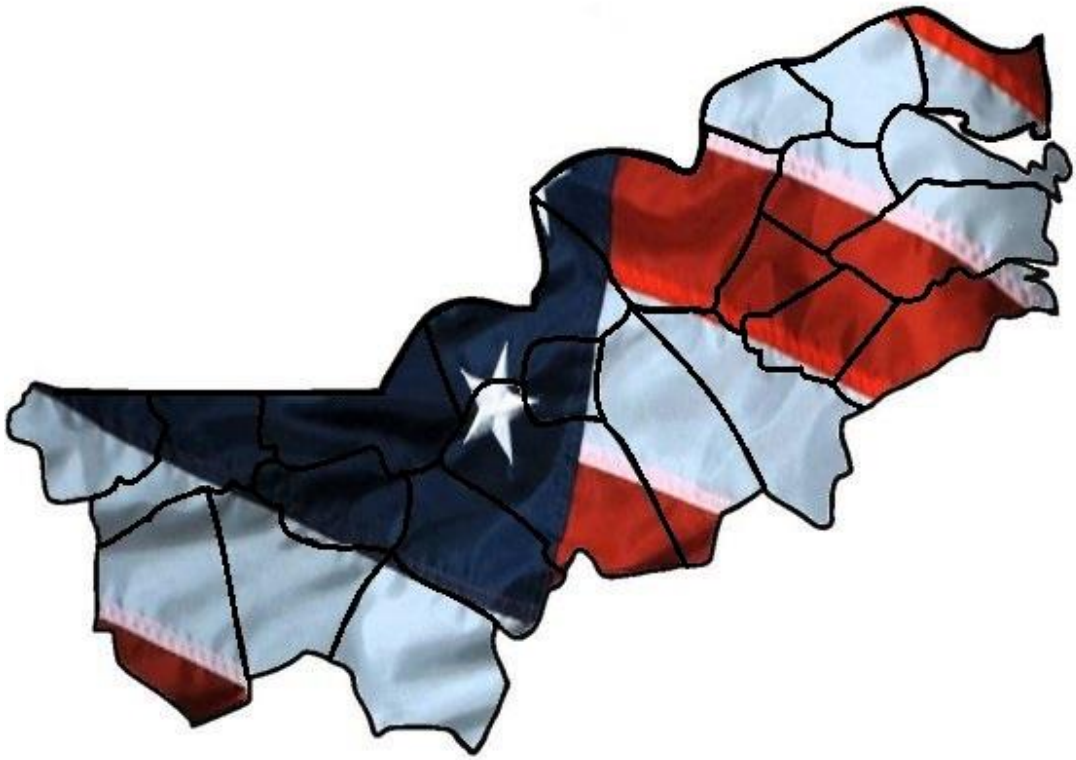
Merrimack Valley

Veteran Resource Guide



Merrimack Valley Veteran Resource Guide (MVVRG)

First Edition

Created by the Amesbury Council on Aging

In collaboration with Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley

Printed on: 9/26/2017 12:52 PM

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Amesbury COA
68 Elm Street
Amesbury, MA 01913
Phone: 978-388-8138

For the reader,

Thank you for your interest in the Merrimack Valley Veteran Resource Guide. Our hope is that this guide will help to address the many questions that Veterans, their family members, and individuals providing assistance have. The mission for this book is to help connect any and all eligible Veterans or service members to resources that are available to them because of their service to their country. We have designed this guide with different learning styles in mind. For more information about how to use our navigation tools, please see the instructions on the next page titled "How to use this Guide." See page 8.

The Veteran Resource guide is designed for use in conjunction with the Green Book, distributed by Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley. The Green Book is a reference tool pertaining to older adults and adults with disabilities within the Merrimack Valley.

The information in this guide has been compiled from state, federal and community organizations and is no way all-inclusive of every resource available to the Veteran and their family. **While certain resources are targeted to Veterans over sixty years of age and local to the Merrimack Valley, we believe this guide will be helpful to Veterans of all ages.** This guide has also been designed to be helpful for the caseworker assisting the Veteran and their family.

This book is as current as the date on the front page. The information is always changing and we will do our best to update the information periodically.

Please contact The Amesbury COA with content updates to the Resource Guide at 978-388-8138 or https://www.amesburyma.gov/users/vkahrman/contact.

Sincerely,

Amesbury Senior Community Center

Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley

ESMV and the Veteran Resource Guide service the following cities and towns:
Amesbury, Andover, Billerica, Boxford, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Westford, West Newbury.

How to use this Guide

These instructions are intended to help the reader get the most out of this guide.

Flow Chart Visual and Questionnaire (Q&A)

People interpret information differently due to diverse learning styles. The reader can choose to use either a flow chart or a questionnaire found at the beginning of this guide. These navigation tools contain the same information to help direct the reader to reference pages within the guide.

Reference Pages

The Flow Chart and Q&A refers the reader to reference pages. These reference pages include basic information and direct the reader to services that may be available to them. They can help you locate information quickly.

Veterans Case Managers Form

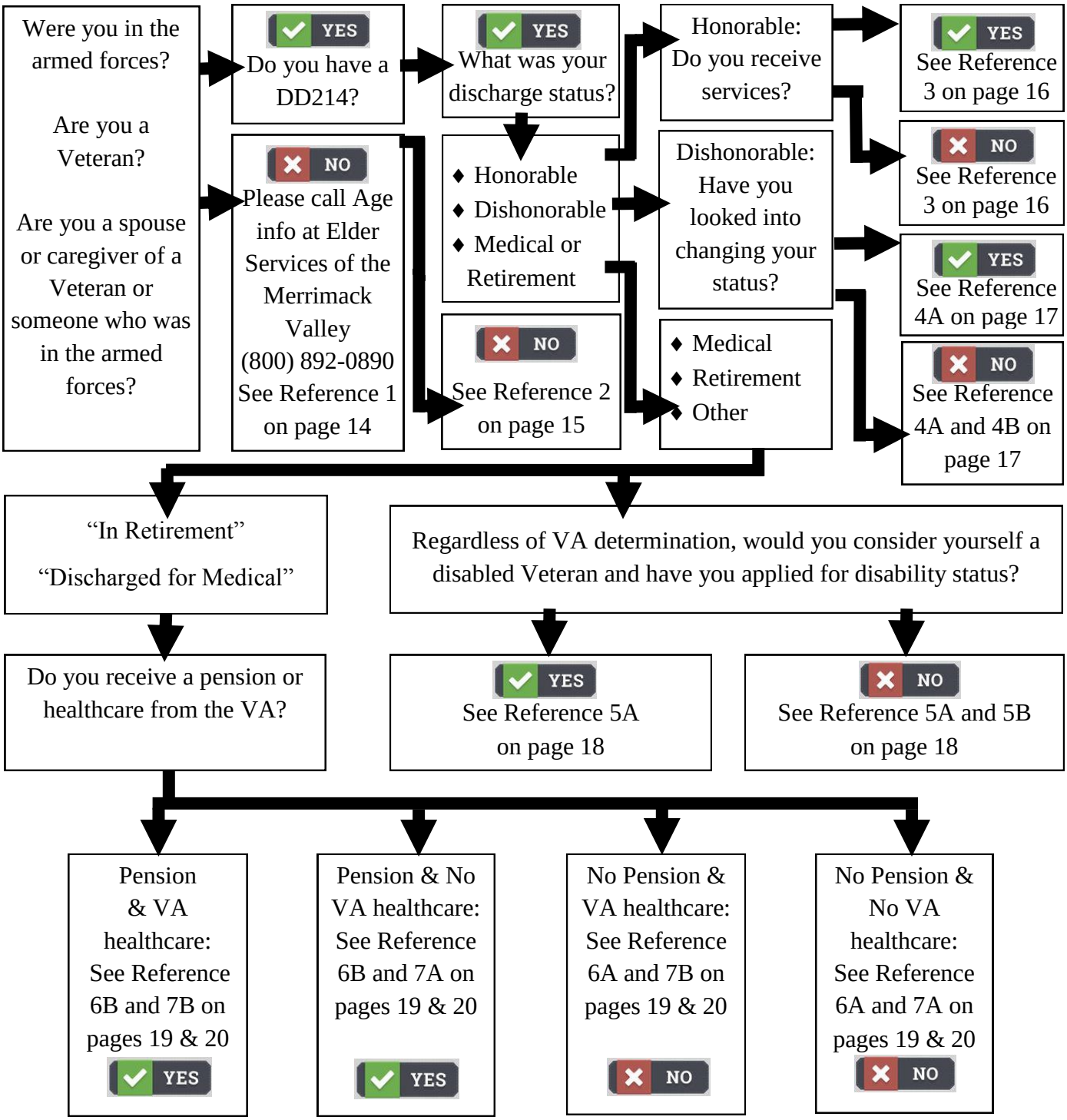
The Veterans Case Manager Form is a tool that can help case managers more quickly identify Veterans' needs. This form aids the reader with gathering general information to share with any assisting agency representative.

Green Book

The Green Book is a reference tool for information pertaining to older adults and adults with disabilities within the Merrimack Valley. The Veteran Resource guide is a tool to be used in conjunction with the Green Book. The Green Book can be found at many locations including your local Council On Aging or Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley. For more information on Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, please see reference 1 on page 14.

Flow Chart Self-assessment (Visual)

Please answer Yes or No to each question and follow the arrow to next the box.



This document was created by the Amesbury Senior Community Center.

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Flow Chart Self-Assessment (Q&A)

1.

Were you in the armed forces?	YES / NO
Are you a Veteran?	YES / NO
Are you a spouse or caregiver of a Veteran or someone who was in the armed forces?	YES / NO

If you answered NO to ALL of the questions (in #1), **please go to Reference sheet 1 on page 14.**

If you answered YES to ANY of the questions (in #1), **please answer question 2.**

2.

Do you have a DD 214?	YES / NO

If you answered NO to this question, **please go to Reference sheet 2 on page 15.**

If you answered YES to this question, **please answer question 3.**

3.

What was your discharge status? (Honorable, Dishonorable, Medical / Retirement, or other)

If you answered Honorable, whether or not you receive services, **please go to Reference sheet 3 on page 16.**

If you answered Dishonorable, **please answer question 4.**

If you answered Medical / Retirement, **please answer question 5.**

If you answered other, **please answer question 6.**

4.

Your discharge was dishonorable. Have you looked into changing your status?	YES / NO

If you answered NO, **please refer to Reference sheets 4A and 4B on page 17**.

If you answered YES, **please refer to Reference sheet 4A only on page 17.**

4.

Your discharge was dishonorable. Have you looked into changing your status?	YES / NO

If you answered NO, **please refer to Reference sheets 4A and 4B on page 17**.

If you answered YES, **please refer to Reference sheet 4A only on page 17.**

5.

Which one of the following boxes refers to your situation?			
A	B	C	D
You have a Pension & have VA Health Care	You have a Pension & do not have VA Health Care	You do not have a Pension & have VA Health Care	You do not have a Pension & do not have VA Health Care

If you answered A, **please go to Reference sheet 6B on page 19 and 7B on page 20.**

If you answered B, **please go to Reference sheet 6B on page 19 and 7A on page 20.**

If you answered C, **please go to Reference sheet 6A on page 19 and 7A on page 20.**

If you answered D, **please go to Reference sheet 6A on page 19 and 7B on page 20.**

6.

Regardless of VA determination, would you consider yourself a disabled Veteran and have you applied for disabled Veteran status?	YES / NO

If you answered NO, **please refer to Reference sheets 5A and 5B on page 18.**

If you answered YES, **please refer to Reference sheet 5A only on page 18.**

VETERANS CASE MANAGER'S FORM

Intake Form:

Please complete this page and bring to your assisting case manager

---

Today's date: _____/_____/_____ Intake Completed By: _____

Name: _____ DOB: _____/_____/_____

Sex: □ M □F □T □O Marital Status: □ Married □Single □Partnered □Divorced □Widowed

Street: _____ PO Box: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Emergency Contacts

1. Name: _____ Relationship to Client: _____

Home #: _____ Cell#: _____ Other: _____

2. Name: _____ Relationship to Client: _____

Home #: _____ Cell#: _____ Other: _____

Veteran Specific Questions

Do you have your DD 214? Type of discharge: _____

YES / NO / I do not know

Did you serve in combat zone? # of days active duty: _____

YES / NO / I do not know

Are you receiving benefits? Which benefits: _____

YES / NO / I do not know _____

Are you service connected through the Veterans administration? _____

YES / NO / I do not know

If yes, what is your service connection rating? _____

Financial Information

Income Source 1: _____ Gross Amount Per Month: _____

Income Source 2: _____ Gross Amount Per Month: _____

Income Source 3: _____ Gross Amount Per Month: _____

Total: _____

Past Due Medical Bills □Yes □No Amount: _____

Out of Pocket Medical Expenses: □Yes □No Amount: _____

Please List Assets (Real Estate, Bank Accounts, Life Insurance, Stocks, Bonds, Annuities & Trusts):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Income guidelines for Chapter 115:

- Income guidelines: Single $1,300.00, family $2,700.00
- Most recent VA award letters
- Most recent Social Security award letter (even if turned down)
- Any other income sources (pensions, annuities, unemployment, etc.
- 90 days of checking account statements, if applicable (direct express statements can be made)
- Medicare cards
- Death certificate
- Birth certificate of dependent children (Veteran's name must be on it)
- All out of pocket medical expenses (medical insurance premiums, prescription premiums, current month co-pays, etc.) These can be obtained by print out from your pharmacy.
- Life insurance (person insured, beneficiary, premium, total amount of policy and policy number)

Do you rent, or own your home? _____

Is there anything else you would like to share with caseworker?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ END OF VETERAN CASE MANAGERS FORM~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Reference 1

Not in armed forces, not a Veteran, or spouse of Veteran.

This reference sheet is specifically for people who cannot find what they are looking for on the flow sheet or questionnaire. For other Veteran-related services please see page 26 for a list of a case managers.

Since 1974, Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, Inc. (ESMV), a private non-profit human services agency, has provided a range of programs; services and opportunities to help older adults within the Merrimack Valley remain in their community. Our mission is to insure that choices of programs and services are available and accessible to meet the diverse needs and changing lifestyles of older adults. ESMV believes that home-based care, community services and supportive living programs maintain the dignity of human life by promoting self-determination and by encouraging the maximum independence of the people we serve.

