

**Colorado
Incarcerated
Veterans
Guide**

FORWARD

This handbook can be an important tool. Review all of the programs thoroughly to understand the opportunities available. When these programs are used properly, the benefits will help minimize the outside pressures you may be confronted with if released i.e., social acceptance, economics, and re-establishment as a productive member of society.

This booklet is a tool for Veterans incarcerated and their families who wish access to services to support a new and better way of life. Be aware, this guidebook is designed to assist veterans incarcerated in the State of Colorado and their families. Laws do vary from state to state, therefore, check your state laws and regulations against this guide.

Agency staff names and addresses, phone numbers and website addresses change. If you attempt to contact one of the resources in this guidebook and it is not current, do your best to obtain the current information through phone information or a Google web search. To perpetuate the value of this document, we respectfully request that if you discover any incorrect, conflicting, or out-of-date information in this Guidebook please send the discrepancies, and updated information if you have it, to

HCHV Coordinator (116)
VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System
1055 Clermont Street
Denver, CO 80220

Acknowledgement

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SECTION I

USING THIS GUIDE AND SEEKING HELP

This guide has information for you to be aware of when working to develop a community transition plan and to keep as a reference after your release. The guide includes addresses, phone numbers, and websites that you can use after your release. Keep in mind that **this guide does not include all of the services available**. What is available in one area may be different from what is available in another, so be sure to check with local resources to learn about services in your area.

While you are incarcerated, your case manager is the person with whom you should discuss release planning. Classes may be offered so you can work on skills development and prepare for life after release. **You don't want to risk homelessness once you are released, so take advantage of the opportunities available to you.**

Begin thinking about what specifically you will need upon release. Ask yourself these kinds of questions. Will I need housing? Will I need medical, substance abuse, or mental health care? Do I need to learn a job skill? Do I have any other legal issues, such as child support? How do I restart my VA check or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Make a list of your needs. Remember that is just a tool to help you get organized.

A sample list might look like this:

- I need a place to live.
- I need a job.
- I need clothing to wear to work.
- I need to find out what benefits I can get as a veteran.
- I want to get addictions treatment.
- I owe child support.

Think about your list as you read through this guide. Who do you think can help you with each of these needs? Is there one organization that may be able to work with you on

many different things, or do you need to contact several agencies? Keep track of the steps you take, including the dates and names of people you contact for information or assistance. Although this guide provides *national and state* addresses for many organizations, we recommend you check your phone book for local, county, and state agencies or call 2-1-1.

2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects people with important community services and volunteer opportunities and helps people navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human service agencies and programs. 2-1-1 can help you locate health and human services in your community, including counseling, emergency shelter, food, job training, substance abuse counseling, child and elder care and more.

2-1-1 is free, confidential, bilingual (English and Spanish) and a comprehensive information and referral (I&R) service available to anyone who calls 2-1-1 or (303) 561-2111. 2-1-1 Call Center specialists respond to calls during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.), Monday through Friday. After-hours clients may leave a voice mail message. A call center specialist will return messages by close of business the next day.

Upon release, the Internet can also be helpful to find information about VA benefits and community resources in your area. This guide includes web addresses, when available. Visit the public library after release and use a computer with Internet access to visit the links in this guide. ***2-1-1 databases can be searched at www.unitedwaydenver.org.*** The 2-1-1 database is the definitive on-line resource where you can find specific resources by location i.e., you can search for transitional housing or shelter in Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Grand Junction etc.

SECTION II

HELP FOR VETERANS

This section includes resources that can help you get back on your feet. Remember to check the phone book or call 2-1-1 for local, county, and state agencies so that you know what services are available in the area to assist you. Some organizations may have waiting lists, require an interview, or have specific rules about whom they serve. It is best if you **start asking about services and requirements now**, so that you will be prepared when you are released. You may even ask if your name can be out on a waiting list when you get closer to your release date.

TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Crisis and other toll-free numbers are often listed in the front cover or first few pages of the phone book. You may also want to check under “Social Services” in the blue or yellow pages for hotlines and local numbers.

