

1ST DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICER VA & R REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2022



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Did you know the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is distributing disability benefits to Vietnam Veterans who qualify for compensation under new liberalized rules for Agent Orange exposure?

According to Don Minter, a Certified Senior Advisor (CSA), based on specific signs, placing a veteran in an assisted living facility might be the appropriate choice based on a few key indicators. Below are indicators and signs that can help you make a decision regarding whether an assisted living facility is the right choice for your veteran-hero:

- Increased number of falls or significant risk of falls
- Wandering away from home and not being able to navigate back
- Wearing the same clothes on multiple consecutive days
- An unsafe, cluttered or unclean home
- Frequently forgetting to take medications
- Difficulty with at least one ADL, such as bathing, preparing meals or using the bathroom independently
- A need for nighttime supervision that cannot be met by an in-home caregiver
- Repeating questions and making multiple phone calls with the same question
- Not eating nutritious meals or drinking enough fluids
- Unsafe behavior, such as leaving the stove on or exterior doors open

Aid & Attendance (A&A) is a need-based benefit offered to eligible veterans by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Received in addition to a VA pension, this monthly stipend may be used to cover the cost of a long-term care or assisted living facility.

In order to be eligible for this benefit, a veteran must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- They are confined to a bed
- They are a resident of a long-term care facility
- They need assistance with ADLs
- They have severe vision impairment

Did you know it's common to forget or lose things sometimes, but if you're finding that your memory loss is getting in the way of your everyday life, you should discuss that with your health care team? Consider writing down problems when they happen and using Secure Messaging to describe any signs of dementia to your doctor. Your provider may run exams and tests to determine if changes in your memory and thinking are due to a type of dementia, normal aging, or another problem.

Did you know if you have PTSD from your military service, it could be possible to make a claim under the Veterans Act based on your mental health condition and its impact on your life? In severe cases, PTSD will affect a veteran's ability to work, have a social life and lead an active life. As such, PTSD can be considered a service-connected injury under the VA Act if it was caused by military service. This means that if you have PTSD as a result of military service, then it could be possible to make a compensation claim. The assistance of experienced Veterans Service Officer (VSO) or disability lawyer can potentially make the difference in making an accurate determination as to your eligibility for VA disability benefits.

Did you know if you have been diagnosed with arthritis in your knee joint, benefits may be awarded to cover the cost of knee surgery and rehabilitation? If you suffer from this disability, you may not be able to bend your knee past 90 degrees without experiencing pain and discomfort in the knee joint. An example of this type

of disability would be arthritis or osteoporosis, which could cause deterioration of cartilage tissue in your knee joint, causing it to become inflamed when bent. This condition can result in pain and swelling when you push off with your foot and extend your knee fully. Limitation of flexion may also cause problems when walking because it limits your ability to pivot at the knee joint.

Did you know hearing loss as part of your disability must interfere with at least one significant life activity, such as working, communicating with others, seeing, and following directions? When your hearing loss is caused by an injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, you may qualify for disability compensation through the VA. Also, if you have hearing loss due to age or noise-induced hearing loss, you may be eligible for compensation if: the VA finds that your hearing problem impacts how well you can hear; the VA doesn't find any other reason for your hearing problem; you've been treated for your hearing problem for more than one year, and your claim has been pending for at least 12 months. One should also remember that if the hearing loss does not interfere with any other major life activity, it will not qualify as a compensable condition under the VA statute. This is unless it has been documented by a qualified medical professional such as an audiologist or otologist who has recorded specific findings based on objective testing procedures such as audiograms.

Veterans applying for disability benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must provide evidence that their injury or sickness is related to their time served in the Armed Forces.

Buddy statements are a significant piece of documentation that can be acquired by veterans battling for service connection or a higher rating. Buddy statements, also known as buddy letters, are documents that can provide first-hand information on the occurrence that led to the disability, including the nature of the condition itself. When applying for VA disability benefits, a veteran may find that a strong statement from a buddy is essential.

Did you know Project 112/SHAD (Shipboard Hazard and Defense) is the name of the program for both shipboard and land-based biological and chemical testing conducted by the U.S. military between 1962 – 1973? VA will provide physical examinations to veterans who participated in the testing. Veterans will receive medical care free of charge for conditions related to exposure. Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation if they have a service-related disability and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

The PACT Act was approved by the Senate late Tuesday in an 86-11 vote, the culmination of a monthslong congressional effort to bring the legislation across the proverbial finish line. In his State of the Union Address in January, Biden vowed to help veterans with exposure-related illnesses, calling it a "sacred obligation." Following Senate approval of the bill, Biden released a statement saying passage was a "decisive and bipartisan win for America's veterans." "For the millions of veterans who may have been exposed to harmful toxins, this bill means quicker access to health care services and other benefits," Biden said. "This could be the difference between life and death for many suffering from toxic-related illnesses." Terri Tanielian, special assistant to the president for veterans' affairs, said Wednesday that the bill includes provisions and resources for the VA to process claims more quickly, including an automated system that will expedite claims filed for certain conditions. Currently, the VA has 595,862 claims filed by veterans that are pending; that includes 164,743 considered backlogged or pending for more than 125 days. The PACT Act is expected to add thousands of more claims, from former service members who were diagnosed with one or more of 23 illnesses listed in the new legislation as presumed to be related to airborne toxins. Those will range from Vietnam-era veterans with hypertension to monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance, to veterans exposed to Agent Orange who previously couldn't file a claim because they were assigned to locations that weren't identified as having stored or used toxic herbicides. But Tanielian said the department will be ready. "The department is planning to be able to lean in. They have been working on hiring more claims

processors and looking at additional ways to do more to automate claims. If they can [do that], the timeline will be much shorter," The bill could help roughly 3.5 million veterans access health care in the coming years. The PACT Act extends the period for post-9/11 combat veterans to enroll in VA health care from five years to 10 and also includes a one-year open enrollment for combat veterans who fall outside that time frame. It expedites claims for more than 20 specific conditions and removes a requirement that afflicted veterans and their survivors prove service connection for 11 specific respiratory conditions and several types of cancer, including reproductive cancers, melanoma, pancreatic cancer, kidney cancer and brain cancers. Survivors of veterans who died due to one of these conditions may now also be eligible for benefits, according to a White House press release. In addition to expanding benefits for post-9/11 veterans, the agreement announced Wednesday broadens coverage for Vietnam-era veterans exposed to Agent Orange. Specifically, it would add Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Atoll to the list of places where veterans were exposed to Agent Orange and so can get coverage.

Veterans are entitled to certain benefits the United States government provides. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a wide variety of programs to ensure that active duty service members, veterans and their families have access to health care, housing, and the chance to succeed in their civilian career and life. Many of the benefits open to veterans are financial. However, active duty service members and veterans who were honorably discharged may receive grants, loans, or other aid to further their education, help their business, or provide them with retirement income. Veterans with a service-connected disability may receive additional benefits to help ease their transition into civilian life. Veterans who have a disability can access VA health care as well and receive higher pension payments and grants that help make their home more accessible.



Please Remember..... That all gave some, *but many gave all!*