As the Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) under contract with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the federally-designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for the Merrimack Valley, we are responsible for assessing the needs of elders and developing a community-based long-term care system to respond to those needs. ESMV is proud to be a nationally recognized leader in promoting evidence-based chronic disease self-management programs through the Healthy Living Center of Excellence. In addition, ESMV and the Northeast Independent Living Program partnered to form the Merrimack Valley Aging Disability Resource Consortium, designed to ensure that elders and adults with disabilities encounter "no wrong door" in accessing information, assistance and long-term services and supports.

ESMV manages a wide range of programs, most targeted to elders with the greatest social and economic need who live in the following cities and towns: Amesbury, Andover, Billerica, Boxford, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, Westford and West Newbury. For more information on particular programs and services we offer, please contact:

Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, Inc.
280 Merrimack St. Suite 400 Lawrence, MA 01843
1-800-892-0890 / 1-978-683-7747
www.esmv.org

Green Book

The Green Book is a reference tool for information pertaining to older adults and adults with disabilities within the Merrimack Valley. The Veteran Resource guide is a tool to be used in conjunction with the Green Book. The Green Book can be found at many locations including your local Council On Aging or Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley.

Reference 2

Department of Defense Form 214 (DD 214)

This reference sheet is specifically for information on the DD 214. For Veteran-related services other than DD 214, please see a case manager. A list of case managers can be found on page 26.

What is a DD 214?

Upon release of active duty Veterans receive original copies of their discharge papers. These release papers are termed the Department of Defense Form 214 (DD 214). The DD 214 form is often needed for a job application, VA Loan, medical benefits, association membership, a Veteran's funeral benefit, school enrollment, reenlistment or proof of service.

On July 12, 1973, a fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) destroyed approximately 16-18 million Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF), including DD 214.

Loss of DD 214

If the Veteran in question has lost or misplaced their DD 214, the local Veterans Service Officer (VSO) can obtain discharge paperwork by other methods listed below.

It is the job of the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to provide the Veterans (living and deceased) and their dependents access to every federal, state, and local benefit and service to which they are entitled including obtaining the Veteran's discharge, separation papers or DD 214.

To contact the local VSO in the city or town where the Veteran lives:

- Look on Page 24 for a list of VSOs
- Call the local City or Town Hall and ask for Veterans' Services; or
- Call the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services, 617-210-5480, and ask for the VSO name and contact information: Visit the DVS website at www.mass.gov/Veterans to search by municipality.

You can obtain separation documents through The National Archives. All requests to get a copy of DD 214 from discharges less than 62 years ago must be signed and dated by the Veteran or next-of-kin. If you are the next of kin of a deceased Veteran, you must provide proof of death of the Veteran such as a copy of death certificate, letter from funeral home, or a published obituary.

DD 214s can be requested either on-line or by mail. You will receive your DD 214 from the Archives in about three to four weeks. Your records are free of charge! You should never pay for your DD 214. Visit www.ebenefits.va.gov to obtain DD 214 online.

Emergency Requests (Funerals, Surgery, etc.)

The National Archives will expedite delivery of a DD 214 under certain circumstances, usually in 1 to 5 days. If the reason you need the DD 214 is for burial at a Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery, contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117 or visit the National Cemetery Administration website. https://www.cem.va.gov/. They will work directly with the Archives to obtain the records necessary.

Reference 3
Honorable Discharge

This reference sheet is specifically for service members with an Honorable Discharge. For Veteran-related services other than honorable discharge please see the list of case managers found on page 26. Legal definitions of Discharges are located on page 29.

Honorable Discharge
An Honorable discharge from military service is defined as leaving service under good standing. This means that you have met or exceeded the conduct and performance standards of the military. You are eligible for all Veteran (and military) benefits if you receive this discharge.

Here is a list of services available to Veterans with honorable discharges:

- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) ——— (800) 827-1000
- Massachusetts Chapter 115 ——— Page 34
- Veterans Choice Program ——— Page 53
- How to obtain documents ——— Page 58

Reference 4
Dishonorable Discharge

This reference sheet is specifically for service members with types of discharges other than "Honorable". For Veteran-related services other than dishonorable discharge please see the list of case managers found on page 26. Legal definitions of Discharges are located on page 29.

Dishonorable Discharge
Dishonorable Discharge is expulsion from the armed services and denial of Veterans' benefits resulting from a court martial conviction of a serious violation of the military code, such as failure to obey orders, desertion, rape, or murder. With this characterization of service, all Veterans' benefits are lost, regardless of any past honorable service. In many states a dishonorable discharge is deemed the equivalent of a felony conviction, with attendant loss of civil rights. Additionally, US federal law prohibits possession of firearms by those who have been dishonorably discharged per the Gun Control Act of 1968.

4A. If Dishonorable Discharge Status cannot be changed
The service member looked into discharge status and discharge status does not change
There are three other types of discharges listed under dishonorable discharge.

Here is a list of discharges other than "Honorable":

- Other than Honorable Conditions Discharge ——————— Page 30
- Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD) ——————————— Page 30
- Dishonorable Discharge ——————————————— Page 30

4B. How to change your discharge status
Changing your status is considered Upgrading Military Discharge. See page 58

Reference 5
Disabled Veteran

This reference sheet is specifically for service members who believe that, regardless of VA determination, they consider themselves a disabled Veteran. These service members may have types of discharges other than "Honorable." A Veteran who is disabled may not have received an "Honorable" discharge, however, as long as the Veteran does not have a bad conduct discharge (BCD) or Dishonorable Discharge they can be considered disabled. For Veteran-related services other than disabled Veteran status please see the list of case managers found on page 26. Legal definitions of Discharges are located on page 29.

5A. Disabled Veteran
A disabled Veteran is a person who has incurred any injury or illness during their military service.

Who qualifies for Disabled Veteran status?

Disabled Veteran

- A Veteran of the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service who is entitled to compensation (or who, but for the receipt of military retired pay, would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or
- A person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

    - **Special Disabled Veteran**
        - A veteran of the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service who is entitled to compensation
            - 30 percent or more, or
            - 10 or 20 percent in the case of a Veteran who has been determined under Section 3106 of Title 38, U.S.C. to have a serious employment handicap, or
        - A person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

Here is a list of services available to disabled Veterans:

- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) ——————— (800) 827-1000
- Massachusetts Chapter 115 ——————————— Page 34
- Veterans Choice Program ——————————— Page 53

5B. How to apply for change of status: See page 58

Reference 6
Veteran Pensions

This reference sheet is specifically for information on pensions for Veterans. For Veteran-related services and information other than VA pension status please see the list of case managers found on page 26.

Pensions

- **Service Pension**
  - Retirement ——— Page 53
  - Medical ——— Page 53
- **Non service connected pensions**
  - Income Based ——— Page 53

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

6A: Pension Enrolment
To apply for Veterans Pension, download and complete VA Form 21-527EZ, "Application for Pension". VA Form 21-527EZ: http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-527EZ-ARE.pdf.

You can mail your application to the Pension Management Center (PMC) that serves your state. You may also visit your local regional benefit office and turn in your application for processing.

PMC that serves Massachusetts:
Philadelphia VA Regional Office
PO Box 8079
Philadelphia, PA 19101

6B: Here is a list of services available to Veterans with a Pension:

- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) ——— (800) 827-1000
- Massachusetts Chapter 115 ——— Page 34
- Veterans Choice Program ——— Page 53
- Info on Medical and Dental Facilities on Military Bases ——— Page 48

Reference 7
VA Healthcare

This reference sheet is specifically for information on Veteran VA Healthcare. For Veteran-related services and information other than VA Healthcare please see the list of case managers found on page 26.

7A. VA Health Care Enrollment

Please call, 781-687-2000, option 3 for people residing in Massachusetts. If you are in need of immediate assistance please call 855-574-7286.

To apply online go to www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply/.

7B. Here is a list of services available for Veterans with VA healthcare:

- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) ——— (800) 827-1000
- Massachusetts Chapter 115 ——— Page 34
- Veterans Choice Program ——— Page 53
- Info on Medical and Dental Facilities on Military Bases ——— Page 48
- VA Medical Center ——— 1-877-222-8387

Acronyms

AB	Air Base
AFSC	Air Force Specialty Code
AWOL	Absent without leave
C&A	Certification and Authority
DAV	Disabled American Veterans
DD 214	Department of Defense form 214 (Certificate of Release)
DEERS	Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System
DOD	Department of Defense
DODI	Department of Defense Instruction
DOE	Department of Energy
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOL	Department of Labor
DOT	Department of Transportation
ESMV	Elder Services of Merrimack Valley
ETS	Estimated Time of Separation
MF	Medical Facilities
MOS	Military Operations Specialty
MST	Military Sexual Trauma
MTF	Medical or Military Treatment Facility/Facilities (DOD)
OEF	Operation Enduring freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OND	Operation New Dawn
PCP	Primary Care Physician
PM PAR	Program Management Policy, Assessment, and Reporting
PMC	Primary Medical Center
PO	Purchasing Order
POC	Point of Contact
T&C	Terms and Conditions
TA	Technology Assessment
TAC	Technology Assessment Committee
TAC	Technology Acquisition Center
USAF	United States Air force
USC	United States Coast Guard
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
VA	Veterans Administration
VAMC	Veteran Affairs Medical Center
VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VHIC	Veterans Health Identification Card
VISN	Veterans Integrated Service Network
WVHP	Women’s Veteran Health program

Dependency & Indemnity Compensation

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to the surviving spouse or dependents of certain Veterans. For a survivor to be eligible for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), the Veteran's death must have resulted from one of the following causes:

- A disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty or active duty for training.
- An injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on inactive duty training.
- A service-connected disability or a condition directly related to a service-connected disability. DIC also may be paid to survivors of Veterans who were totally disabled from service-connected conditions at the time of death; even though their service-connected disabilities did not cause their deaths.

Additional DIC eligibility

- The survivor qualifies if the Veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and:
  - Continuously rated totally disabled for a period of 10 years immediately preceding death;
  - Continuously rated totally disabled from the date of military discharge and for at least five years immediately preceding death; or
  - A former POW who died after September 30, 1999, and who was continuously rated totally disabled for a period of at least one year immediately preceding death.

To apply for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, complete VA Form 21-534a, Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by a Surviving Spouse or Child, and mail it with a copy of the Veterans DD Form 1300, Report of Casualty, to your local VA regional office.

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services

Executive Order No. 483

The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services was established in April 2007. The Council advises the Governor and the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Veterans' Services on issues relating to Veterans of the Commonwealth. The Council reviews and assesses state and federal statutes and programs that relate to Veterans, and the delivery of services to Veterans, including healthcare, education, housing, outreach, training, and retraining. The Council serves as an educational resource for citizens and elected and appointed officials on Veterans' issues. The Lieutenant Governor serves as the chair of the Council.

Massachusetts Veteran Child Support Payments

Veterans who are collecting Veteran's benefits from the federal government or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and have a child support obligation should contact Department of Revenue (DOR) to discuss their child support cases. While some federal and state Veteran's benefits are not subject to income withholding, Veterans who receive these benefits can enter into voluntary payment agreements to pay their child support obligations. By entering into a voluntary payment agreement, you may be able to avoid certain enforcement actions to collect past-due support. Veterans may also be eligible for an exemption from interest and penalty charges based on receipt of certain Veteran's benefits. If you have a current support obligation and are a disabled Veteran or your earning capacity has changed since your return from active duty, DOR can assist you in asking the court for a modification of your child support order.

Qualifying Exigency Leave

In separate FMLA provisions, "qualifying exigencies" can entitle the spouse, child, or parent, of certain service members to up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period. These provisions apply to the specific family members of service members on or notified of an impending call to "covered active duty." Covered active duty includes service members in the regular Armed Forces who are deployed to a foreign country and service members in the reserve Armed Forces who are called to federal active duty for a deployment to a foreign country. Qualifying exigencies associated with the service member's covered active duty may involve short-notice deployment, military events, childcare/school arrangements, financial/ legal arrangements, counseling, rest and recuperation, post-deployment activities, and other related activities as agreed upon between the employer and employee.

VA Office of Survivors Assistance

The VA's Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA) provides services to survivors and dependents of deceased Veterans and service members. The OSA serves as a resource on the benefits available to survivors. Answers to most benefits questions can be found on the OSA's website at www.va.gov/survivors. If you cannot find the answer on the OSA's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page, you may send an email to officeofsurvivors@va.gov.

Veterans' Bill of Rights

M.G.L. ch. 115 and 108 CMR (Code of Massachusetts Regulations)

You have a right to:

- File a written application for Veterans' benefits at any time. You can insist upon this right, even if told that you are not eligible. [108 CMR 4:02 (1)];
- Receive assistance from your local Veterans' Service Officer (VSO), see page 0 in completing your application (M.G.L. ch. 115, s. 3);
- Receive a full explanation of the services and benefits available under M.G.L. ch. 115, as well as other available benefits;
- Receive a written notice and explanation of the approval or denial of your application for benefits (108 CMR 8.02);
- Be treated with dignity and respect and to receive accurate, courteous, and timely service;
- Appeal and request a hearing if you disagree with any action taken in your case [108 CMR 8.07 (1)];
- Expect confidentiality: personal information will not be collected or used except for the purpose of determining your eligibility for benefits (M.G.L. ch. 40, s.51);
- Receive fair and equal treatment without regard to sex, race, religion, handicap, ethnicity, or national origin (M.G.L. ch. 151B, s.3);
- Preference in public employment (M.G.L. ch.31, s.12, 26, 28 and ch. 41, s.112).
- For additional information on your rights, speak to your local city/town VSO, or call the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (617-210-5480) or visit www.mass.gov/ Veterans.

Veterans Northeast Outreach Center (VNOC)

The mission of the Veterans Northeast Outreach Center is to provide the highest quality of services to assist, support and advocate for all Veterans and their families in Essex and Middlesex counties.