- **US Department of Veterans Affairs** – www.va.gov
 - ✓ Benefits: 1-800-827-1000,
 - ✓ Medical Centers: 1-877-222-8387,
 - ✓ Persian Gulf War Help line: 1-800-749-8387
- **Focus On Recovery Help line** – A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-888-9383
- **National AIDS Hotline** – Talk to someone who knows about HIV/AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 1-800-822-7422
- **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** – www.nchv.org, 1-800-838-4357
- **National Suicide Support Number** – 1-888-784-2433 (1-888-SUICIDE)
- **Agent Orange** - 1-800-749-8387, www.va.gov/AgentOrange

WHERE TO START

Check the local phone book, yellow/blue pages, under “Homeless” or “Social Service Organizations” or call 2-1-1, www.unitedwaydenver.org, for a list of many local organizations that offer different services, i.e., clothing, public transportation tokens, emergency shelter, and more. You may need to contact several agencies to find all the services you need. Services provided by *governmental* agencies are listed in the yellow/blue pages found near the front of the phone book. Check with your local county department of human services to find out what programs are available and what their guidelines are. We have included some guidance below, but your local organizations are your best resources. **Remember, it never hurts to ask!**

- **Every VA Medical Center has a Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinator** who is responsible for helping homeless veterans assess VA and community-based care to end homelessness among veterans. The HCHV program provides outreach, clinical assessment and referral for medical and mental health care, long-term transitional residential assistance, case management and employment assistance with linkages to permanent housing. To locate your nearest HCHV coordinator call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www1.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=21>.
- **Colorado Department of Military & Veterans Affairs** provides assistance with Veterans benefits & entitlements information, VA claims process, representation and advocacy, Veterans Homes for those in need of nursing care, and employment referrals through federal funded reintegration projects. Call 303-894-7474 or go to <http://www.dmva.state.co.us>.
- **National Coalition for the Homeless** has a directory of shelters and homeless assistance programs online. This does not list every program in the country, so be sure to check your phone book for local programs. The following are those listed for the State of Colorado:

Directory of Local Homeless Service Organizations

COLORADO SPRINGS

[New Hope Center \(formerly Red Cross Shelter\)](#)

709 S. Sierra Madre
Colorado Springs, CO
Phone: 719-578-9190

[Homes Of Refuge](#)

3958 North Academy Blvd; Suite 103
Colorado Springs, CO 80917
Phone: 719-597-8888
Email: homes@homesofrefuge.org

DENVER

[Denver Rescue Mission](#)

3501 E. 46th Avenue
Denver, CO 80216
Phone: 303-297-1815
Fax: -303-295-1566
Email: drmpubrel@aol.com

[Mercy Housing, Inc.](#)

Mercy Housing, Inc.
601 E. 18th Ave Suite 150
Denver, CO 80211
Phone: 303-830-3300
Fax: 303-830-3301
Email: mail@mercyhousing.org
URL: <http://www.mercyhousing.org>

[Samaritan House](#)

2301 Lawrence St.
Denver, CO 80205
Phone: 303-294-0241
Fax: 303-294-9523
E-mail: samhouse@usa.net

FORT COLLINS

Neighbor to Neighbor, Inc.

424 Pine Street, Suite #203
Fort Collins, CO 80524
Phone: (970) 484-7498
Fax: (970) 484-4572
Email Contact: DLind10118@aol.com

SAN LUIS VALLEY

La Puente Home

913 State St.
Alamosa, CO 81101
Phone: 719-589-5909
Email: lanceches@bbs.slv.org

Directory of Local Homeless & Housing Advocacy Coalitions

The following is a list of Homeless and Housing Advocacy Coalitions for the State of Colorado. Not all of these coalitions provide direct services, but they may be able to tell you about local programs or services.

