



# News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

## **Social Security Improves Service and Expands Outreach to Wounded Veterans**

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today highlighted the agency's efforts to improve service and reach out to wounded veterans. "On Sunday, we honor America's veterans whose love of country, willingness to serve and sacrifice ensures the many freedoms we enjoy today," Commissioner Astrue said. "While we can never fully repay them for their sacrifices, we can be sure we provide them with the quality of service and the respect they so richly deserve.",

Commissioner Astrue highlighted a number of activities Social Security has undertaken in the last several months to improve service and expand outreach to wounded veterans and their families. These include:

- Expedited processing of disability claims for men and women serving in the U.S. military who become disabled while on active duty. The expedited process is for military service members disabled on or after October 1, 2001, and is applicable regardless of where the disability occurs. Social Security also expedites survivors claims.
- Development of an easy-to-use website - [www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors) - that provides information about Social Security and military service. The website also includes a link to apply for disability benefits online.
- An agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the VA to electronically provide Social Security with the medical records of veterans applying for disability benefits. This agreement enables us to get medical records quicker and more efficiently and helps us expedite the disability determination.
- Assigning Social Security liaisons throughout the country to work closely with VA's Transition Patient Advocates (TPAs). Social Security's liaisons provide TPAs with Social Security information and ensure that the application for benefits is expedited.
- Instructions and extensive training for our disability examiners -- the people who make the medical decisions on our disability claims -- on how to properly identify and evaluate Traumatic Brain Injury, the signature injury of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

- A fact sheet that provides information about Social Security and military service and explains how to apply for Social Security benefits. The fact sheet has been distributed to all branches of the military service, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and other interested groups.
- An active presence at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Brooke Army Medical Center, Evans Army Medical Center and numerous other treatment facilities throughout the U.S. For example, Social Security employees are onsite every week at Walter Reed, Bethesda, Brooke and other facilities to take disability applications and ensure expeditious handling of the case.
- Coordinated efforts with organizations such as the Severely Injured Marines and Sailors and Wounded Warriors Project to address concerns and facilitate open communications regarding the processing of Social Security claims.

“The Social Security Administration is proud to have within its ranks many people who have honorably served -- or are presently serving -- their country in uniform,” Commissioner Astrue said. “Let me assure veterans and their families that the dedicated men and women of Social Security stand ready to help them in any way they can, and that we will continue to look for ways to improve our service to those who have given so much in defense of our freedom.”

To learn more about Social Security benefits for wounded veterans go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors). For general information about Social Security, visit our website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

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