Veterans Service Officers (VSO)

To find the VSO of your area please call Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services 617-210-5480, and ask for the VSO name and contact information:

Amesbury
68 Elm Street
Amesbury, MA 01913
978-388-8136

Andover
36 Bartlet Street
Andover, MA 01810
978-623-8218

Billerica
365 Boston Road
Billerica, MA 01821
978-671-0968

Boxford
120 Main ST
North Andover, MA 01845
978-688-9525
Alt. Phone 978-609-2977

Chelmsford
50 Billerica Rd.
Chelmsford, MA 01824
978-250-5238

Dracut
951 Mammoth Road
Dracut MA 01826
978-455-1349

Dunstable
511 Main street
Dunstable, MA 01827
978-649-3919

Groveland /Haverhill
10 Welcome Street, Room 43
Haverhill, MA 01830
978-374-2351

Lawrence
200 Common Street
Basement room 2
Lawrence MA 01840
978-620-3282

Lowell
276 Broadway Street
2nd Floor
Lowell, MA 01852
978-674-4066

Merrimac
68 Elm Street
Amesbury, MA 01913
978-388-8136

Methuen
41 pleasant st RM. 108
Methuen MA 01844
978-983-8585

Newbury
60 Pleasant Street
Newbury, MA 01950
978-356-3915

Newburyport
331 High Street
Newburyport, MA 01951
978-462-2201

North Andover
120 Main Street
North Andover, MA 01845
978-688-9525

Rowley
25 Green Street
Ipswich, MA 01938
978-356-3915
120 Main Street

Salisbury
5 Beach Road
Salisbury, MA 01952
978-388-8136

Tewksbury
1009 Main St
Tewksbury Ma, 01876
978-640-4485

Tyngsborough
25 Bryant Lane
Tyngsborough MA, 01879
978-649-2300 x 131

Westford
23 Depot st
Millennium Building door #9
Westford, MA 01886
978-392-1170

West Newbury
Ipswich town hall
25 Green
Ipswich MA
(978) 356-3915

Case Management

Department of Veterans' Services
600 Washington street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02111
617-210-5480
www.mass.gov/Veterans
Email: mdvs@vet.state.ma.us

SAVE Team
Department of Veterans' Services 600
Washington St., 7th Floor Boston, MA 02111
Toll-free: 1-888-844-2838
Fax: (617) 210-5755

Suicide Prevention Coordinators in state MA
Bedford, MA 01730
P: 781-687-2176
F: 781-687-3194
vhabedspc@va.gov

Brockton, MA 02301
P: 774-826-1526
F: 774-826-3744
vhabhssuicidepreventionteam@va.gov

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
P: 857-364-5086
F: 857-368-4408
vhabhssuicidepreventionteam@va.gov

Veterans Northeast Outreach Center (VNOC)
10 Reed Street
Haverhill, MA 01832
Tel: 978-372-3626

Veterans Treatment Court coordinator
(617) 788-8387
BVTC@jud.state.ma.us
Fax: (617) 788-843

VFW- Boston Main
VFW State Service Officer
Office John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Address: Government Center - Room 1500-C
Boston, 02203
Phone 617-303-5690
Fax 617-227-2024
http://www.vfw.org/NVS/

Women Veterans Program Manager
781-382-3426

Dental

The VA would like all Veterans and beneficiaries to have access to good oral health. Good oral health is more than just a nice smile or ability to chew favorite foods. It impacts a person's overall health throughout his or her life. The Department of Veteran Affairs provides comprehensive dental care to Veterans who meet eligibility standards; however, the benefit is only available to certain Veterans.

Homeless Dental Services

Dental problems, such as pain and/or missing teeth can be tremendous barriers in seeking and obtaining employment. VA's Homeless Veterans Dental Program provides some dental treatment for eligible Veterans in a number of programs: The Dom, Grant and Per Diem, Crescent House, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (contract bed), and Community Residential Care. Contact the manager of any eligible program or the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program manager for more details.

For information regarding Bedford VA Dental Service, please call: 781-687-2469 Dental Clinic Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00am- 4:30pm

Non VA Dental

Fenway Community HC
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 267-0900

Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
Boston, MA - 2108
Dial - (617) 426-2225

North End Community Health Committee, Inc.
Boston, Massachusetts 02113
(617) 643-8000

South Boston Community Health Center
Boston, MA 02127
(617) 269-7500

Boston Health Care for The Homeless, Inc.
Boston, Massachusetts 02118
Phone - (857) 654-1885

Boston Healthnet
Boston, Massachusetts 02118
(800) 841-4325

Boston University Dental School Clinic
Boston 02228
617-638-4700

Harvard University Dental School Clinic
Boston. 02115
617 432-1000

Tufts Dental school
Boston, MA 02111
617-636-6669

Lazarus House
412 Hampshire Street
Lawrence, MA - 1842
(978)689-8575

VA Dental

Dental benefits are provided by VA according to law. In some instances, VA is authorized to provide extensive dental care, while in other cases treatment may be limited by law. For more information about eligibility for VA medical and dental benefits, contact VA at 1-877- 222-8387, or www.va.gov/healthbenefits.

Services Provided for Veterans who have earned this benefit: restorative dentistry, prosthodontic services, periodontics, endodontics, oral surgery, fillings, crowns and bridgework, partial and full dentures, implant dentistry, management and education of gum disease, root canal, extractions, pathology, cleanings, and oral health education.

Federal law determines which Veterans have earned dental benefits. See VA Dental Website for information on eligibility or call Admissions at 781-687-2275.

VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP)

VA's Dental Insurance program (VADIP) offers enrolled Veterans and beneficiaries of VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) the opportunity to purchase dental insurance at a reduced cost. For more information, those individuals should contact their insurance provider. The telephone number for Delta Dental is 1-855-370-3303; the telephone number for MetLife is 1-888-310-1681.

Discharge Definitions

The military has many different ways of classifying discharges, depending on the circumstances surrounding a Veteran's departure from military service. The type of discharge a Veteran receives can impact his or her eligibility for a variety of state and federal benefits. In order to be eligible for most benefits a Veteran must have been discharged under "other than dishonorable conditions." There are some differences in the terminology used by state or federal agencies and the military branches themselves when referring to types of discharges.

The following discharges are generally considered to be under "other than dishonorable conditions:"

Discharge under Honorable Conditions

- Honorable Discharge
- General discharge

Under 38 C.F.R. § 3.12, some discharges require the VA to make a "character of service determination" on an individual basis to determine if the type of discharge disqualifies a Veteran from receiving VA benefits. Those discharges include:

Discharge under other than honorable conditions;

- Bad conduct discharge
- Dishonorable discharge

Most Veterans who are released from service as a result of a court-martial conviction or resigning to avoid a court martial are ineligible for VA benefits. Service members who are guilty of desertion, treason, or are unjustifiably absent without leave for an extended period of time may also be ineligible.

The character of a Veteran's discharge is listed on his or her discharge papers (separation papers or Form DD 214). For more information about how to obtain a copy of your own or a family member's DD 214, visit the Military and VA Records section of this guide. If you believe your discharge is listed incorrectly or was characterized inappropriately, you have the right to request that it be reviewed and changed. Each of the military services maintains a discharge review board with authority to change, correct or modify discharges or dismissals that are not issued by a sentence of General Courts-Martial. The board has no authority to address medical discharges.

If you want the military to review or change the type of discharge you received, and you were discharged within the past 15 years, complete and submit DD Form 293: Application for review of discharge or dismissal from the Armed Forces of the United States. If your discharge was more than 15 years ago, complete and submit DD Form 149: Application for Correction of Military Records. Instructions and contact information for the review boards of all branches of service are included on both forms.

The Army Review Boards Agency (ARBA) now accepts online applications for the Board for Correction of Military Records, and for the Discharge Review Board. This online application process (http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/) will expedite applicants' requests for changes to their military records. Applicants can check the status of their requests using the Internet. Visit the

ARBA website at: http://actsonline.army.mil. Your local VSO, on page 24, can help you fill out these forms. Following definitions

Honorable Discharge
If a military service member received a good or excellent rating for their service time, by exceeding standards for performance and personal conduct, they will be discharged from the military honorably. An honorable military discharge is a form of administrative discharge.

General Discharge
A General military discharge is a form of administrative discharge. If a service member's performance is satisfactory but the individual failed to meet all expectations of conduct for military members, the discharge is considered a General Discharge, Under Honorable Conditions. To receive a General Discharge from the military there has to be some form of non-judicial punishment to correct unacceptable military behavior or failure to meet military standards. The discharging officer must give the reason for the discharge in writing, and the military member must sign paperwork stating they understand the reason for their discharge. Veterans may not be eligible for certain veterans benefits under a General Discharge, including the GI Bill.

Other than Honorable Conditions Discharge
The most severe type of military administrative discharge is the Other Than Honorable Conditions. Some examples of actions that could lead to an Other Than Honorable Discharge include security violations, use of violence, conviction by a civilian court with a sentence including prison time, or being found guilty of adultery in a divorce hearing (this list is not a definitive list; these are only examples). In most cases, Veterans who receive an Other Than Honorable Discharge cannot re-enlist in the Armed Forces or reserves, except under very rare circumstances. Veteran's benefits are not usually available to those discharged through this type of discharge.

Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD)
The Bad Conduct Discharge is only passed on to enlisted military members and is given by a court-martial due to punishment for bad conduct. A Bad Conduct discharge is often preceded by time in military prison. Virtually all Veteran's benefits are forfeited if discharged due to Bad Conduct.

Dishonorable Discharge
If the military considers a service member's actions to be reprehensible, the general court-martial can determine a dishonorable discharge is in order. Murder and sexual assault are examples of situations which would result in a dishonorable discharge. If someone is dishonorably discharged from the military they are not allowed to own firearms according to US federal law. Military members who receive a Dishonorable Discharge forfeit all military and Veterans benefits and may have a difficult time finding work in the civilian sector.

Education and Employment

Career Source Counselors in Merrimack Valley

Career Center of Lowell
18 John Street
Lowell, MA 01852
(978) 805-4724

Valley Works Career Center of Lawrence,
439 South Union Street, Bldg.2
Lawrence, MA 01843
(978) 722-7014

Valley Works Career Center at the Student Services Center
Northern Essex Community College,
100 Elliot St., Haverhill, MA 01830
(978) 241-4747

Career Source Counselors Central offices

Metro North
The Career Place
Trade Center Park
100 Sylvan Rd., Suite G-100
Woburn, MA 01801-1871
(781) 932-5528

Career Source
186 Alewife Brook Parkway, Ste. 310
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 661-7867
Ext. 261 & 257

Federal Education Benefits

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program assists' Veterans who have service connected disabilities with obtaining and maintaining suitable employment. The program will provide Veterans with education, training, assistance with finding employment, and other services, which are determined by the Veteran's skills and employment goals. Independent living services are also available for severely disabled Veterans who are not currently ready to seek employment. Additional information is available on VA's website at http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/.

A Veteran must have a VA service-connected disability rated at least 20 percent with an employment handicap, or rated 10 percent with a serious employment handicap, and be discharged or released from military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Service members awaiting medical separation from active duty may also apply if their disabilities are reasonably expected to be rated at least 20 percent following their discharge.

State Education Benefits

National Guard Tuition and Fee Waiver

Acts of 2005 ch. 130

Members of the National Guard are eligible for a waiver of both fees and tuition at all state colleges and universities. Please contact the college or university Veterans' representative for details about this program.

Public Service Scholarship Programs

Under M.G.L. ch. 15A, § 16, Massachusetts sponsors a scholarship for certain dependents of deceased Veterans. Scholarships will be awarded to the children of prisoners of war, the children

of military or service persons who are missing in action in Southeast Asia whose service was between February 1, 1955, and the end of the Vietnam campaign, and the children of Veterans, as defined by M.G.L. ch. 4 § 7, who were killed in action or otherwise died as a result of such service.

The scholarships are awarded for undergraduate study at Massachusetts's institutions of higher education. For more information contact:

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Office of Student Financial Assistance 454 Broadway Street, Suite 200
Revere, MA 02151
Phone: (617) 391-6070
Fax: (617) 727-0067
Email: osfa@osfa.mass.edu www.osfa.mass.edu

Tuition Waivers

Under M.G.L. ch. 15A, § 19, Massachusetts Veterans as defined by M.G.L. ch. 4 § 7 clause 43, who are not in default of any federal student loans and who are legal residents of Massachusetts may be eligible for any state-supported course in an undergraduate degree program or certificate program offered by a public college or university.

Veterans will be eligible on a space-available basis for a waiver of full or partial tuition based on proper documentation of the eligibility of the Veteran. Space availability shall be determined in accordance with normal practices and procedures as published by each institution, i.e., the individual college or university. Contact the Veterans' representative at the college or university for details

Under Chapter 130 of the Acts of 2005, National Guard members are eligible for a waiver of state college and state university fees and tuition.

For more information, you may contact the Veterans Representative at the college or university, or visit the University of Massachusetts Veterans' website at: www.umass. edu/Veterans.

Upward Bound Program

The Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) Program is a free pre-college program to help Veterans develop the academic and personal skills necessary for success in a program of post-secondary educations. VUB services include workshops, tutorials, and classroom-based instruction on high school diploma equivalency, computer skills, and developing college and career awareness. All Veterans Upward Bound classes and supplies are free for qualified Veterans.

For eligibility requirements, contact:

Veterans Upward Bound Program UMass Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard
McCormack Hall, 3rd floor, Room 704 (inside Ryan Lounge)
Boston, MA 02125
Phone: (617) 287-5870
Fax: (617) 287-5844
Email: Veteransupwardbound@umb.edu www.Veterans-ub.umb.edu

Veterans Upward Bound Program Suffolk University
73 Tremont, Suite 7025
Boston, MA 02108
617-725-4100
Vub@suffolk.edu www.suffolk.edu/offices/39470.html

Veteran Integration To Academic Leadership (VITAL)
The Bedford VA hospital administers VITAL in conjunction with the following colleges; Bunkerhill Community College, Endicott College, Fitchburg State University, Middlesex Community College, Mount Wachusett Community College, North Shore Community College, Northern Essex Community College, Northeastern University, Salem State University. VITAL gives support to student Veterans in many different ways. Call: 781-983-2400, Office information: Building 78 room 12

Aid and Attendance and Housebound

Veterans and survivors who are eligible for a VA pension and require the aid and attendance of another person, or are housebound, may be eligible for additional monetary payment. These benefits are paid in addition to a monthly pension, and they are not paid without eligibility to Pension. This benefit is paid through both Massachusetts Chapter 115 and The VA benefits system depending on the eligibility of the Veteran who is receiving aid or who is considered housebound. Since Aid and Attendance and Housebound allowances increase the pension amount, people who are not eligible for a basic pension due to excessive income may be eligible for pension at these increased rates. A Veteran or surviving spouse may not receive Aid and Attendance benefits at the same time. Please see a VSO for eligibility. See page 24

Benefits under M.G.L. ch. 115 - (Chapter 115)

The Commonwealth provides financial assistance for indigent Massachusetts Veterans and their dependents, including assistance for food, shelter, clothing fuel and medical care. These benefits are available for dependents of deceased Veterans as well. (M.G.L. ch. 115)
The following dependents of Veterans may qualify for Chapter 115 benefits:

- Spouse of the Veteran.
- Widow or widower of the Veteran.
- Dependent parent of the Veteran.
- Any person who acted as a parent to the Veteran for five years immediately preceding the commencement of the Veteran's wartime service.
- Child of the Veteran until his or her 19th birthday.
- Child of the Veteran between 19 years and 23 years of age while the child is attending high school, an institution of higher learning or some other accredited educational institution provided that the applicant is in receipt of benefits under the provisions of M.G.L. ch. 115.
- Child of the Veteran 19 years of age or older who is mentally or physically unable to support himself or herself and was affected by the disability prior to his or her 18th birthday.
- Legally adopted children of the Veteran.

