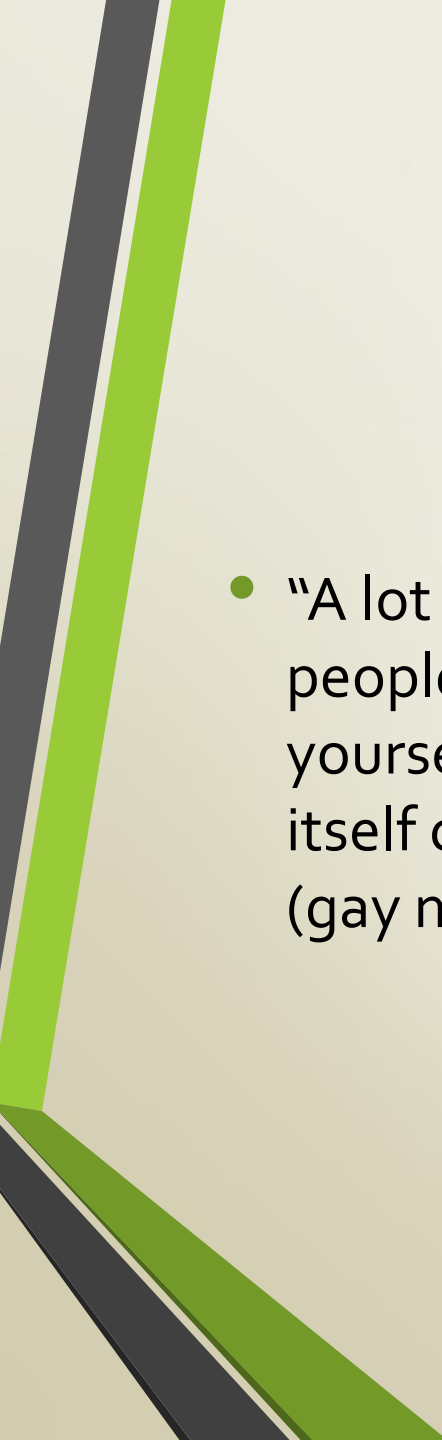




# Department of Veterans Affairs

Seattle Public Contact

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- "A lot of my anxieties and the mistrust I have for people...began in the military...Where you had to not be yourself...I think recognition of that; that the military itself created that trauma is important to many people."  
(gay man)

# Presentation Content

- Who is a Veteran
- Types of Benefits Administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)
- Service Connected Compensation
- Non Service-Connected Pension
- Survivor Claims/Burial Benefits
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSO)

# Who is a Veteran?

- Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations defines a veteran as “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.”
- In general, active service means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service; or as a commissioned officer of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessors.

# Types of Discharges

There are currently five types of discharges issued by the military services:

1. Honorable Discharge (HD),
2. Under Honorable Conditions (UHC) or General Discharge (GD),
3. Other than Honorable Conditions (OTH) or Undesirable Discharge (UD),
4. Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD), and
5. Dishonorable Discharge (DD).

# Types of Benefits Administered by VBA

- Service-connected compensation and non-service connected pension
- Survivor's Benefits (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, and Death Pension).
- Education Benefits
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Home Loans
- Life Insurance
- Burial Benefits
- Healthcare

# Additional Benefits Available to Veterans

- Preference in federal hiring
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Unemployment Insurance (if actively seeking work)
- Military retirement, medical severance and separation pay
- State programs including tuition assistance, emergency funds, PTSD and grief counseling, soldier's homes and elder care, fiduciary and guardianship, license plates, hunting and fishing licenses, park passes, burial plots, claim assistance, access to discharge papers and other Veteran records

# How to Apply for Benefits

- Apply Online (recommended)
- Contact an accredited Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)
- Download and mail a Standard Form
- Speak with us in person



# How to Apply for Benefits (continued)

Applicants must now use Standard Forms:

- VA Form 21-526EZ for original or reopen **compensation** claims
- VA Form 21-527EZ for original or reopen **pension** claims
- VA Form 21-534EZ for **Survivor** benefit claims
- VA Form 21-0966 if you **Intend to File** a claim
- VA Form 21-0958 to file a **Notice of Disagreement** with a decision

# Service-Connected Compensation

- Disability compensation paid to veteran who is disabled by an injury /illness incurred or aggravated during active military service
- Injury or illness does NOT have to be combat related or have been incurred during a period of war
- If granted, veteran assigned a percentage (0%, 10%, 20%...) which corresponds to a dollar value
  - 10% = \$136.24
  - 50% = \$855.41 (single vet with no dependents)
  - 100% = \$2973.86 (single vet with no dependents)

## Service-Connected Compensation (continued)

- Vets rated at or above 30% are entitled to add dependents to their award (VA Form 21-686c) which increases payment.
- For example, add spouse = \$48.00 to \$163.00 increase
- This benefit is NOT affected by other sources of income *except* when receiving Individual Unemployability.