- Housing Advocacy Coalition** – 2023 E. Bijou, Colorado Springs, CO, 80909, 719-634-0739
- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless** – 2111 Champa Street, Denver, CO 80205, 303-293-2217
- HomewardBound of the Grand Valley Inc.** - 2853 North Avenue, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501 • (970) 256-9424
- **Salvation Army** – provides services, including shelter and transitional housing, for homeless individuals and families. For local services and information contact: The Salvation Army, Intermountain Division - 1370 Pennsylvania Street, Denver, CO, 80203, 303-861-4833 (phone), www.salvationarmy.org/im
- **United Way** – provides informational and referral information for much of the state of Colorado. 2-1-1 is free, confidential, bilingual (English and Spanish) and a comprehensive information and referral (I&R) service available to anyone who calls 2-1-1 or (303) 561-2111, www.unitedwaydenver.org . 2-1-1 Call Center specialists respond to calls during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.), Monday through Friday. After-hours clients may leave a voice mail message. Messages will be returned by a call center specialist within the next business day.

- **Local churches and faith-based organizations**, such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and Volunteers of America, may have a variety of programs to assist you. Find these organizations by calling your county or city Department of Human Services. Check the blue pages of the phone book for the number.

HOUSING

It is important to know you have a place to go when released. The first step in returning to the community is finding a place to stay. This section includes ways to locate emergency shelter, transitional programs, and permanent housing assistance.

Transitional or temporary housing can serve as a step toward full independence upon your release. However, there are often waiting lists for housing assistance programs, so you ask about applying as soon as possible. If you are released and find yourself homeless, emergency assistance is available.

Emergency and Transitional Housing

To find out if there are homeless veteran service providers in your area, call 1-800-VET-HELP, write NCHV, 333½ Pennsylvania Ave., SE Washington, DC 20003-1148, or go to www.nchv.org

- **Grand Junction Community Homeless Shelter** – 2853 North Avenue, Grand Junction, CO, (970) 256-9424
- **Wayside Cross Gospel Rescue Mission** – 728 West 4th, Pueblo, CO. (719) 545-5744
- **New Genesis** - 1680 Sherman Street, Denver, CO. Telephone 303-831-4905
- **Samaritan House** – 2301 Lawrence Street, Denver, CO. Telephone 303-294-0241.
- **Crossroads (Salvation Army)** – 1901 29th Street (North End of the Broadway Bridge). Telephone: 303-298-1028.
- **Denver Rescue Mission (Jesus Saves)** – 1130 Park Avenue (Park Avenue and Lawrence Street) Denver, CO. Telephone 303-294-0157.
- **Bijou House** – 411 W. Bijou Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80905. Telephone: 719-635-5078.
- **Beacon Place** – 3636 Colfax, Denver, CO, 80204. Telephone: 303-629-1667

Look in the **yellow/blue pages** under “Social Service Organizations” for local shelters or organizations that may be able to help.

Look in the phone book **yellow/blue pages** under local, city, or county government Department of Social Service or “Human Service” or call the County Commissioner’s Office for information about local low-income housing coalitions or homeless advocacy groups who may know what is available.

To find a list of emergency shelters for men, women and families in every state, check the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** online at www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm

Long-term or Permanent Housing

Public housing waiting lists can be long, but the length of time can vary from place to place. Even if you are not sure where you want to live yet, apply to get on the waiting list so that you have as many options as possible. To learn how to apply, contact the local housing authority listed in the phone book blue pages under “Local Government, Public Housing Authority”.

FINDING & KEEPING A JOB

Finding a job may be difficult and can seem overwhelming, but it is possible and very important! When released, you may find that you are completely starting over. You should ask for job counseling and training while incarcerated so you are prepared to work when released. **Don’t wait** until you get out to start thinking about what you will do. **Start planning now!**

- **Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists** (<http://www.coworkforce.com/vet/lvers.asp>) exist to help veterans find and keep jobs. LVERs are located with the local WorkForce centers. DVOP specialists work to develop job and training opportunities for veterans with service-connected disabilities, linking veterans with employers and making sure follow-up services are provided. To find a LVER or DVOP near you, visit your state employment service office listed

in the phone book blue pages under “State Government, Employment Department” or their website.