NOTE: Veterans and their dependents may be required to apply for federal benefits for which they are eligible before being eligible for state benefits under Chapter 115.

For more information please contact the local VSO listed for your town, **See page 24,** or call Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services, 617-210-5480

Registries

Have you looked at the various registries for Veterans to include, Airborne Hazards and burn pit, Gulf War Syndrome, Depleted Uranium, Embedded fragment, and/or Agent Orange registries? Please see our registry section on page 62.

Renters Assistance

May receive assistance through some outreach organizations. See your local case managers found on page 26.

Tax discounts

Service connected Veterans who own their own home can receive annuities or discounts on their city/ town taxes. Contact local town assessor or veteran service officer (VSO) located on page 24.

Welcome Home Annuities

Welcome Home annuities is a financial bonus for veterans who were enlisted in Massachusetts. Veterans are eligible with at least 6 months of active service either stateside or overseas and/or one or more days in Iraq or Afghanistan on or after September 11, 2001. Vietnam Veterans may be eligible for financial bonus if they served during that era and active duty in theatre. Visit your local VSO or http://www.mass.gov/veterans/benefits-and-services/bonus/bonuses-only/bonus.html.

Home and Vehicle Modification

Housing Grants for Disabled Veterans

Service members and Veterans with certain service-connected disabilities may be entitled to a housing grant from the VA to help build a new specially adapted house, to adapt a home they already own, or buy a house and modify it to meet their disability-related requirements. Eligible Veterans or Service members may now receive up to three uses of the grant, with the total dollar amount of the grants not to exceed the maximum allowable. To obtain general information about the Specially Adapted Housing program, go to www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp, or call the program's local office of jurisdiction at 1-877-827-3702.

Temporary Residence Adaptation (TRA)

Eligible Veterans and service members who are temporarily residing in a home owned by a family member may also receive a TRA grant to help the Veteran or service member adapt the family member's home to meet his/her special needs. Under the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012, TRA grant amounts do not count against Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) or Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant maximum amounts, starting Aug. 6, 2013.
https://www.benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS/documents/circulars/26_12_9.pdf

Vehicle Adaptations for Disabled Veterans

VA Adaptive Equipment Grant: Veterans who need to adapt an existing vehicle to accommodate certain disabilities can also apply for a VA grant. Adaptive equipment includes, but is not limited to, power steering, power brakes, power window lifts, power seats, and special equipment necessary to assist the eligible person into and out of the vehicle. Contact your local VA medical center's Prosthetic Department prior to purchasing any equipment. This grant may be paid more than once.

Other Vehicle Adaptation Financial assistance is available to adapt an automobile to accommodate a disability for a Veteran or service member with certain disabilities that resulted from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated during active military service. The Veteran or service member may only receive the automobile grant once in his or her lifetime. The grant is paid directly to the seller of the automobile for the total price (up to $11,000) of the automobile.
A Veteran or service member must have one of the following disabilities to qualify for the automobile grant:

- loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both feet
- loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both hands, or
- permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a certain degree

https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-auto-allowance.asp

Housing

Veteran-specific housing options may include rental voucher programs, local preference for housing authority applicants, assistance with home modifications for disabled veterans, and long term care programs. Some of these are federal programs while others are state funded.

Homes for Our Troops

Homes For Our Troops 6 Main Street
Taunton, MA 02780
Phone: (508) 823-3300 Toll Free: 1-866-7-TROOPS
www.homesforourtroops.org

Housing Authorities (Veterans have local preference)

The Merrimack Valley Green Book has additional Housing listings. For information on how to obtain the Green Book see page 8.

Other VA Housing Programs

Severely disabled Veterans or service members may need to modify their home or move to a new home that can accommodate their service-connected disabilities. For example, a Veteran in a wheelchair may require ramps instead of stairs and wider doors throughout his or her home. Under 38 U.S.C. § 21, Veterans or service members who have specific service-connected disabilities may be entitled to a grant from the VA for the purpose of constructing an adapted home or modifying an existing home to meet the Veteran's needs. Temporary grants may be available for smaller adaptations of the home of a family member of the Veteran, such as a parent, if the Veteran will be staying with the family member while recovering. The goal of the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) Grant Program is to provide Veterans with barrier-free living environments.

For more information about the VA's Specially Adapted Housing Grant Program, call the regional loan center or visit the website at: http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/ adaptedhousing.asp. To apply for a grant, complete VA Form 26-4555, Veteran's Application in Acquiring Specially Adapted Housing or Special Home Adaptation Grant, and submit it to:
Manchester Regional Loan Center VA Regional Loan Center (262) Norris Cotton

Federal Building 275 Chestnut Street
Manchester, NH 03101
1-800-827-1000

Supportive Housing

Soldiers' Homes

Massachusetts Soldiers' Homes provide a variety of services to Veterans such as acute hospital care, domiciliary care, long-term care, physical and occupational therapy, laboratory and radiology services, an outpatient department, and a social services department. There are two state Soldiers' Homes, one in Chelsea, the other in Holyoke. For information on eligibility and admission, contact either:

Chelsea Soldiers' Home
91 Crest Ave
Chelsea, MA 02150
617-884-5660

Holyoke Soldiers' Home
110 Cherry Street
Holyoke, MA 01041
413-552-4764

Long-term Care Services:
VA provides institution-based services (nursing home level of care) to Veterans through three national programs: VA owned and operated Community Living Centers (CLC), State Veterans' Homes owned and operated by the states, and the community nursing home program. Each program has admission and eligibility criteria specific to the program. The VA is obligated to pay the full cost of nursing home services for enrolled Veterans who need nursing home care for a service-connected disability, or Veterans or who have a 70-percent or greater service-connected disability and Veterans with a rating of total disability based on individual unemployability. VA will provide nursing home care for all other Veterans based on available resources.

Fisher House
Fisher House provides family members of Veterans and active duty service members with a place to stay while their loved ones receive medical treatment. There is no charge for any family to stay at a Fisher House operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Fisher House Foundation uses donations to reimburse the individual Fisher Houses operated by the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Locally Fisher House has constructed housing at the VA Medical Center in West Roxbury, MA.

For more information, including a list of existing locations, visit the Fisher House website, call, or email at: www.fisherhouse.org., (888) 294-8560 or (301) 294-8560, info@fisherhouse.org

VA Supported Housing Program (VASH)

The VA Supported Housing (VASH) Program is a joint project of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). VASH provides Section 8 vouchers to chronically homeless Veterans.
The voucher provides a rent subsidy that generally covers rental costs in excess of 30% of the Veterans' income. The goal of the program is to transition Veterans from homelessness to independent subsidized housing by providing supportive, community-based case management services.

VA VASH information and online applications found here.
http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp
Or call
781-687-2733
781-687-2374

Legal

There are specialized programs to assist Veterans with the legal system. The Merrimack Valley Green Book has additional Legal listings. For information on how to obtain the Green Book see page 8.

Anti-discrimination protection

M.G.L. ch. 151B, § 4 It is illegal for any employer to deny initial employment, reemployment, retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment to a person who is a member of, applies to perform, or has an obligation to perform, service in a uniformed military service of the United States, including the National Guard.

Veterans believing they were discriminated against on the basis of their status as Veterans should report any complaints to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD).

Contact information
Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)
One Ashburton Place, Room 601
Boston, MA 02108-1518
617-994- 6000
TTY: 617-994- 6196
www.mass.gov/mcad/

Appealing a VA Benefits Decision or Denial

Veterans who disagree with a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) decision or denial with regard to their benefits have the right to appeal that decision. The VA has an extensive appeals process and it is very important to follow the VA instructions carefully. **Veterans must meet strict time limits** and other requirements or their appeals may be denied. However, many Veterans whose initial claims are denied succeed in getting their benefits on appeal. For more detailed information about the appeals process, visit the VA's website on Understanding the Appeals Process at: http://www.bva.va.gov/How_Do_I_APPEAL.asp.

Help with Your Appeal

Although some Veterans choose to handle their appeals themselves, Veterans who have an advocate familiar with the appeals process may be more likely to succeed. Don't be afraid to ask for help. The earlier you have the assistance of a professional advocate, the more likely you are to get your benefits. The Attorney General Office (AGO) does not recommend one type of assistance over another. Each individual Veteran should decide which type of advocate can be most effective in his or her case. The following types of assistance are available. Your local Veterans' Service Officer or the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services can provide you with a variety of levels of assistance filing and appealing a VA claim.

There are many private attorneys who are trained in helping Veterans with the appeal process and are willing to volunteer their services through their local bar association or other pro bono programs. Low-income Veterans may also be eligible for free legal services from the many legal aid organizations in the Commonwealth.

There are a number of trained representatives available through various Veterans' service organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American

Veterans, AMVETS, Gold Star Wives, VNOC, and numerous other dedicated organizations. Many of these organizations are congressionally chartered, which means they are approved by the VA Secretary to provide Veterans with assistance. The VA provides a directory of all Veterans' service organizations where you can find this type of assistance online at: www.va.gov/vso. Lawyers for Heroes' are a collective effort to provide legal services for military personnel and Veterans: http://www.lawyersforheroes.org/

Public Counsel's Center for Veterans' Advancement (CVA) provides extensive pro-bono services. Veterans are required to have an annual household income less than twice the federal poverty guidelines excluding income received for disability, welfare, pension, social security or any other state/local benefits:
http://www.publiccounsel.org/practice_areas/center_for_veterans_advancement or
American Bar Association: 213-385-977, extension 302

Civil service

M.G.L. ch. 31, § 26 Veterans are given preference in the eligibility lists of civil service positions in the following order:
1. Disabled Veterans
2. Veterans
3. Spouses or single parents of Veterans who were killed in action or who died from a service-connected disability incurred during wartime service, provided that the spouse or parent has not remarried.

M.G.L. ch. 31, § 12 Veterans who apply for civil service jobs for which there is no exam, and therefore, no list, receive preference over equally qualified non-Veterans. If more than one Veteran qualifies for a position, it is up to the appointing authority to make the choice between or among them. If an authority wants to bypass this law, it has to get the Human Resources Division's (HRD) approval. HRD's civil service unit also maintains lists of state agencies with vacancies and will notify interested Veterans of openings.

Disability Rights Laws

The Attorney General's Office enforces federal and state laws protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. The AGO enforces Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law (M.G.L. ch. 272, § 92A, 98, and 92A), and the Massachusetts Equal Rights Act (M.G.L. ch. 93, § 103), and focuses on eliminating discriminatory barriers to services, programs, and ensuring accommodations for people with disabilities.

An individual with a disability is a person with a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; who has a history of such impairment; or who is perceived (even if erroneously) as having such impairment. Among the many issues the AGO works to address are the following: Fair housing rights for individuals with disabilities. Access to town and municipal meetings, polling sites, and other governmental programs and services. Access to retail establishments, restaurants, stores, transportation, entertainment facilities and other places of public accommodation. The Attorney General works collaboratively with other state attorneys general and the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and various state agencies, in addition to working cooperatively with a network of local disability rights advocates, commissions, independent living centers, community access monitors, and others in the disability community.

Discrimination

State Laws about Discrimination Against Veterans: Under M.G.L. ch. 151B, § 4, it is illegal for any employer to deny initial employment, reemployment, retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment to a person who is a member of, applies to perform, or has an obligation to perform, service in a uniformed military service of the United States, including the National Guard.

If you think you have been discriminated against or your rights may have been violated on the basis of your status as a Veteran or military service member, you may also file a complaint with the Civil Rights Division of the Office of the Attorney General.

For more information, visit:
www.mass.gov/ago/civilrightscomplaint.

You can also file a complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). For more information and instructions on filing a complaint, visit the Frequently Asked Questions section of the MCAD website at: http://www.mass.gov/mcad/about. Veterans who believe they were discriminated against on the basis of their status as Veterans can also report any complaints to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services for investigation.

Department of Veterans' Services 600
Washington Street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 210-5755
Email: mdvs@vet.state.ma.us
www.mass.gov/Veterans

Employment Rights of Individuals with Disabilities

The Massachusetts Antidiscrimination Law (M.G.L. ch. 151B) is the state law that prohibits discrimination in employment against persons with disabilities. The ADA covers public and private employers with 15 or more employees. Chapter 151B applies to public and private employers with 6 or more employees. The ADA and Chapter 151B provide that an employer may not discriminate against a "qualified individual with a disability," which is defined as a person who can perform the "essential functions of a job, with or without a reasonable accommodation."

Family Medical Leave Act

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act, most employers with 50 or more employees must grant an eligible employee up to a total of 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period. For more information, call the Wage-Hour toll-free help line at 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243), or visit the FMLA website at http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Military Caregiver Leave

Provisions of the 2008 and 2010 National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs) altered the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to assist family members who need to take unpaid leave to care for a service member or Veteran with a "serious injury or illness." The law allows spouses, children, parents, and other next-of-kin who provide such care to take as many as 26 workweeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides that any person has a right of access to Federal agency records, except to the extent those records are protected from release by a FOIA exemption or a special law enforcement record exclusion. The most commonly requested VA materials are the VA's Physician's' Guide to Disability Evaluation Examinations and information regarding the 2006 Loss of Veterans Identity Information after the theft of a VA employee's laptop. Many VA publications, directives, and other materials accessible via FOIA are already posted on the VA website. For more information on how to request VA records visit: http://www.oprm.va.gov/foia/.

Home Front

Provides Pro bono legal services to military families: http://www.americanbar.org/portals/public_resources/aba_home_front.html.

Housing Unit for Military Veterans (HUMV)

Housing Unit for Military Veterans (HUMV) are for incarcerated Veterans in Billerica MA. The Unit is open to both sentenced inmates and pretrial detainees who have served at home or abroad. The program offers a therapeutic setting to give incarcerated Veterans a successful reentry.

Phone # 978-495-7034
Middlesex Jail & House of Correction,
269 Treble Cove Rd, Billerica, MA 01862

Incarcerated Veterans

VA benefits are affected if a beneficiary is convicted of a felony and imprisoned for more than 60 days. Disability or death pension paid to an incarcerated beneficiary must be discontinued. Disability compensation paid to an incarcerated Veteran rated 20 percent or more disabled is limited to the 10 percent rate. For a Veteran whose disability rating is 10 percent, the payment is reduced to half of the rate payable to a Veteran evaluated as 10 percent disabled. Any amounts not paid to the Veteran while incarcerated may be apportioned to eligible dependents. Payments are not reduced for participants in work-release programs, residing in halfway houses, or under community control. Failure to notify VA of a Veteran's incarceration can result in overpayment of benefits and the subsequent loss of all VA financial benefits until the overpayment is recovered. VA benefits will not be provided to any Veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant.

