts both individual medical and health-care delivery research projects and multi-hospital research programs, and it assists in the education of physicians and dentists and with training of many other health care professionals through affiliations with educational institutions and organizations.

Veterans Benefits The Veterans Benefits Administration provides information, advice, and assistance to veterans, their dependents, beneficiaries, representatives, and others applying for VA benefits. It also cooperates with the Department of Labor and other Federal, State, and local agencies in developing employment opportunities for veterans and referral for assistance in resolving

socioeconomic, housing, and other related problems.

The Compensation and Pension Service is responsible for claims for disability compensation and pension, specially adapted housing, accrued benefits, adjusted compensation in death cases, and reimbursement for headstone or marker; allowances for automobiles and special adaptive equipment; special clothing allowances; emergency officers' retirement pay; survivors' claims for death compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, death pension, and burial and plot allowance claims; forfeiture determinations; and a benefits protection program for minors and incompetent adult beneficiaries.

The Education Service administers the Montgomery GI Bill program and other programs which provide education benefits to qualified active-duty members, veterans, certain dependents of veterans, and members of the Selected and Ready Reserve. The Service also checks school records to ensure that they comply with the pertinent law, approves courses for the payment of educational benefits, and administers a work-study program. Additional details are available at www.gjbill.va.gov.

The Insurance Service's operations for the benefit of service members, veterans, and their beneficiaries are available through the regional office and insurance center (phone, 800-669-8477) in Philadelphia, PA, which provides the full range of functional activities necessary for a national life insurance program. Activities include the complete maintenance of individual accounts, underwriting functions, life and death insurance claims awards, and any other insurance-related transactions. The agency also administers the Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance Program for those disabled veterans who receive a VA grant for specially adapted housing and supervises the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Program and the Veterans Group Life Insurance Program.

The Loan Guaranty Service is responsible for operations that include appraising properties to establish their values; approving grants for specially adapted housing; supervising the

construction of new residential properties; establishing the eligibility of veterans for the program; evaluating the ability of a veteran to repay a loan and the credit risk; making direct loans to Native American veterans to acquire a home on trust land; servicing and liquidating defaulted loans; and disposing of real estate acquired as the consequence of defaulted loans.

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service provides outreach, motivation, evaluation, counseling, training, employment, and other rehabilitation services to service-connected disabled veterans. Vocational and educational counseling, as well as the evaluation of abilities, aptitudes, and interests are provided to veterans and servicepersons. Counseling, assessment, education programs, and, in some cases, rehabilitation services are available to spouses and children of totally and permanently disabled veterans as well as surviving orphans, widows, and widowers of certain deceased veterans.

Vocational training and rehabilitation services are available to children with spina bifida having one or both parents who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era, or served in certain military units in or near the demilitarized zone in Korea, between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971.

Veterans' Appeals The Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) is responsible for entering the final appellate decisions in claims of entitlement to veterans' benefits and for deciding certain matters concerning fees charged by attorneys and agents for representation of veterans before VA and requests for revision of prior BVA decisions on the basis of clear and unmistakable error. Final Board decisions are appealable to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Field Facilities The Department's operations are handled through the following field facilities:

- cemeteries, providing burial services to veterans, their spouses, and dependent children;
- domiciliaries, providing the least intensive level of inpatient medical care including necessary ambulatory medical

treatment, rehabilitation, and support services in a structured environment to veterans who are unable because of their disabilities to provide adequately for themselves in the community;

- medical centers, providing eligible beneficiaries with medical and other health care services equivalent to those provided by private-sector institutions, augmented in many instances by services to meet the special requirements of veterans;

- outpatient clinics to provide eligible beneficiaries with ambulatory care; and
- regional offices to grant benefits and services provided by law for veterans, their dependents, and beneficiaries within an assigned territory; furnish information regarding VA benefits and services; adjudicate claims and make awards for disability compensation and pension; conduct outreach and information dissemination and provide support and assistance to various segments of the veteran population to include former prisoners of war, minority veterans, homeless veterans, women veterans and elderly veterans; supervise payment of VA benefits to incompetent beneficiaries; provide vocational rehabilitation and employment training; administer educational benefits; guarantee loans for purchase, construction, or alteration of homes; process grants for specially adapted housing; process death claims; and assist veterans in exercising rights to benefits and services.

For a complete listing of the Department's field facilities, consult the Web site at www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp.

Sources of Information

Audiovisuals Persons interested in the availability of VA video productions or exhibits for showing outside of VA may write to the Chief, Media Services Division (032B), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Phone, 202-273-9781 or 9782.