- The City and County of Denver, Department of Human Services, provides employment and training services to homeless veterans to help them get back into the workforce through DOL-VETS funded **Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Projects (HVRP)**. HVRP assists veterans with job search preparation, vocational counseling, occupational skills training, on-the job training, trade skills certification and licensing, and job placement assistance and referral to supportive services. To find out if you may be eligible and how to access HVRP in Denver, CO contact 720-944-3500.
- The VA’s **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment** services helps veterans with service-connected disabilities by providing job training and counseling to those who have an employment handicap. Services include help finding a job, on-the-job training, job development, and vocational training. If you are not eligible for these services, a VA counselor may help you find other options, goals, or programs. Contact your VA Regional Office (VARO) at 1-800-827-1000, or go to www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/regional_offices.htm
- Through its’ **Veterans Industries and Compensated Work Therapy programs**, the VA offers structured work opportunities and supervised therapeutic housing for at-risk and homeless veterans with physical, mental health, and addictions problems. VA contracts with private industry and the public sector for work by these veterans, who learn job skills, re-learn successful work habits, and regain a sense of self-esteem. Veterans are paid for their work and given assistance with employment in the community. In Colorado, the VA currently has the veteran Industries Program located at the Colorado Springs CBOC and the Denver VA Medical Center. For further information go to www.va.gov/vetind.
- The state of Colorado has a **Vocational Rehabilitation** program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. Apply for these services immediately after your release. Look in the phone book blue pages under “Department of Social an Health Services (DSHS),” then “Vocational Rehabilitation,” or search the internet through www.unitedwaydenver.org

HEALTH

If eligible for veteran's benefits: We encourage you to apply to the VA Health Benefits System as soon as you are released. Every **VA Medical Center** has a **Health Care for Homeless Veterans Coordinator** who helps veterans and their families find resources inside and outside the VA Health Care system. Call 1-877-222-8387 to find the medical center or Community Based Outpatient Clinic nearest you.

VA Medical Centers

DENVER

1055 Clermont Street
Denver , CO 80220
(888) 336-8262
(303) 393-2861
(700) 322-2861

Has a Health Care for Homeless Veteran Coordinator

GRAND JUNCTION

2121 North Avenue
Grand Junction , CO 81501
(970) 242-0731, (970) 244-1303

Has a Health Care for Homeless Veteran Coordinator

VA Outpatient Clinics

AURORA

13001 East 17th Place Bldg. 500, 2nd Floor, West Wing
Aurora , CO 80045
(303) 724-0190, (303) 724-0828(fax)

COLORADO SPRINGS

25 North Spruce
Colorado Springs , CO 80905
(719) 327-5660
(800) 278-3883 Toll Free
(719) 327-5669(fax)

Has a Health Care for Homeless Veteran Coordinator

LA JUNTA

Arkansas Valley Regional Medical Center 1100 Carson Avenue, Suite 104
La Junta , CO 81050
(877) 329-2625
(719)383-5195
(719) 383-5181(fax)

LAKWOOD

155 Van Gordon Street Suite 395
Lakewood , CO 80225
(303) 914-2680, (303) 914-2682(fax)

LAMAR

High Plains Community Health Center
201 Kendall Drive
Lamar , CO 81052
(719) 336-5972
(866) 240-2279
(719)336-5980(fax)

PUEBLO

4112 Outlook Boulevard
Pueblo , CO 81008
(719) 553-1000
(800) 369-6748
(719)553-1104(fax)

If ineligible for veteran’s benefits, free or low-cost health care may be available from the following sources:

- **Department of Human Services (DHS)** can tell you where to find health care facilities for the homeless. Check the phone book blue pages under local, city, or county government for the number.
- **United Way** – provides informational and referral information for much of the state of Colorado. 2-1-1 is free, confidential, bilingual (English and Spanish) and a Comprehensive Information and Referral (I&R) service available to anyone who calls 2-1-1 or (303) 561-2111, www.unitedwaydenver.org . 2-1-1 Call Center specialists respond to calls during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.), Monday through Friday. After-hours clients may leave a voice mail message. Messages will be returned by a call center specialist within the next business day.
- **National Health Care for the Homeless Council** has a list of health care providers working with homeless people across the nation. For a list of providers in your state, go to www.nhchc.org.
- **Free Clinics** are run by many local organizations and communities. Look in the phone book blue pages under “Public Health” to contact local government offices for clinics in your area.