Health Care for Reentry Veterans Program (HCRV)

The HCRV Program offers outreach to Veterans incarcerated in state and federal prisons, and referrals and short-term case management assistance upon release from prison. The Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO) offers outreach and case management to Veterans involved in law enforcement encounters, overseen by treatment courts, and incarcerated in local jails. Visit www.va.gov/homeless to locate an outreach worker.

Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program

The VJO Program offers outreach and linkage to needed treatment and services to

Veterans involved in law enforcement encounters, seen in the court system, and/or incarcerated in local jails that may be at risk for homelessness upon their release. Visit www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp to locate a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist.

Contact information:
(617) 788-8387 (788-VETS) or
BVTC@jud.state.ma.us
Fax: (617) 788-8432

Private Attorneys

Some Veterans may choose to hire a private attorney to help them, even though there are many volunteer lawyers willing to help with VA benefits claims. Veterans who make this choice should be aware of what fees an attorney may and may not charge for these services. Attorneys may charge a reasonable fee to represent Veterans, to assist Veterans before they file a VA claim, or to assist with an appeal after the Veteran has filed a Notice of Disagreement. The lawyer must provide the Veteran with a written fee agreement and the agreement should specify if the VA should pay the fees to the lawyer directly out of past due benefits if the Veteran is successful on appeal. The fee also must be reasonable for the amount of skill required and type of work performed. Under 38 U.S.C. § 5904, if the lawyer is being paid from any past due benefits awarded to the Veteran, the lawyer may not receive more than 20 percent of the past due benefit award. The lawyer may not receive a share of the Veteran's future benefits.

Records Related to Benefits Claims

Any Veteran who has filed a claim for benefits will have a VA claims file-containing records of all examinations, claims, treatment, decisions, and other documents relevant to the Veteran's claim. A Veteran's claims file is maintained at the VA Regional Office where the Veteran filed his or her claim for benefits. A Veteran is entitled to review the information contained in his or her claims file and to either make copies at the VA facility or request them by mail. The VA may charge a reasonable fee to provide a copy of the file. It is generally easiest to review or obtain a copy of your claims file in person at the VA facility. You may wish to contact the VA to determine which regional office in your area has your claims file before traveling to the office itself. To request a copy of a VA claims file Release of Information from Individual's Records, go to the nearest VA Regional Office. To find the Regional Office nearest you, call 1-800-827-1000.

Tips for Life Long Care Giving

Pro bono legal services to Veterans for some instances.
http://www.moaa.org/caregiver_legal

VA Inspector General Hotline

810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
E- mail: vaoighotline@va.gov
VAOIG hotline: (800) 488-8244
Fax: (202) 495-5861

Veteran's Tenure

M.G.L. ch. 30, § 9A Veterans who hold state non-civil service positions for more than three years cannot be involuntarily separated for lack of work or money when similar offices or positions

exist, unless such positions are held by Veterans, in which case separation shall occur in reverse order of their respective original appointments.

Veterans & the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits employers from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. The ADA covers employers with 15 or more employees, including state and local governments. It also applies to employment agencies and to labor organizations. The ADA's nondiscrimination standards apply to federal sector employees under section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act. Under the ADA, an employer is required to make a reasonable accommodation to the known disability of a qualified applicant or employee if it would not impose an "undue hardship" on the operation of the employer's business. Undue hardship is defined as an action requiring significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of factors such as an employer's size, financial resources, and the nature and structure of its operation. Charges of employment discrimination on the basis of disability may be filed at any U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) field office. For the appropriate EEOC field office in your area, contact the EEOC directly at 1-800- 669-4000 (TTY: 1-800- 669-6820), or visit their website at: http://www.eeoc.gov/field/index.cfm.

Medical and End of Life Benefits

Basic eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits depends upon the type of military service performed, the duration of the service, and the character of discharge or separation. The VA looks at the "character of discharge" to determine whether a person meets the basic eligibility requirements for receipt of VA benefits under title 38 of the United States Code. Any discharge under honorable conditions satisfies the character of discharge requirement for basic eligibility for VA benefits.

The Veterans Administration, through its Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), provides a variety of services for Veterans including disability compensation, pension, education, home loans, life insurance, vocational, rehabilitation, survivors' benefits, health care, and burial benefits.

Alzheimer's Disease / Dementia

- Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (GRECC) —— Page 47
- Geriatric, Evaluation & Management (GEM) —————————— Page 47
- Geriatric Psychiatry Unit (GPU) ———————————————— Page 54

Note: The Merrimack Valley Green Book has additional Alzheimer's Disease / Dementia resources. For information on how to obtain the Green Book see page 8.

American Cancer Society: A national non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major public health problem through education and advocacy to help people fight cancer.
Website: www.cancer.org Phone: 1-800-227-2345

American Diabetes Association: A national non-profit providing education and advocacy for diabetes.
Website: www.diabetes.org Phone: 1-800-342-2383

American Heart Association: A national voluntary health agency whose mission is "Building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke." Their website provides a wealth of information and resources for heart health.
Website: www.heart.org Phone: 1-800-242-8721

American Lung Association: Resources and educational information to improve lung health.
Website: www.lungusa.org Phone: 202-785-3355

Bedford VA

Phone: Please call 781-687-2000, select option 3 for people residing in Massachusetts. If you are in need of immediate assistance please call 855-574-7286. To apply online go to www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply/.

Claims, Benefit information, Applications, and other services

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

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

Commonwealth Care

Commonwealth Care is a subsidized insurance program for uninsured individuals with incomes that fall within certain guidelines and who meet other qualifications. Commonwealth Care plans are low or no cost depending on your income. With Commonwealth Care, you choose a health plan and you choose your own doctor. Commonwealth Care plan benefits include regular check-ups, treatment when you are sick or injured, prescriptions at your local pharmacy, vision care, mental health or substance abuse treatment, and, for some members, dental care. Commonwealth Care plans are offered by Boston Medical Center (BMC) Healthnet Plan, Fallon Community Health Plan, Neighborhood Health Plan and Network Health. To find out if you are eligible for Commonwealth Care, call 1-877-MA-ENROLL (1-877-623-6765) or visit www.mahealthconnector.org.

Disability Compensation

Federal disability compensation is one of the most common benefits provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA will make monthly payments to Veterans who are currently disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service. For more information on disability rates please visit: http://benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/types-disability.asp. Disability benefits are not taxed as income to the Veteran.

The payment of military retirement pay, disability severance pay, and separation incentive payments known as SSB (Special Separation Benefits) and VSI (Voluntary Separation Incentives) affects the amount of VA compensation paid to disabled Veterans. To be eligible for VA disability benefits, a Veteran must have left military service under other than dishonorable conditions, and have an existing disability that is service-connected. For additional information visit the Compensation and Pension Benefits section of the VA website at: http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/.

Special benefits are available to Veterans with certain medical conditions who were/are:

- Prisoners of war (POWs);
- Exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides [Note: Veterans who served in Vietnam during between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are assumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange.];
- Exposed to radiation; or
- Gulf War Veterans with certain chronic illnesses.

For additional information about these conditions, visit the Disease-Specific Registries section of this guide. See page 62.

You can apply for compensation benefits through the VA's Veterans Online Application, or by submitting an application by mail to the nearest VA regional office. For assistance, contact the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services. The VA also publishes a guide to Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents, available online at http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp, which lists the many types of VA benefits available.

Family Service members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI)

Military spouses are eligible to receive up to $100,000 in life insurance coverage. Military members can elect to enroll their family members in this program for coverage of $10,000 to

$100,000. Spouse and dependent coverage may not exceed the coverage held by the service member, and children are restricted to $10,000. Contact your Military Personnel Office for enrollment information.
Read more: http://militarybenefits.info/5-top-military-spouse-benefits/#ixzz4PWZx4PNW

Federally Offered Health Insurance

TRICARE is the health care program serving active duty service members, National Guard and Reserve members, retirees, their families, survivors and certain former spouses worldwide. TRICARE utilizes the health care resources of the uniformed services and supplements them with networks of civilian health care professionals. In general, active duty and retired service members of the uniformed services, and their families, are eligible for TRICARE. The uniformed services include the: U.S. Army; U.S Air Force; U.S. Navy; U.S. Marine Corps; U.S. Coast Guard; Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service; and Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

For TRICARE information, call the customer service line at (877) 874-2273 or visit www.tricare.mil. For registration in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System and to update personal information, call 1-800-538-9552 or visit www.tricare.mil/deers.

Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers (GRECC)

The purpose of the Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers is to increase the basic knowledge about the aging process and how diseases of the elderly are best managed, to transmit this knowledge to healthcare providers, and to improve the quality of care delivered to elders. GRECC, located at Bedford VA, supports care to elderly Veterans, supports methods of health care delivery, and provides nursing home care. Social workers are available to help identify possible sources for financial assistance. Contact GRECC social work office at 781-687-2701 for assistance.

Individual Diabetes Self-Management and Nutrition Counseling

Diabetes Self-Management Education Group Program
6 weekly 2-hour classes – Thursday, 10am - 12pm
Located at the Bedford VA:
200 Springs Road, Bedford, MA 01730, Building 78, third floor classroom 311
https://www.bedford.va.gov/Documents/HPDP_Resource_Guide.doc

Management of Diabetes
Nutrition Services:
781-687-2685
Referral by Physician, NP

Inpatient Short Stay Programs Bedford, MA.

Geriatric, Evaluation & Management (GEM)

The goal of this rehabilitation/restorative program is to facilitate the Veteran's ability to remain in the community. The rehabilitation team works to develop a treatment plan customized to each Veteran's abilities, needs and goals.

Rehabilitation
Our short-stay inpatient rehabilitation program is specifically designed to help Veterans return to living an independent and active lifestyle as quickly as possible. **781-687-2732**

Respite
The goal of short-term respite is to give family caregivers temporary relief from the routine daily care of their chronically ill or disabled Veteran at home. A planned respite admission begins on Thursday and may be from one to two weeks depending on the caregiver's need. **Respite is not available on an emergency basis. To learn more, contact 781-687-2700**

Skilled Nursing Care
Provide up to 90 days of 24 hour nursing, medical care, and assistance for those who qualify.

Issues with VA Health Care
The VA has a patient advocate system for Veterans who disagree with their doctors about their treatment, or have other issues related to health care received at VA facilities. If you have a question regarding VA medical personnel or the type or quality of care you or a family member is receiving at the VA, ask to speak to a patient advocate at the VA medical center where you or your family member received treatment. For more information visit:
http://www.patientadvocate.va.gov.
Note: If you feel that you or a family member have been abused by VA medical personnel, or have witnessed misconduct on the part of VA employees, you may wish to file a complaint with the VA Office of the Inspector General:
VA Inspector General Hotline (53E) 810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20091-2042
Toll-free hotline: 1-800-488-8244 (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays)
Email: vaoighotline@va.gov http://www.va.gov/oig/contacts/hotline.asp

Massachusetts Health Care Reform Law
Massachusetts Laws on Veterans Affairs Health Care Under Chapter 58 of the Acts of 2006, frequently referred to as the Massachusetts Healthcare Reform Law. Under this law, as of July 2007 all adult Massachusetts residents are required to have health insurance. Residents are asked to verify their health insurance coverage on their tax return and residents who do not have insurance face financial penalties. There are a variety of health insurance options available that Veterans can access.

Medical and Dental Facilities on Military Bases
Almost all bases have their own medical and dental care clinics for service members and approved dependents. Government employees, retirees, and Veterans can be provided services however members and dependents have priority. The clinic's capacity, staff and equipment can also affect the extent of services to all eligible specifically by base. These benefits are available to Guard and reserve members as well. Federal benefits are not exclusive to the state. For example a service member, spouse or dependent that lives in Amesbury, Massachusetts could go to the Portsmouth Navy Yard in New Hampshire for services if it is more convenient. To be eligible for dental and medical care a person would need to be enrolled in the military's Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS) program. For more information:
http://militarybenefits.info/10-great-miltary-base-perks/#ixzz4PWcZZQwd

Medicare

Medicare is a health insurance program for people age 65 or older, some disabled people under age 65, and people of all ages with end-stage renal disease (permanent kidney failure treated with dialysis or a transplant). Medicare has three parts. Medicare Part A is hospitalization insurance, which may cover critical care such as inpatient hospital stays. Medicare Part B is medical insurance, which may pay for more routine medical care such as doctor's visits and lab tests. Medicare Part D covers some prescription drugs. **Please note Massachusetts's Chapter 115 can offset the cost of Medicare Part B.**

The Merrimack Valley Green Book has additional information on Medicare. For information on how to obtain the Green Book see page 8.

My Health*e*Vet

My Health*e*Vet is the VA's online Personal Health Record (PHR). It offers users anywhere, anytime access to health care information, resources and tools online 24/7. My Health*e*Vet features: VA Prescription Refills, VA Wellness Reminders, VA Benefits & Services, VA Appointments, Personal Health History, Military Health History, www.myhealth.va.gov, 781-687-3619, at the Bedford VAMC.

New Patient Orientation
781-687-2418
For Veterans new to the VA health care system.
Every Wednesday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm
Building 78, third floor classroom

Other Medical Services

Acupuncture Family Practice
75 Union Ave.
Sudbury, MA 01776
978-443-6789
Accepting VA Insurance.

Acupuncture Without Borders – Military Stress Recovery (Veterans) Project
Website: www.acuwithoutborders.org

Catch A Lift ("CAL") is a non-profit organization that assists wounded service members from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with starting their healing process and maintaining their mental and physical health through physical fitness. CAL provides gifted gym memberships or in-home gym equipment to wounded post 9-11 Veterans anywhere in the United States.
Website: www.catchaliftfund.com, Phone: 1-855-GYM4VET

Smoking Cessation Programs at the VA

Quit VET is a telephone-quit line for Veterans interested in quitting smoking. This smoking cessation quit line is a program co-led by the VA and the National Cancer Institute. The program has trained smoking cessation counselors provide individualized counseling services to callers and help develop a quit plan with Veterans. Veterans who call the quit line will be offered the option of receiving up to 4 follow-up calls from a quit line counselor to assist with their quit attempt. Quit VET is not meant to replace behavioral counseling from a health care

provider, but may be a useful option for Veterans who are unable to regularly meet with their VA provider.