**Important:** The date VBA receives a Claim is generally the date of entitlement for benefits. For this reason, use VA Form 21-0966 if you **Intend to File** a claim but don't have everything assembled

# Who is Eligible for S/C Compensation?

- Any veteran is eligible for s/c compensation if they meet the criteria:
  - Have service-related disability
  - Have discharge that is other than Dishonorable
  - Served on active duty
    - Guard and Reserve Members generally need to have been called on to active duty under Title 10 or USC 32 (DD 214 usually notates this)

# Special Issues Relating to S/C Compensation

- Claims for PTSD
  - Current diagnosis + in-service stressor + symptoms/condition medically related to in-service stressor (nexus)= likely grant of service connection for PTSD
  - Vet needs to provide stressor statement demonstrating an in-service stressor caused him/her fear of hostile military or terrorist activity (statement can be replaced by evidence of certain medals/ribbons on DD 214)
  - Non combat veterans: Need to provide stressor statement including who/what/where/when (2 month date range and year) /how of the traumatic event they experienced

# Special Issues Relating to S/C Compensation (continued)

- respiratory cancers, such as cancers of the
  - lung
  - bronchus
  - larynx
  - trachea
- soft-tissue sarcoma
- chloracne or other acneiform disease consistent with chloracne
- type 2 diabetes mellitus
- chronic lymphocytic leukemia
- AL amyloidosis
- Parkinson's Disease
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

## Non Service-Connected Pension

- Income based benefit for veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to work due to non military-related conditions
  - Purpose to bring the veteran's total monthly income to a level set by congress (currently \$1,097.17)
- What does Permanent and Total mean?
  - Age 65 or older
  - Under age 65 but deemed unable to work based on medical evidence, or
  - Residing in a Medicaid approved nursing home

# Who is eligible?

Vet must meet ALL the following criteria:

1. Have received other than dishonorable discharge
2. Meet length of service criteria:
  1. Service prior to 9-7-1980: served 90 days
  2. Service after 9-7-1980: served 24 consecutive months
3. At least one day of service must be during period of war (did not have to be in combat)
4. Permanently and Totally disabled –or- 65+ years of age
5. Countable income less than \$12,868 yearly (\$1,072.33 monthly) for a single Veteran with no dependents



# War Time Service Periods

- WWI: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918
- WWII: December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946
- Korean War: June 27, 1950 to January 31, 1955
- Vietnam War: August 5, 1964\* to May 7, 1975 (\*In country from February 28, 1961)
- Gulf War: August 2, 1990 to present

# How to Apply for NSC Pension

- Veteran needs to complete VA Form 21-526 or 21-527
  - IF using 21-526, do not fill out compensation section unless vet intending to apply for this
  - In income section, fill out EVERY line (if the question doesn't apply or answer is "0", write "0")
  - If form is not complete, we will need to do development, causing delays

# Survivor Claims/Burial Claims

- What is Dependency and Indemnity Compensation?
- What are accrued benefits?
- What is death pension?
- What are burial benefits?

# What is Dependency and Indemnity Compensation?

**Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)** is a monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors of:

- Servicemembers who died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, OR
- Veterans whose death resulted from a service-connected injury or disease, OR

## What is Dependency and Indemnity Compensation? (continued)

- Veterans whose death resulted from a non-service-connected injury or disease, and who were **totally disabled from their service-connected disabilities** for at least **10 years** immediately preceding their death,

OR, since the Veteran's release from active duty and for at least **five years** immediately preceding death,

OR, at least **one year** immediately preceding death if the Veteran was a **Former Prisoner of War (FPOW)** who died after September 30, 1999.

# What are Accrued Benefits?

- Accrued benefits are **benefits that are due** to the beneficiary based on an existing decision on a claim for benefits or evidence in the Veteran's claim file at the date of death, **but not paid prior to death.**
- *Example:* A claim for a recurring benefit had not been allowed, but the beneficiary died before award action could be taken, OR one or more benefit checks had not been deposited or negotiated.

# What are Burial Benefits?

- VA burial allowances are flat-rate monetary benefits that are generally paid at the maximum amount authorized by law for an eligible Veteran's burial and funeral costs.
- Eligible surviving spouses of record are paid automatically upon notification of a Veteran's death, without the need to submit a claim.

# What are Burial Benefits? (continued)

## *Non Service-Connected Death*

- If the Veteran died on or after October 1, 2016, VA will pay a \$300 burial allowance and \$749 for a plot.
- If the Veteran died on or after October 1, 2015, but before October 1, 2016, VA will pay a \$300 burial allowance and \$747 for a plot.
- If the Veteran died on or after October 1, 2014, but before October 1, 2015, VA will pay \$300 for burial allowance and \$745 for a plot.



# What are Burial Benefits? (continued)

## Additional Memorial Benefits

- No cost internment at a National or State Cemetery for the Veteran, spouse and children (regardless of age)
- Presidential Memorial Certificate
- Memorial Flag (one per family)
- Headstone or crypt marker

# What is Aide and Attendance?

- VA may provide additional income in the form of an allowance to the basic benefit if the Veteran or the surviving spouse has a regular medical need for assistance or supervision due to disability.
- Allowances are granted for the regular need for "aide and attendance" or if the beneficiary is "housebound."

**Special Note:** Aide and Attendance is an allowance paid *in addition to* the basic benefits of compensation or pension. It is **not** a separate or stand-alone program.

# What is Aide and Attendance? (continued)

- Aid and Attendance may be granted when one or more conditions exist that require additional caregiver support for the disability.
- Medical evidence is required unless someone is a patient in a nursing home, and then the requirement is waived.
- Submit VA Form 21-2680, Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent need for Regular Aid and Attendance, OR
- Submit VA Form 21-0779, Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance

# Tools/Resources

- <https://explore.va.gov/>
- <https://www.vets.gov/>
- <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage>
- <https://www.outserve-sldn.org/>
- <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/factsheets.asp>
- <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>

# Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)

- **What is an accredited representative?**
  - An accredited representative is an individual who has undergone a formal application and training process and is recognized by VA as being capable of assisting claimants with their affairs before VA.
  - A VSO, along with state, county, and other local Veteran service representatives are trained to help you understand and apply for any VA benefits you may be entitled to including: compensation, education, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loans, life insurance, pension, health care, and burial benefits. Additionally, your VSO can help you gather any evidence needed and submit a Fully Developed Claim on your behalf. Many VSOs provide their services free-of-charge, but they may request reimbursement for unusual expenses.



Questions?