Special Health Information for Veterans:

- If you think you may be at risk for AIDS and HIV infection after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested, and seek counseling. Those at highest risk for AIDS and HIV infection are:
 - people who share needles or syringes to inject drugs or steroids;
 - men who have sex with other men;
 - those born to mothers who have HIV
 - people who receive blood transfusions before 1985;
 - anyone who has sex with anyone who is at risk for HIV/AIDS.

- Veterans, homeless, and incarcerated people are at high risk for **Hepatitis C** (HCV), a serious disease that can cause cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. If you think you are or may be at risk after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested and seek HCV counseling. You are at risk if:
 - you ever used a needle to inject drugs;
 - you had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992;
 - you were a health care worker and had a contact with blood;
 - you were on long-term kidney dialysis;
 - your mother had hepatitis C when she gave birth to you.

- The Veterans Health Administration also recommends testing if:
 - you are a Vietnam-era veteran;
 - you have had exposure to blood on your skin;
 - you have had multiple sex partners;
 - you have tattoos or body piercing;
 - you have ever snorted cocaine;
 - you have liver disease;
 - you have a history of drinking alcohol;
 - you have had an abnormal liver function test.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

If eligible for veterans' benefits:

Contact the Homeless Veterans Services Coordinator at the local VA Medical Center **or** Vet Center.

Boulder Vet Center

2336 Canyon Blvd., Suite 103

Boulder, CO 80302

Phone: (303)-440-7306

Fax: (303)-449-3907

Colorado Springs Vet Center

416 E. Colorado Avenue

Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Phone: (719)-471-9992

Fax: (719)-632-7571

Denver Vet Center

7465 East First Avenue, Suite B

Denver, CO 80230

Phone: (303)-326-0645

Fax: (303)-326-0715

If not eligible for veterans benefits, the following sources may be able to tell you where you can go to get help:

- The Department of Health and Human Services **Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Services** can refer *you* to local programs. Call 1-800-662-4357.
- **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill** lists community mental health services providers at: www.nami.org, or call 1-800-950-6264.
- **National Mental Health Association** offers support groups, rehabilitation, socialization, and housing services through 340 community organizations located across the country. Call 1-800-969-6642, or find a local office online at www.nmha.org.

FINANCIAL HELP

- The American Legion provides **Temporary Financial Assistance**, (TFA) from its national headquarters to help maintain a stable environment for children of veterans. To obtain an application, look in the phone book to contact a local post, or contact the National Headquarters to find the post nearest you.
- If you are unemployed or have little or no income or savings, you may be eligible for **food stamps**. Call the toll-free information number at 1-800-221-5689, or find a list of food stamp hotline for each state at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contact_info/hotlines.htm. You can also contact the local Department of Human Services - many have drop-in shelters, or legal aid services to ask for an application.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** benefits can be applied for before your release, even though you won't receive the benefits until after you are released. Food stamps can be applied for along with SSI. Normally, it takes about three months to review an application, so apply well before your release date. It is best to get help out the application. For detailed assistance, call 1-800-772-1213, or your local social security administration office listed in the phone book blue pages, or go to: <http://www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/>.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has a program called Emergency Food and Shelter Program to help prevent homelessness. Contact the local Office of the Mayor or United Way to ask who awards this money in your area and what the rules are.

LEGAL HELP

Veteran status issues:

- You should talk to a **Veterans Service Officer** for help with discharge upgrades, seeking benefits, and filling a VA claim (call 1-800-562-2308 for the nearest Service Officer).

Other legal issues:

- Most law is state-specific. Most common legal problems are governed by the law in the state where you live or where the problem occurred. When looking for legal help, make sure the information you find applies to your state, or the lawyer or other service provider is qualified to work in your state.