1-855-QUIT VET (1-855-784-8838)
Monday – Friday
8AM – 8PM, Eastern Time
The Quit line counseling is available in Spanish as well as English.

SmokefreeVET is a mobile text messaging service available to Veterans quitting smoking. This text-messaging program is designed to provide 24/7 support, tips, and encouragement to Veterans interested in quitting smoking. SmokefreeVET is collaboration between VHA Tobacco & Health and the National Cancer Institute's Tobacco Control Research Branch.

SmokefreeVET – A Text Messaging Program to Help Veterans Stop Smoking
Veterans can sign up for the program by:

- Texting **VET to IQUIT (47848)** from their mobile phone
- Visiting www.smokefree.gov/VET

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: eKidney Clinic
This online tool helps Veterans understand kidneys disease and better take care of their kidneys. Website: http://ckd.vacloud.us

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Guide to Long-Term Care
The Guide to Long-Term Care provides information on the full range of long-term care services, particularly home and community-based services. This is an on-line tool that provides worksheets for Veterans and caregivers to help assist in identifying long-term care needs. Website: https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/longtermcare/

Veterans Acupuncture Care (VAC) Boston Clinic - Member Clinic
Veterans Benefit Clearinghouse, located at Charlestown Yoga, 191 Main St. Charlestown, MA
For more information, call Pathways to Wellness at 617-859-3036 or 617-241-0824
Held 3rd Saturday of each month from 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Veterans Acupuncture Care (VAC)- Supporting Clinic
St. Andrew's Church, 3 Maple Street, Framingham, MA 01702
All Veterans, active military & their families are welcome
Saturdays 10 a.m. – 12 noon (last seating at 11:30 a.m.)
For more information call: (508) 626-0896

Veterans Acupuncture Care (VAC) Worcester - Member Clinic
Dodge Park Rest Home, 101 Randolph Rd., Worcester, MA 01606
Near the Higgins Armory. Exit 1 off of 190 or WRTA bus route 30/31.
Enter through the rear entrance. (508) 890-8899

Preventive Amputation for Veterans Everywhere (PAVE) Clinic
The Preventive Amputation for Veterans Everywhere Clinic, located at the Bedford VA, provides foot screenings for individuals with high-risk feet, such as those with diabetes. Treatments and referrals are individualized. Best time to call is after 4:30pm. 781-687-2348. A consult from a primary care provider is required for the first visit.

Program for All-inclusive Care for Elderly (PACE)

PACE is a Medicare and Medicaid program that helps people meet their health care needs in the community instead of going to a nursing home or other care facility. The Merrimack Valley Green Book has additional information on PACE programs. For information on how to obtain the Green Book see page 8.

Sew Much Comfort

Sew Much Comfort provides adaptive clothing free of charge to support the unique needs of injured service members from all branches of the military and National Guard. The organization will custom design or adapt existing clothing items to accommodate injured service members with prosthetics and other medical devices. Simple changes such as adding a Velcro closure to the side seam on an ordinary pair of pants may enable injured service members to be more independent and recover with dignity and comfort. Clothing is distributed at VA and military hospitals. For more information, visit: www.sewmuchcomfort.org.

State level insurance programs

To apply for Mass Health (Medicaid), call Mass Health Customer Service at 1-800-841-2900 (TTY 1-800-497-4648) to receive a Medical Benefit Request (MBR) form. Mass Health provides a variety of levels of health care benefits to low and medium income residents of Massachusetts by paying for insurance or paying doctors and other service providers directly. Eligibility and levels of coverage depend on the type of Mass Health plan. Some individuals may be eligible for Mass Health because of a disability or illness, such as HIV or breast cancer. For more information about available plans, visit the Mass Health website at www.mass.gov/masshealth.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Services/support groups

Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, is an injury that occurs when damage is done to the brain from an external physical force. The head may be hit, may strike a stationary object, or be shaken violently. This may occur in a car accident, serious fall or by an act of violence. Service members may sustain a TBI from a blast injury or shockwave. These kinds of events may result in significant cognitive, behavioral, or social challenges.

Brain Injury and Statewide Specialized Community Services (BI&SSCS)

The Brain Injury and Statewide Specialized Community Services (BI&SSCS) is a department of the MRC. This program provides a range of community-based services to persons, who have sustained a TBI, including: case management, social/recreational programs, skills training via regionally-based head injury centers, respite, residential services/programs, and family support services.

Eligibility criteria

In order to be determined eligible for BI&SSCS services, an individual must:

- Be a Massachusetts resident
- Have sustained a documented TBI
- Exhibit impairments (physical, cognitive, and/or behavioral) primarily caused by a TBI
- Be able to participate in community-based services

BI&SSCS also offers screening exams for TBI and neuropsychological assessment for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom

(OEF/OIF) Veterans who have not been previously diagnosed with, or treated for TBI, for eligibility determination purposes.

Contact information
Brain Injury and Statewide Specialized Community Services,
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
27 Wormwood Street, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02210-1616
617-204-3852, Toll-Free: 1-800-223-2559, x2
www.mass.gov/mrhip
Email: shipu@mrc.state.ma.us

Poly-trauma and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Support

Veterans and healthcare professionals are encouraged to contact the Poly-trauma and TBI Support Clinic team, located at the Bedford VA, to discuss potential referrals of any OEF/OIF/OND combat and active-duty service injured Veterans. Healthcare professionals may send an electronic consult to the Polytrauma and TBI Support Clinic team for evaluation

Clinic Coordinator:
781-687-3525

Director of Rehabilitation Services:
781-687-3066

Statewide Head Injury Program grant (SHIP)

The Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) provides services to individuals with TBI regardless of military discharge rating. SHIP received a $1 million competitive federal grant to strengthen services for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain injury. The four-year grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration, builds on a 2006 grant to continue to improve systems of care to better serve Veterans (and their families) of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who sustained a TBI. This effort will include piloting an integrated case management model in partnership with the Massachusetts National Guard and Reserve.

VA Billing

The VA is required to bill private health insurance providers for medical care, supplies and medications provided for treatment of Veterans' non service-connected conditions.

Veterans Affairs Health Care

Many Veterans are eligible to receive healthcare from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions, and service-connected disability rating, status as a recent combat Veteran, receipt of certain metals (e.g. Purple Heart), or income. "Active military service" means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Reservists and National Guard members who were called to active duty by the federal government are generally also eligible for VA health care if they meet the other requirements.

Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges may make a Veteran in-eligible for VA benefits, and the VA is prohibited by law from providing any benefits, including health care, to a Veteran with

an outstanding felony warrant. Some family members of Veterans are eligible for VA benefits as well.

To obtain VA health care most Veterans are required to enroll in the VA system and provide documentation that they are eligible for VA services, such as a copy of their discharge/separation papers (form DD 214). There are several ways to apply for enrollment including

- in person at any VA Medical Center or Clinic.
- by calling VA's Health Benefits Service Center, Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. (EST) at 1-877-222-VETS.
- For more information about, call 1-877-222-8387 or visit www.va.gov.

Veterans Affairs Pension Benefits

If you qualify for a VA pension and you have a disability that meets certain criteria, you may also be eligible to receive an Aid and Attendance (A&A) (on page 34) or Housebound benefit. For more information on applying for A&A or Housebound benefits contact your local VA Regional Office or visit http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/pension/vetpen.htm#7.

Veterans Choice Program

Veterans' Choice Program allows Veterans to see community physicians at no cost to members if a VA facility is too far away or the Veteran cannot be seen for an extended period of time. For more information and enrolment please call 866-606-8198 or visit https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/faqs.asp.

Mental Health Resources

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

DBSA Merrimack Valley is a peer- based self-help support group focusing on issues surrounding bipolar and depressed individuals and their families. They are affiliated with the National Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.
Contact Alliance for locations and time: 888-280-7773, dbsamerrimackvalley.org

Geriatric Psychiatry Unit (GPU)

The GPU is an interdisciplinary service that conducts an in-depth psychosocial evaluation and provides a full spectrum of pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies to address psychiatric and behavioral symptoms.

The clinical team in the GPU consists of Specialty Nursing, Social Work, Geriatric Psychiatry, Geriatric Medicine, Neurology, Neuropsychology, and Rehabilitation Therapies. This unit is appropriate to treat geriatric Veterans with delirium, psychosis, psychotic depression, dementia, and other behavioral disturbances that require treatment for the Veteran to remain in the community.

The Geriatric Psychiatry Unit is not appropriate for Veterans with acute medical problems or substance abuse needs, suicidal intent, homicidal intent, extreme aggression, or who are candidates for long-term care. The GPU is not an entry point into VA Long Term care; Veterans must be returned to the referral source when the GPU determines that treatment is completed.

For more information, please call 781-687-2731 or 781-687-2293

Give an Hour (program)

Free counseling for a year to Veterans and their families. Website: https://giveanhour.org/, Email: info@giveanhour.org

Home Base Program

The Home Base Program is a partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). The program offers OEF/OIF Veterans and their families' diagnostic assessments, treatment, and referral services. The program is intended to help participants overcome combat-related stress and/or traumatic brain injury. The services are available regardless of whether treatment has previously been sought and regardless of ability to pay. Discharge status does not affect eligibility for services. OEF/OIF Veterans and their families may contact the Home Base Program at 617-724-5202 or at homebaseprogram@partners.org for assistance. To learn more about the program, visit www.homebaseprogram.org.

Massachusetts SAVE Program

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services in collaboration with the Department of Public Health, has a Statewide Advocacy for Veterans' Empowerment (SAVE) program that assists Veterans in need of referral services and seeks to prevent suicide and advocate on behalf of Massachusetts' Veterans. SAVE will act as a liaison between Veterans (and their families) and the various agencies within the federal and state governments. A team of SAVE Outreach Coordinators will focus on community advocacy, suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and referrals. SAVE Outreach Coordinators will be in the field responding to the needs of Veterans and their families.

Military One Source:
For Immediate Help 24/7 CALL: 1-800-342-9647
National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
Military OneSource is a free service that is provided by the Department of Defense for active-duty, Guard, and Reserve service members and their families. It helps clients with education, relocation, parenting, and stress. Website:www.militaryonesource.com

Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
A number of Veterans, both women and men, may have experienced sexual trauma while they served on active military duty. The law defines sexual trauma as: sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and other acts of violence. It further defines sexual harassment as repeated unsolicited, verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature, which is threatening. Many Veterans have never discussed the incident or their medical or psychological condition with anyone. Yet, these women and men know that they have "not felt the same" since the trauma occurred. Note: Those Veterans with a history of sexual trauma suffered while in the military MAY be eligible for VA treatment without charge for conditions related to that trauma, whether or not they are service-connected for that trauma. For MST counseling, contact the nearest VA medical center, Vet Center, or the National Center for PTSD Service members.

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
The National Center for PTSD is a part of the VA that works to advance the clinical care and social welfare of America's Veterans through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and stress-related disorders. Its website, http://www.ptsd.va.gov/, is provided as an educational resource concerning PTSD and other enduring consequences of traumatic stress. This page also features information on various self-help options including a PTSD online coach that includes a mobile app. The online coach can help manage sleep, provide trauma reminders and anger management techniques. Other options include peer support groups, "dogs and PTSD" and mindfulness coaches.

Contact information
National Center for PTSD, offers programs for
VA Boston Healthcare System
150 South Huntington Avenue (116B-2), Boston, MA 02130
857-364-4145
www.ncptsd.org

National Veterans Foundation
National Veterans Foundation offers a toll-free crisis management hotline for Veterans and their families at 1-888-777-4443. The hotline is open seven days a week, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Pacific Time). Visit www.nvf.org for more information.

Mental Health America distributes educational materials on such topics as reuniting with a spouse and children, adjusting after war, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Visit http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/military-mental-health for more information.

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) provides resources for suicidal Veterans and their families. For more information, contact:
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. 1777 F Street NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20006
Office: (202) 588-TAPS (8277)
Toll-free: 1-800-959-TAPS (8277)
www.taps.org info@taps.org

Veterans and Families is a national nonprofit community service and support organization, founded and directed by Veterans, parents, grandparents, family members, employers, mental health professionals, academics and community leaders. View their website at: www.Veteransandfamilies.org.
Each military branch also offers prevention programs for active duty service members:

- Air Force Suicide Prevention Program: http://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/ suicideprevention
- Army Suicide Prevention Program: http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/
- Coast Guard Suicide Prevention Program: http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/suicide_ prevention.asp
- Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Program: www.usmc-mccs.org/services/support/ suicide-prevention/
- Navy Suicide Prevention Program: http://www.public.navy.mil/BUPERS-NPC/ support/21st_century_sailor/suicide_prevention/Pages/default.aspx

Other Sources of Mental Health Assistance

AMVETS provides many forms of assistance to Veterans across the nation in addition to supporting community service initiatives. Visit www.amvets.org.

Samaritans: Massachusetts 24 hour Crisis Hotlines

Samaritans, Inc. is a non-denominational, not-for-profit volunteer organization dedicated to reducing the incidence of suicide by befriending individuals in crisis and educating the community about effective prevention strategies. The Samaritans provides a free and confidential 24-hour phone befriending line, in Boston at (617) 247- 0220, and in Framingham at (508) 875-4500. Other hotlines:

- Teen Line (statewide): 1-800-252-8336
- Merrimack Valley: 1-866-912-4673; (978) 327-6607; Teen Line (978) 688-8336
- Fall River/New Bedford: 1-866-508-HELP; (508) 673-3777,
- Cape Cod and the Islands: 1-800-893-9900; (508) 548-8900

Screening for Mental Health

Screening for Mental Health provides free mental health tools for service members and their families, including online self-assessments and information on where help is available. Screening for Mental Health also offers Family Resiliency Materials to help families learn how to cope with deployments. Visit www.mentalhealthscreening.org/ programs/military for more information.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides service for Veterans in crisis. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1 to be connected immediately to VA suicide prevention and mental health service professionals. Visit their website at: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Department of Veterans' Service 600
Washington St., 7th Floor Boston, MA. 02111
Toll-free: 1-888-844-2838
save@state.ma.us

Vet Centers
Vet Centers provide readjustment-counseling, outreach, and referral services to Veterans and their families in a relaxed, community-based setting. Vet Centers also provide counseling for military sexual trauma and bereavement counseling to parents, siblings, and spouses of service members who die in service. Many Vet Center staff members are combat Veterans themselves. Almost all combat Veterans are eligible for Vet Center services. For more information about eligibility, visit http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/Eligibility.asp.