Contracts Persons interested in business opportunities with the VA may contact the Director, Acquisition

Resources Service (049A5), 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Phone, 202-273-8815. Information on business opportunities with the VA can be found on the Internet at www.va.gov/oamm/busopp/doingbusiness.htm. Additional information is available at the Office of Acquisition and Material Management Web site at www.va.gov/oamm. Information on solicitations issued by VA is available at www.va.gov/oamm/busopp/index.htm.

Small Business Programs Persons seeking information on VA's small business programs may call 800-949-8387 or 202-565-8124. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Web site (Internet, www.va.gov/osdbu) contains a considerable amount of information about these programs.

Veterans Business Ownership Services The Center for Veterans Enterprise assists veterans who want to open or expand a business. This Center is a component of the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization. Phone, 866-584-2344. Internet, www.vetbiz.gov. Email, vacve@mail.va.gov.

Electronic Access Information concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs is available electronically through the Internet at www.va.gov.

Employment The Department of Veterans Affairs employs physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, nurses, nurse anesthetists, physician assistants, expanded-function dental auxiliaries, registered respiratory therapists, certified respiratory technicians, licensed physical therapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and licensed practical or vocational nurses under VA's excepted merit system. This system does not require civil service eligibility. Other professional, technical, administrative, and clerical occupations, such as veterans claims examiners, secretaries, and management analysts, exist in VA that do require civil service eligibility. Persons interested in employment should contact the human resources services office at their nearest VA facility or search the VA Web site at www.va.gov/jobs. All qualified applicants will receive

consideration for appointments without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, political affiliation, or any nonmerit factor.

Freedom of Information Act Requests Inquiries should be directed to the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, Information Management Service (045A4), 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Phone, 202-273-8135.

Inspector General Inquiries and Hotline Publicly available documents and information on the VA Office of Inspector General are available electronically through the Internet at www.va.gov/oig. Complaints may be sent by mail to the VA Inspector General (53E), P.O. Box 50410, Washington, DC 20091-0410. Hotline phone, 800-488-8244. Email, vaighotline@va.gov.

Medical Center (Hospital) Design, Construction, and Related Services Construction projects for VA medical centers and other facilities in excess of \$4 million are managed and controlled at the VA central office, located in Washington, DC. Projects requiring design, construction, and other related services are advertised on the Internet FirstGov site at www.firstgov.gov. Submit project-specific qualifications (SF 254 and SF 255) to the Director, A/E Evaluation and Program Support Team (181A), 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Phone, 202-565-4181. Additional information regarding the selection process can be found on the VA Office of Facilities Management Internet site at www.va.gov/facmgt.

Construction projects for VA medical centers and other facilities which are less than \$4 million are managed and controlled at the individual medical centers. For information regarding these specific projects, contact the Acquisition and Materiel Management Office at each individual VA medical center. Addresses and additional information on VA medical centers can be found on the VA Internet site at www.va.gov/facilities.

News Media Representatives may contact VA through the nearest regional Office of Public Affairs:

Atlanta (404-929-5880)
Chicago (312-980-4235)
Dallas (817-385-3720)
Denver (303-914-5855)
Los Angeles (310-268-4207)
New York (212-807-3429)
Washington, DC (202-530-9360)

National media may contact the Office of Public Affairs in the VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Phone, 202-273-6000.

Publications The *Annual Performance and Accountability Report* may be obtained (in single copies), without charge, from the Office of Budget (041H), 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420.

The 2005 VA pamphlet *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* (80-98-1) is available for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

The *Board of Veterans Appeals Index* (I-01-1), an index to appellate decisions, is available on microfiche in annual cumulation from July 1977 through December 1994. The quarterly indexes may be purchased for \$7 and annual cumulative indexes for \$22.50. The VADEX/CITATOR of Appellate Research Materials is a complete printed quarterly looseleaf cumulation of research material which may be purchased for \$175 with binder and for \$160 without binder. The Vadex Infobase, a computer-searchable version of the VADEX, is also available on diskettes for \$100 per copy. These publications may be obtained by contacting Promisel and Korn, Inc. Phone, 301-986-0650. Archived decisions of the Board of Veterans' Appeals are available through the VA Web site at www.va.gov.

A January 2000 VA pamphlet entitled *Understanding the Appeal Process* (01-00-1) is available for sale from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

The VA pamphlet, *A Summary of Department of Veteran Affairs Benefits* (27-82-2), may be obtained, without charge, from any VA regional office.

Interments in VA National Cemeteries, VA NCA-IS-1, details eligibility

information and contains a list of both national and State veterans cemeteries. Copies may be obtained without charge from the National Cemetery

Administration (41C1), 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Call 800-827-1000 or visit www.cem.va.gov for more information.

For further information, contact the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420. Phone, 202-273-6000. Internet, www.va.gov/opa.