- The **American Bar Association** has a web site with guidance about free legal services and links to directories of legal aid offices and pro-bono programs. Go to: www.abanet.org
- **Legal Services or Legal Aid Offices** have staff lawyers to provide free legal help to the poor clients. The lawyers are usually experts in the types of problems that poor clients often have. Look in the yellow pages for a local Legal Aid Office or check on-line for the program nearest you.
- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance** has an online list of organizations across the nation that provides free legal help to clients who qualify. Go to www.ptla.org/links/services.htm.
- Lawyers in private practice sometimes volunteer in “pro-bono” programs to take cases for poor clients free of charge. Check the yellow pages to contact you **Local Bar Association** to learn if there is a pro-bono program in your community, or go to www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html.

WOMEN VETERANS

- Most VA **Medical Center** and readjustment offices have a designated Women Veterans Coordinators to assist women veterans in accessing VA benefit program and healthcare services. Call 1-877-222-8387, to find the medical center nearest to you.
- In Colorado a woman can contact the Denver VA Medical Center 303-399-8020 ext.2467, Colorado Springs 719-471-9992, Grand Junction 970-242-0731, Boulder 303-440-7306, Fitzsimmons (Aurora) 303-724-0190, Pueblo 719-384-3100.

SECTION III

SEEKING FEDERAL BENEFITS

The Department of Veterans Affairs publishes a booklet called “**Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents**” that describes the types of benefits available and lists the addresses and phone numbers for VA facilities nationwide. Write the VA Regional Office (VARO) to request a copy.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Regional Office Denver

VA Regional Office
155 Van Gordon St.
Lakewood CO 80228
COMM 800 827-1000
FAX 303 914.5879

mail to:

VA Regional Office
Box 25126
Denver CO 80225

Call 1-800-827-1000 or find information about benefits at www.vba.va.gov.

ELIGIBILITY FOR VA BENEFITS DURING INCARCERATION

Veterans incarcerated and incarcerated dependents may apply for the same compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) – service connected death benefits – and pension benefits as veterans who are not incarcerated. However, Congress has greatly restricted the amount of benefits that may be paid to a veteran or dependent while he or she is incarcerated. These benefits are institutionalized as part of law: 38 U.S.C. Sec. 5313 (a) 38 C.F.R. Sec. 3665 (a), (d), which reads as follows:

If a veteran is incarcerated as the result of a “felony” conviction as defined by law: “Any offense punishable by death or imprisonment for a term exceeding one

year, unless specifically categorized as a misdemeanor under the law of the prosecuting jurisdiction,”

Then, the amount paid to a veteran for a service-connected disability is generally limited by law to the 10 percent disability rate, or half the amount of the 10 percent rate if the veteran’s disability rating is 10 percent. (If the veteran is rated before incarceration as 20 percent disabled or higher, he will receive only the amount payable to a 10 percent disabled veteran.) Incarcerated DIC recipients will receive one-half the amount paid to a veteran receiving compensation payments for a 10 percent-rated disability.

A veteran may not receive non-service connected VA pension benefits, or any portion of these benefits, while incarcerated for a felony. However, his family may receive an apportionment of such benefits under the procedure described above. (See C.F.R. Sec. 3.666)

One important requirement for eligibility for VA benefits is that the veteran has to have been issued either an honorable or general discharge, or would have received one if not for reenlisting. If a veteran had two periods of service, one honorable and the other less than honorable, he may still be eligible for VA benefits based on the honorable period of service.

VA Medical Care is not provided to veterans in prison, but VA health facilities may provide care to you after release. Contact 1-877-222-8387 to find the nearest medical center to you.

BENEFIT PAYMENTS WHILE INCARCERATED

There is a 60-day “grace period” following a conviction when you may still receive full benefits. **To avoid an overpayment**, it is important that you notify the VARO immediately upon incarceration if you are receiving payments. If you do not notify the VA and receive overpayment, you and your family will lose financial payments until the debt is paid.