All services are free-of-charge to eligible Veterans, their families, and significant others. Vet Center staff protect the privacy of all clients. All records related to treatment are strictly confidential and will not be shared with the VA. The Vet Center for Merrimack Valley is located in Lowell.

Lowell Vet Center
10 George Street, Lowell, MA 08152
978-453-1151

Veterans Crisis Line
The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1.** Chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. www.Veteranscrisisline.net

For mental health resources in addition to those listed below, visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Massachusetts website for Veterans and service members at www.namimass.org/resources/Veterans-and-service-members.

Obtaining and Changing Documentation

Correcting Military Records

Each of the military services maintain a Discharge Review Board with authority to change, correct or modify discharges or dismissals not issued by a sentence of a general court-martial.

The Secretary of a military department, acting through a Board for Correction of Military Records, has authority to change any military record when necessary to correct an error or remove an injustice. A correction board may consider applications for correction of a military record, including a review of a discharge issued by court-martial.

How to Upgrade a Military Discharge

In some situations, you may be eligible to apply to have your military discharge upgraded to a higher rating. However, there is no automatic upgrade process. You must apply to have your discharge upgraded by downloading DD Form 293 –*Application for the Review of Discharge or Dismissal from the Armed Forces of the United States.* You must then submit the form to the Discharge Review Board within 15 years of your discharge. If your discharge was more than 15 years ago, you must request a change to your military records. More information is located on the following website:http://themilitarywallet.com/military-discharge-upgrade/. It is a complicated process, and one that is often best done with the help of legal assistance. For Legal Assistance see page 39.

The Veteran, survivor, or legal representative must file a request for correction within three years of discovering an alleged error or injustice. The board may excuse failure to file within this time, however, if it finds it would be in the interest of justice. It is an applicant's responsibility to show why the filing of the application was delayed and why it would be in the interest of justice for the board to consider it despite the delay. To justify a correction, it is necessary to show to the satisfaction of the board that the alleged entry or omission in the records was in error or unjust. Applications should include all available evidence, such as signed statements of witnesses or a brief of arguments supporting the correction. This application is made available along with DD Form 149, at VA offices, Veterans organizations or visit www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/formsprogram.htm.

Military and VA Records

There are many reasons you may need copies of your military records. If you are filing a claim with the VA, any record of traumatic events, injuries, and medical treatment you received during your service can be helpful. If you are applying for Veteran's' preference, a tax exemption, or other state and federal benefits you will probably need a copy of your discharge papers (Form DD 214). If you are a spouse or dependents of a Veteran you will probably also need a record of the Veteran's military service and documentation of your relationship to the Veteran such as a marriage or birth certificate.

There are many different types of military records. The following includes some of the most common records and how to obtain them. This is not an exhaustive list. If you have a complicated VA claim or issue with trying to upgrade your discharge there may be other records available that can be helpful.

Obtaining Additional Military Records

Each military branch maintains its own military personnel records for service members on active duty. Once a service member has been discharged and no longer has any further service obligation, his or her personnel records are sent to a central archiving facility. These facilities vary based on the date of the service member's discharge and branch of service. Veterans discharged to Massachusetts can contact the Military War Records Office (See Below) of the Adjutant General in order to obtain their military records. Veterans can also visit their local Veterans' Agent office or the central office of the Department of Veterans' Services (600 Washington Street, Suite 1100 in Boston) to request a copy of their form DD 214. Local agents and DVS staff will access DD 214 forms online and print them for Veterans who present positive photo ID.

Military War Records Office
50 Maple St.
Milford, MA 01757
Phone: (508) 233-7780
Fax: (508) 233-7785

Veterans living in another state at the time of discharge can obtain their records directly from the federal agency responsible for maintaining the records. **Please see Appendix B on the archives website listed below, for a table from the National Personnel Records Center that lists the location of most military personnel records.** Most records can be obtained by submitting a completed Standard Form 180 (preferred) or by providing the information listed in the table, to the address listed for the agency in charge of maintaining the records. Veterans who plan to file a claim for medical benefits with the VA do not need to request a copy of their military health record from the National Personnel Records Center, unless the Veteran wants a copy for his or her personal records. The original health records are provided directly to the VA after the Veteran's claim is filed. For more information about obtaining military records visit the NPRC website at: http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/.

Note: "Discharged" means a person with no current military status. A person released from active duty based on expiration of terms of service, generally is transferred into the inactive reserve. Most military service obligations are for 8 years. If it is less than 8 years from the date of enlistment, then the person is probably in the reserve.

Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR)

Veterans separated due to disability from Sept. 11, 2001, through Dec. 31, 2009, with a combined rating of 20 percent or less, as determined by the respective branch of service Physical Evaluation Board (PEB), and not found eligible for retirement, may be eligible for a review by the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR).

The PDBR was established to reassess the accuracy and fairness of certain PEB decisions, and where appropriate, recommend the correction of discrepancies and errors. A PDBR review will not lower the disability rating previously assigned by the PEB, and any correction may be made retroactively to the day of the original disability separation. As a result of the request for review by the PDBR, no further relief from the Board of Corrections of Military Records may be sought, and the recommendation by the PDBR, once accepted by the respective branch of service, is final. A comparison of these two boards, along with other PDBR information, can be viewed at www.health.mil/pdbr.

The Veteran or, if the Veteran is deceased or incompetent, the spouse or surviving spouse, next of kin or legal representative, may apply for a review using DD Form 294, "Application for a Review by the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) of the Rating Awarded Accompanying a Medical Separation from the Armed Forces of the United States." As part of the review process, the PDBR considers the rating(s) previously awarded by VA. The completion of VA Form 3288, "Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Individual's Records," along with DD Form 294, allows the PDBR to request VA records. Both forms can be downloaded from the PDBR website at www.health.mil/pdbr. These forms may also be obtained at a VA Regional Office (VARO), from a Veteran's service organization (VSO) found on page 37.

Replacement Medals, Awards & Decorations

Veterans or their families may obtain replacements for lost medals or other decorations awarded to the Veteran by submitting appropriate documentation to the Veterans branch of service. There is generally no charge for replacement medals or other awards.

Requests can be submitted online using the eVetRecs system at: http://www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/. Paper requests can be submitted by completing a Standard Form 180, titled Requests Pertained to Military Records, and mailing it to the address for the Veteran's branch of service indicated at the bottom of page 3.

For general information:
National Personnel Records Center
(Military Personnel Records)
9700 Page Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Note: Under 18 U.S.C. 704, also known as the Stolen Valor Act, it is class D felony to wear, purchase, ship, sell, or exchange, or to falsely claim to be the recipient of, a medal, ribbon, or badge, unless the honor was properly earned. The law is not intended to apply to legitimate collectors of these items provided they do not represent that they have earned them through military service.

Veterans can determine which medals they earned by examining their military discharge forms (DD 214, WD 53-35, NAVPERS, etc.). Listed on the form are all the medals the final military unit deemed the Veteran was authorized to possess at the time of discharge.
To apply for a medal not listed on your discharge papers, but that you feel you deserve, complete Form DD-149 and mail the completed form to the appropriate address listed on the back of the form based on your branch of service.

Review of Discharge from Military Service

Each of the military services maintains a Discharge Review Board with authority to change, correct or modify discharges or dismissals not issued by a sentence of a general court-martial. The board has no authority to address medical discharges.

The Veteran or, if the Veteran is deceased or incompetent, the surviving spouse, next of kin or legal representative, may apply for a review of discharge by writing to the military department concerned, using DD Form 293, "Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces

of the United States." This form may be obtained at a VA regional office, from Veterans organizations or online at www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/formsprogram.htm. However, if the discharge was more than 15 years ago, a Veteran must petition the appropriate Service's Board for Correction of Military Records using DD Form 149, "Application for Correction of Military Records Under the Provisions of Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1552." A discharge review is conducted by a review of an applicant's record and, if requested, by a hearing before the board.

Discharges awarded as a result of a continuous period of unauthorized absence in excess of 180 days make persons ineligible for VA benefits regardless of action taken by Discharge Review Boards, unless the VA determines there were compelling circumstances for the absence. Boards for the Correction of Military Records also may consider such cases. Veterans with disabilities incurred or aggravated during active duty may qualify for medical or related benefits regardless of separation and characterization of service. Veterans separated administratively under other than honorable conditions may request that their discharge be reviewed for possible re-characterization, provided they file their appeal within 15 years of the date of separation. Questions regarding the review of a discharge should be addressed to the appropriate discharge review board at the address listed on DD Form 293.

VA Medical Records

VA facilities maintain records of all treatment received by Veterans from facilities in the VA system. This information is shared electronically between VA facilities so most information created at one VA facility can be accessed from other VA facilities. Most VA medical facilities have a Release of Information Office where Veterans can request a copy of their medical records in person for no charge. Veterans can also obtain copies of VA medical records by mail. To request your own medical record from one of the VA medical facilities located in Massachusetts, complete a **VA Form 10-5345a, Individuals' Request for a Copy of Their Own Medical Record,** and mail it to the facility where you received medical treatment. If you are a family member or advocate requesting records on behalf of a Veteran, complete **VA Form 10-5345, Request for and Authorization to Release Medical Records or Health Information,** and submit it to the VA facility where the Veteran was treated. The forms must be submitted with the Veteran's original signature or the request will not be processed. To obtain information about the facilities visit the Boston VA Healthcare System website at:

http://www.boston.va.gov/patients/roi.asp.

Registries

There are many registries designated for Veterans who were exposed to different environments proven to cause harm to long term health. **Note for Veteran Health Registries:** Certain Veterans can participate in a VA health registry and receive free evaluations. VA maintains health registries to provide special health evaluations and health-related information. To participate, contact the Environmental Health Coordinator at the nearest VA health care facility or visit http://www.publichealth. va.gov/exposures to see a directory which lists Environmental Health Coordinators by state and U.S. territory. Veterans should be aware that a health registry evaluation is not a disability compensation exam. A registry evaluation does not start a claim for compensation and is not required for any VA benefits.

Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

Unlike other registries, when Veterans complete the online Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry self-assessment questionnaire, they are in the registry. No in-person medical evaluation is required to become registered. Veterans not already enrolled in VA health care should contact an Environmental Health Coordinator at a nearby VA facility by visiting the following link: (http://www.publichealth.va.gov/expo- sures/coordinators.asp) or calling 1-877-222-8387.

Camp Lajeune Service member and family registry

VA has established a presumptive service connection for Veterans, Reservists, and National Guard members exposed to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune from August 1, 1953 through December 31, 1987 who later developed one of the following eight diseases:

- Adult leukemia
- Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- Bladder cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

Presently, these conditions are the only ones for which there is sufficient scientific and medical evidence to support the creation of presumptions; however, the VA will continue to review relevant information as it becomes available.

Veterans who are experiencing other health conditions that they think may be related to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune are encouraged to contact their primary care provider and to file a claim. The VA reviews and decides disability compensation claims on a case-by-case basis.

Veterans' health care

In accordance with the 2012 Camp Lejeune health care law, VA provides cost-free health care for certain conditions to Veterans who served at least 30 days of active duty at Camp Lejeune from January 1, 1957 and December 31, 1987. Qualifying health conditions include:

- Esophageal cancer
- Breast cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Renal toxicity
- Female infertility
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Scleroderma
- Lung cancer
- Bladder cancer
- Leukemia
- Myelodysplastic syndromes
- Hepatic steatosis
- Miscarriage

Neurobehavioral effects

Veterans eligible for health care under the 2012 Camp Lejeune health care law may enroll in VA health care and receive medical services for the 15 covered health conditions at no cost (including copayments). Call 1-877-222-8387 for help. Inform VA staff that you served on active duty at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days during the covered time period.

Camp Lejeune Disability Benefit Coverage Area & Family member health care reimbursement
Family members of Veterans who also resided at Camp Lejeune during the qualifying period are eligible for reimbursement of out-of-pocket medical expenses related to the 15 covered health conditions. VA can only pay treatment costs that remain after payment from your other health plans. https://www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov/https://www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov/ or call 1-866-372-1144 for help.

Children of Women Vietnam Veterans Born with Certain Birth Defects
Biological children of women Veterans who served in Vietnam at any time during the period beginning on Feb. 28, 1961, and ending on May 7, 1975, may be eligible for certain benefits because of birth defects associated with the mother's service in Vietnam that resulted in a permanent physical or mental disability. The covered birth defects do not include conditions due to family disorders, birth- related injuries, or fetal or neonatal infirmities with well-established causes. A monetary allowance is paid at one of four disability levels based on the child's degree of permanent disability.

Embedded Fragment Registry
OEF, OIF, and OND Veterans who have, or are likely to have an embedded fragment as the result of an injury they received while serving in an area of conflict.

Gulf War Illnesses Registry
For Veterans who served on active military duty in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, which began in 1990 and continues to the present, and includes Operation Iraqi Freedom. Some Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Shield in the early 1990s or in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003 to the present may develop a cluster of unexplained, multi-symptom illnesses sometimes referred to as Gulf War Syndrome. These Veterans are entitled to a free registry examination to identify any conditions that may have been caused by their military service, and to help the VA determine which illnesses or conditions are common among Gulf War Veterans.

Public Law 103-446 allows the VA to pay compensation to Gulf War Veterans with certain chronic disabilities resulting from undiagnosed illnesses that appeared during active duty in the Gulf War or within a specified time period after Gulf War service, which led to a degree of disability of 10 percent or more. In 2001, Public Law 107-103 expanded the definition of "qualifying chronic disability" to include fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and irritable bowel syndrome.

The following symptoms are sometimes associated with Gulf War illnesses. However, these symptoms are also associated with many other medical conditions that may or may not be related to military service. If you have any of the following symptoms and served in Iraq or elsewhere in the Persian Gulf, you may consider contacting the VA to find out if a registry examination is appropriate.

- Fatigue
- Skin disorders
- Headaches
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Neurological symptoms
- Neuropsychological symptoms
- Respiratory symptoms
- Sleep disturbances
- Gastrointestinal symptoms
- Cardiovascular symptoms
- Abnormal weight loss
- Menstrual disorders

1-800-PGW-VETS. For gulf war Veterans: http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar.

Ionizing Radiation Registry

For Veterans who have received nasopharyngeal (nose and throat) radium irradiation treatments while on active duty and Veterans possibly exposed to radiation.

Vaccine Adverse Events

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) maintain a database of adverse events and harmful side effects of vaccines called the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). Each report that is filed with VAERS provides valuable information that is added to the VAERS database, which is then used to ensure the safest strategies of vaccine use and to further reduce the rare risks associated with vaccines.