*For example, Joe is a veteran who receives a VA pension of \$807 per month. He commits a crime and is incarcerated, but doesn't tell the VA right away and keeps getting paid for six months. **Joe is overpaid a total of \$4,872.** After serving his sentence of 18 months, he is released and applies to the VA to have his pension restarted. The new pension rate is \$830 per month, but the VA will use that amount to start repaying the \$4,872 debt. **Joe's first real check will start 5 months after he is released and will be \$30!** Joe has got at least 5 months without that income.*

Your award for compensation or pension should resume from the date you are released, as long as the VA receives notice of release within one year. This includes placement in a community treatment center or halfway house. **Remember, you must notify the VA when you are released to restart your payments.**

APPORTIONMENT

Although legally, the veteran can only receive a portion of the full amount for his or her disability rating, the remaining balance may be “apportioned to the individual's dependent family”. To apply for apportionment, send a letter to the VA Regional Office (VARO) that has jurisdiction over the veteran's case. VA regulations clearly specify this apportionment amount will only go to family members if they can show financial need for such amount. This applies to the spouse, children, or dependent parents who are involved in the application.

In deciding whether an apportionment is appropriate, the amount of the apportionment, and to whom it will go, the following factors are considered:

- The family member's income and living expenses;
- The amount of compensation available to be apportioned;
- The needs and living expenses of other family members; and
- Special needs of any of the family members.

For example: a veteran rated 80 percent disability can only receive the amount he or she would get if he or she were 10 percent disabled. However, his or her family may be apportioned up to 70 percent, the difference of the 80 percent rating. (DIC may also be apportioned with similar restrictions).

There is a 60-day “**grace period**” following conviction where the veteran, or DIC recipient, may still receive benefits. If the veteran continues to receive benefits after the 60-day period, it will result in an “over-payment”. The VA considers it to be the recipient's responsibility and fault if this occurs because the recipient failed to notify the VA of his or her incarceration. Attempts to obtain a waiver in these situations of overpayment are often unsuccessful. As a rule, the veteran loses most, if not all, financial benefits until the entire overpayment is recovered by the VA. It has also been a standard procedure that the family will not be entitled to receive an apportionment until the debt is completely recovered.

For more information concerning VA debt collection rules that may affect the veteran incarcerated, telephone: 1-800-827-1000 and request a Veterans Service Organization representative or, write to a Veterans Service Organization (attention SR list).

It is important that each disabled veteran receiving compensation or DIC payments promptly notify VARO (Veterans Administration Regional Office). Regular full benefit payments should begin upon release, providing the VA is notified of the veteran's release within one year.

One other relevant restriction on veteran's incarcerated eligibility for service connected disability compensation is that "No total disability rating based on un-employability, may be assigned to an incarcerated veteran".

It is important to remember that most VA decisions, including those on apportionment, can be appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals and, if need be, to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Affairs.

HELP SEEKING BENEFITS

If you would like to get benefits or think you have a pending claim before the VA, it is best to get professional help to assist you.

Many Veterans Service Organizations have trained staff who can help you with your VA claim, and legally represent your claim before the VA. Some also help homeless and at-risk veterans find the support services they need. You can contact any VSO listed below to see if there is a service representative near you.

National & Department Service Officers are located at the VARO-Denver unless otherwise noted.

American Legion	155 Van Gordon St.	Denver, CO 80225	P 303-914-5585 F 303-914-5588
American Legion of Colorado	7465 E. First St., Suite D	Denver, CO 80230	P 303-477-1655 F 303-477-2950
Blinded Veterans Association Denver VA Medical Center	2575 S. Gilpin	Denver, CO 80210	P 303-744-8905 F 303-399-8020
Disabled American Veterans National Service Office	155 Van Gordon St., VARO	Denver, CO 80225	P 303-914-5570 F 303-914-5584
Military Order of the Purple Heart Department of Veterans Affairs	789 Sherman St., Suite 460	Denver, CO 80203	P 303-894-7474 F 303-894-7442
Non Commissioned Officers Association National Headquarters	10635 IH 35 North	San Antonio, TX 78233	P 210-653-6161 F 210-637-3338
Paralyzed Veterans of America Mountain States Chapter	1101 Syracuse St.	Denver, CO 80220	P 303-322-4402 F 303-321-6123
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. Veterans of Foreign Wars	155 Van Gordon St., VARO Room 360	Denver, CO 80225	P 303-914-5595 F 303-914-5598
Vietnam Veterans of America Division of Veterans Affairs	789 Sherman St., Suite 260	Denver, CO 80203	P 303-894-7474 F 303-894-7442
Vietnam Veterans State Council Presidents Vietnam Veterans of America Colorado State Council	P.O. Box 3622	Grand Junction, CO 81502-3622	P 970-434-0410 F 970-523-5630

Although we encourage you to seek the aid of a service representative, you may choose to apply for VA benefits on your own. Write the VARO or find the forms online at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/> . You can also apply for certain benefits online at: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp> .

Below are brief descriptions of forms needed to file for certain VA benefits. Be sure you use a return address when mail will get to you as quickly as possible. Make photocopies of all forms for your records before sending your packet to the VARO nearest you.

- **Standard Form-180 – Request Pertaining to Military Records** – is used to get copies of your Record of Discharge (DD-214), military personnel and medical records. You will need a copy of your DD-214 when applying for benefits. Request may also be completed online at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>.
- **VA Form 21-526 – Application for Compensation or Pension** – must be filed to apply for compensation or pension. This form, along with your DD-214 and the following forms should be mailed directly to the VARO nearest your release destination 30 to 45 days before your release.
- **VA Form 21-4138 – Statement in Support of Claim** – lets you explain why you deserve the benefits you are asking for because of your disability or disorder. It is best to have an experienced service representative help you complete the form.
- **VA Form 21-4142 – Authorization for Release of Information** – If you have received medical or mental health care, that may be relevant to your claim, from any one other than a VA Medical Facility, you need to fill out a **VAF 21-4142** giving permission for release of medical records to the VA.
- **VA Form 10-10EZ – Enrollment for Medical Benefits** – is used by the VA to determine if you can receive medical benefits. Complete the form and bring it with you to the VA medical facility where you will seek evaluation and treatment.
- **VA Form 28-1900 – Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans** – is needed to apply for the vocational rehabilitation program to help veterans who were disabled during the service reach maximum independence in daily living, to learn the skills needed to get a job, and to find and keep a job. Send form 28-1900 to the VARO in your area 10 to 15 day's before your release.
- **VA Form 70-3288 – Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records** – is used to get records relevant to your claim from VA facilities (regional offices, medical centers, outpatient clinics, and vet centers). Request a fee waiver under section 38 C.F.R. Sec. 1.526 (h), which requires the VARO to provide a veteran with one set of his or her records free of charge.

CHECKLIST

Using This Guide

- Make a list of your needs and who may be able to help you.
- While incarcerated, ask your case manager about classes/resources to help plan for your release.
- Write down the steps you take so that you do not repeat them.

Just for Veterans

- Know where to call toll-free for help.
- Think about your housing needs and gather information about what is available locally.
- Learn about job resources and create a plan to find a job.
- Learn about health issues, and what services are available.
- Learn about resources available for substance abuse and mental health treatment in your area.
- Learn about your options to get financial help.
- Learn about homeless veterans services.
- Learn about resources for women veterans.
- If you are not currently receiving benefits, find out if you can or should be.
- If you are receiving VA benefits, notify the VA when you go to prison to avoid an overpayment.
- Contact a veteran service representative to represent you and help you file a claim.
- Apply for apportionment so that some of the money withheld may be given to eligible family members.

RESOURCE ADDRESSES/SITES

US Dept of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) www.va.gov/

Veterans Health Administration – VISN 19 <http://www.va.gov/visn19/>

Colorado Dept of Military and Veterans Affairs <http://www.nasdva.com/colorado.html>

The American Legion – Colorado - <http://www.coloradolegion.org/>

Colorado Veteran’s Services - <http://www.coworkforce.com/vet/default.asp>

Disabled American Veterans –Colorado Chapters –
<http://www.geocities.com/pentagon/quarters/4415>
<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/8684/>

Social Security Administration www.ssa.gov/

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans www.nchv.org/index.cfm

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment <http://www.coworkforce.com/>

United States Department of labor <http://www.dol.gov/>

LVER/DVOP Web site - <http://www.coworkforce.com/vet/lvers.asp>