VAERS
P.O. Box 1100
Rockville, MD 20849-1100
Fax (toll-free): 1-800-822-7967 Email: info@vaers.org

Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange

Agent Orange and other herbicides are chemicals that were used extensively in Vietnam as defoliants to remove leaves from trees. Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides such as dioxin may experience negative health effects.
Many of these Veterans are eligible for VA benefits. The following medical conditions are generally presumed to be service-connected for Veterans exposed to Agent Orange and certain other herbicides. This means that Veterans with these conditions have to submit less evidence to the VA to be eligible for benefits:

- chloracne (a skin disorder),
- porphyria cutanea tarda (sensitivity to sunlight),
- acute or subacute peripheral neuropathy (a nerve disorder),
- type 2 diabetes, and
- numerous cancers.

In addition, Vietnam Veterans' children with the birth defect spina bifida as a direct result of Agent Orange are eligible for certain benefits and services. Furthermore, the VA was recently authorized to provide certain benefits, including health care, for children with birth defects who were born to female Vietnam Veterans. (See below)

The following Veterans are assumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange:

- Any U.S. Vietnam era Veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, regardless of length of service (i.e., 1 hour, 1 day, 1 month, 1 year, etc.).
- Any U.S. Veteran who served in Korea during 1968 or 1969.

- If you served in Vietnam or Korea during those dates, or if you were exposed to Agent Orange, dioxin or another toxic substance in an herbicide or defoliant during the conduct of any military operation or as a result of the testing, transporting, or spraying of herbicides for military purposes, you are entitled to Agent Orange Registry Examination and possibly VA benefits. **Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA health care system to receive an Agent Orange Registry Examination.** The Registry Examination is an opportunity to identify individual health issues and to gather information about the diseases and other medical conditions caused by exposure to Agent Orange. If you have been exposed to Agent Orange and would like more information, contact your local VA Medical Center, or the VA's Agent Orange Helpline:

Gulf War/ Agent Orange Helpline Toll-free: 1-800-749-8387
Environmental Agents Service Department of
Veterans Affairs 810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp Email:
GW/AOHelpline@vba.va.gov

Veterans Mental Health and Addiction Program (VMHAP)

The Veterans Mental Health and Addiction Program provides intensive day programs for Veterans in different stages of recovery from chemical dependency. VMHAP also provides mental health treatment for Veterans.

Intensive Day Treatment Program- This program offers comprehensive and integrated rehabilitation to Veterans seeking recovery from mental illness and substance use disorder. This program will utilize, evidence-based therapeutic modalities to help Veterans build skills to achieve identified treatment goals and facilitate community integration.

Aftercare provides individual counseling and group work to clients who have completed the Substance Abuse focus Intensive Day Program or other substance abuse program.

Rogers House provides temporary housing up to 14 days to clients who are homeless and need a safe environment while engaging in the Intensive Day Program. Located in building 78 at the Bedford VA, Rogers House is available for Veterans enrolled in the Intensive Day Program.

Detoxification/Intensive Day Treatment Program/Rogers House-
Request screening:781-687-2354

Aftercare/Outpatient, relapse prevention and Over 50 Substance Use/Abuse Program
Request screening:781-687-2580

Recovery Management Track – An eight-week series of groups tailored to the client who wants to learn how to stop the pattern of relapse.
Services

- Group and individual treatment and education
- Family counseling and education
- Self-help groups
- Referrals and healthcare needs for female Veterans

Referrals as necessary for other needs

Substance Abuse Treatment

Detoxification/Intensive Day Treatment Program/Rogers House-
Request screening:
781-687-2354

Canines for Combat Veterans

Canine for Combat Veterans is a project of New England Assistance Dog Services (NEADS). NEADS provides extensive training for service dogs to assist Veterans with physical disabilities so that they can maintain their independence. Service dogs are trained to provide support including picking up items from the floor or counter top, turning lights on and off, pushing elevator buttons, pulling a wheelchair a short distance, and getting help for the disabled owner. NEADS dogs are granted public access rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Community Rowing, Inc. is a Paralympic Sports Club providing exciting and unique rowing programs dedicated to Veterans. The Harry Parker Boathouse is a fully accessible facility that allows able-bodied and those with disabilities to enjoy a healthy physical outlet that is both healing and therapeutic. A variety of programs for all levels are offered at no cost to Veterans.

www.communityrowing.org
Veterans and Adaptive Coordinator: 617-779-8277

Family Members of POW/MIA Service Members

Each military branch has a service casualty office to serve family members of POW or MIA service members. The Department of State also has a casualty office to serve family members of civilian defense employees. Military officials can explain how missing service members are accounted for and efforts being made to bring service members home. Casualty assistance officers act as liaisons to family members. If you are the family member a POW or MIA service member, visit Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel, http://www.dpaa.mil/

U.S. Air Force Missing Persons Branch
Phone: 1-800-531-5501
http://www.afpc.af.mil/library/airforcepowmias.asp

U.S. Army Human Resources Command Human Resources Contact Center
Phone: 1-800-276-9472
https://www.hrc.army.mil/

Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps
Morale, Welfare, Recreation and Business Operation Division (MR)
3044 Catlin Ave
Quantico, VA 22134
Phone: (703) 784-3806
https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MR

U.S. Navy
Navy POW/MIA Branch
Casualty Assistance Division (OPNAV N135C)
5720 Integrity Drive
Millington, TN 38055-6210
1 (800) 443-9298
http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/casualty/Pages/NavyPOW-MIA.aspx

National Education for Assistance Dog Services (NEADS)

Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Americans
P.O. Box 213
West Boylston, MA 01583
Phone: (978) 422-9064
Fax: (978) 422-3255
http://neads.org/assistance-dogs/service-dogs-Veterans

The Merrimack Valley Green Book has additional service dog resource information. For information on how to obtain the Green Book see page 8.

Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events

The VA (www.va.gov/adaptivesports) is working with www.footstomp.com to help spread the word about adaptive sports and recreation opportunities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. The site serves as an online platform for disabled Veterans and wounded warriors to learn about new sporting activities, interact with coaches and peers, and get involved in their communities.

Other Contacts for Support Groups

The following information was compiled by the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services.

American Legion
State House, Room 546-2
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2966
www.legion.org

American Legion Auxiliary
State House, Room 546-2
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2958
www.legion-aux.org

AMVETS
State House, Room 546-3
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2972
www.amvets-ma.org

Disabled American Veterans Department of Massachusetts
State House, Room 546
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2974
www.davma.org

Gold Star Mothers of Massachusetts
Email: devlinc@gis.net

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Greater Boston Chapter
Email: Star7551@aol.com
www.goldstarwives.org

Italian American War Veterans
State House, Room 545
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-8397
http://www.itamvets.org/massachusetts.html

Jewish War Veterans
State House, Room 547
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2963
www.jwv.org

Marine Corps League
State House, Room 545
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 720-0414
www.mcleague.org

Marine for Life
Phone: (617) 293-4102
Email: boston@m4l.usmc.mil
www.marineforlife.org

Mass Fallen Heroes
https://www.massfallenheroes.org/

Military Order of the Purple Heart
State House, Room 545
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 263-4654
www.purpleheart.org

New England Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America
1600 Providence Highway, Suite 101R
Walpole, MA 02081
Phone: (508) 660-1181
Email: info@nepva.org
www.nepva.org

New England Center for Homeless Veterans
Email: Andy.McCawley@nechv.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America Boston
VA Regional Office
J.F.K. Federal Building, Rm. 1575-C
Boston, MA 02203-0393
Phone: (617) 303-1395
www.pva.org

Persian Gulf Era Veterans
State House, Room 545
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 263-7438
Toll-free: 1-888-891-1117
www.rt1automile.com/web/mall/pgev/

Polish American Veterans
State House, Room 545
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2970
www.plav.org

Veterans of Foreign Wars
MA Department Headquarters
24 Beacon Street
Room 546-1 State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133
Phone: (617) 727-2613
www.vfwma.org

Vietnam Veterans of America
State House, Room 546-4
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 303-5687
Toll-free: 1-800-358-4340
www.baystatevet.com

Peer Services at Bedford VAMC are specifically designed to offer hope for recovery and role models for successful management of mental and chronic health issues. Peer Providers are Veterans with histories of persistent health issues who are actively engaged in their own recovery and wellness. They are trained to use their lived experience with recovery and the VA system to help other Veterans with similar health issues identify and achieve meaningful life roles.

Individual or group activities are coordinated with and complement other Bedford VA services. Peer services exist in inpatient programs, outpatient programs and the Primary Care Behavioral Health Clinic. Call for more information

Peer Services
781-687-3017
Bedford VAMC

Polytrauma, and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Support Group
Clinic Coordinator: 781-687-3525
Director of Rehabilitation Services: 781-687-3066

The Yellow Ribbon Fund
The Yellow Ribbon Fund is a nonprofit organization that was created in early 2005 to assist injured service members and their families while they recuperate at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center. The Yellow Ribbon Fund assists Veterans and their families during their stay at these medical centers by providing free car rentals, cab vouchers, hotel rooms, apartments, job mentoring and internship programs and free tickets to cultural and sporting events. For more information, contact:

Yellow Ribbon Fund, Inc.
4905 Del Ray Avenue
Suite 500
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: (240) 223-1180
Fax: (301) 654-7674
Email: email@YellowRibbonFund.org www.yellowribbonfund.org

VA Caregiver Support

The VA sponsors a variety of Caregiver Support Services and Tools to assist those who are providing care to a Veteran. Services include a toll free Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 and a web page at www.caregiver.va.gov, providing information on caring for your Veteran and for yourself. The website can also connect you with your local Caregiver Support Coordinator.

Veterans Access Livelihood and Opportunity and Recognition (VALOR) Act

On May 31, 2012, the Veterans Access, Livelihood, Opportunity and Recognition Act (the VALOR Act) became law (Chapter 108 of the Acts of 2012). Massachusetts is already a leader in providing outstanding benefits to its service members and Veterans. The VALOR Act expands upon those benefits by providing additional support for Veterans and their families in areas such as education; small business entrepreneurship; and workforce development. The Act also provides Massachusetts' criminal justice system with additional tools to address some of the underlying issues, such as PTSD, TBI and substance abuse that many Veterans suffer from when they return home and that may result in involvement with law enforcement and the courts.

Wounded Warrior Project

Support Groups: The Wounded Warrior Project provides a variety of types of assistance to Veterans and their families, including financial assistance, counseling, benefits information, employment assistance, and assistance transitioning to civilian life. For more information, contact:

The Wounded Warrior Project
4899 Belfort Road, Suite 300 Jacksonville, FL 32256
Phone: 877-TEAM-WWP (832-6997)

(904) 296-7350
www.woundedwarriorproject.org

Women Veterans

Women Veterans are eligible for the same VA Women's benefits as male Veterans. Comprehensive health services are available to women Veterans including primary care, specialty care, mental health care, residential treatment and reproductive health care services. VA provides management of acute and chronic illnesses, preventive care, contraceptive and gynecology services, menopause management, and cancer screenings, including pap smears and mammograms. Maternity care is covered in the Medical Benefits package. Women Veterans can receive maternity care from an OB/ GYN, family practitioner, or certified nurse midwife who provides pregnancy care. VA covers the costs of care for newborn children of women Veterans for seven days after birth. Infertility evaluation and limited treatments are also available. Women Veterans Program Managers are available at all VA facilities to assist women Veterans with their health care and benefits. For more information, visit www.womenshealth.va.gov or call the Women Veteran Call Center at (1-855-829-6636)

Women Veterans receive the same healthcare benefits as all Veterans and the VA provides a full range of healthcare services to both genders. In 1992 the Veterans Healthcare Act expanded the services available to women Veterans at many VA medical facilities. The VA now provides routine and specialty women's health care including preventative screenings, obstetrics and gynecological services, limited infertility treatment, and breast care. For more information about VA healthcare call 1-877-222-8387, or view the VA Health Care section of this guide.

Database of Women Veterans

Census and population surveys indicate that 26,818 women Veterans live in the Commonwealth. The Women Veterans' Network maintains a confidential database of women Veterans in Massachusetts. The database is used as a mailing list for the Network's biannual newsletter, which contains information on benefits, programs, and events for women Veterans.

To add your name to the Database of Women Veterans, please call, write, or email the Women Veterans' Network and request that your name be added. Information needed for addition:

- full name;
- mailing address;
- Branch of service and years of service (optional).

Honoring Women Veterans

The annual Women Are Veterans Too! Event, sponsored by the Women Veterans' Network, takes place at the State House during the week of Veterans' Day. The ceremony includes a presentation of the Outstanding Woman Veteran Award. The Network participates in other informational events throughout the year.

The Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM)

The Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) is the point of contact at VA Bedford for female identified Veterans to assist women to enroll in VA health care and educate them about the variety of hospital programs available at the facility and help them obtain, care tailored to their individual needs. The WVPM's office is in Building 78 3rd floor room 302G.

Women Veterans' Network

The Department of Veterans' Services, in acknowledging that women Veterans have needs and concerns not experienced by the male population, created the **Women Veterans' Network** in 1997. Its purpose is to find women who served in the military, some of whom may not be aware that they are Veterans and eligible for benefits. The Network is the central resource for women Veterans in Massachusetts. Its mission is to:

- Provide women Veterans with information on federal, state, and local benefits;
- Expand awareness of the needs of women Veterans and identify available health and human resources to meet those needs; and
- Advocate on behalf of women Veterans in Massachusetts.

The Women Veterans' Network of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services is a resource for women Veterans in Massachusetts. It has a database of 12,000 women Veterans who receive a biannual newsletter with information on benefits, programs, and events for women Veterans. To receive the newsletter, please use the contact below.

Women Veterans' Network Committee

Members of the Women Veterans' Network Committee include women Veterans from all eras, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs representatives, local Veterans' Service Officers, representatives of Veterans' services organizations, and active duty military personnel. The Committee meets bimonthly to share information and work on projects.

Women Veterans' Network 600
Washington St., 7th Floor Boston, MA
02111
Phone: (617) 210-5781
Fax: 617-210-5755
Email: DVSWomen@vet.state.ma.us

Women's Clinic at Bedford

Women's Clinic at Bedford is located on the 1st floor of Bldg 78, room 1159, is dedicated to addressing not only the general health needs of women but also unique gender specific care including: maternity, lactation care and support, hormone replacement therapy, contraception, breast and gynecological care, pap smear, bladder-related issues and infertility. Counseling and peer support are also available in the clinic for concerns related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST), interpersonal violence, LGBTQ, PTSD and many other common challenges facing Veterans. Clinic staff, who have additional training in women's healthcare, are dedicated to providing women with a safe, respectful and sensitive health care experience.