

Center for Women Veterans

25 Frequently Asked Questions from Women Veterans

The most frequently asked questions from women veterans, along with the answers, can now be found on the Center's website www1.va.gov/womenvet/. "These 25 questions are the ones we hear most often," said the Director of the Center for Women Veterans. "Too many women veterans don't know that they are eligible for the full range of VA benefits. Too many are unaware of special programs for them." The Director of the Center for Women Veterans notes that the information will be helpful to male veterans as well. Topics include services available to women veterans; information about gender-specific services (including Pap smears, mammography, and prenatal and child care), evaluations for nursing home care, and employment options for women veterans.

General Information

1. What services are available to women veterans?

A full continuum of comprehensive medical services including health promotion and disease prevention, primary care, women's gender-specific health care; e.g., hormone replacement therapy, breast and gynecological care, maternity and limited infertility (excluding in-vitro fertilization), acute medical/surgical, telephone triage, emergency and substance abuse treatment, mental health, domiciliary, rehabilitation and long term care. VA researchers at many VA facilities also conduct medical research on women's health.

2. How do I access the system for health and benefits services?

Veterans can apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ, "Application for Health Benefits." The 10-10EZ may be obtained by visiting, calling or writing any VA health care facility or veterans' benefits office. You can also call the VA Health Benefits Call Center toll-free at 1-877-222 VETS (1-877-222-8387) to determine your eligibility or access the form from the Health Administration Eligibility Reform website: www.va.gov/elig.

For VA benefits, refer to Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents at www.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm. This booklet, which may be downloaded, discusses the variety of Federal benefits available to veterans and their dependents, such as:

- Compensation and Pension
- Montgomery GI Bill (Education)
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment
- Veterans Group Life Insurance, and

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- Home Loan Guaranty

Additional information and application forms can be obtained at VA's website: www.va.gov .

The Veterans Online Application (VONAPP) <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>, allows you to complete and submit application forms on-line.

You may also call the VA nationwide toll-free number, 1-800-827-1000, for specific benefit information.

3. Are VA services authorized for women veterans who were involuntarily discharged from the military for pregnancy prior to May 1974? If not, how does one get this issue addressed?

The provision of health care services to veterans is established by certain eligibility criteria and discharge status requirements. To determine your eligibility for services, contact your nearest VA health care facility.

Women veterans involuntarily discharged may also be eligible for compensation and pension, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, and burial benefits. Children born to veterans who served in Vietnam may also be eligible for monthly monetary benefits, medical care, and vocational training if they have certain birth defects linked to their mother's service. Contact the nearest VA Regional Office on the nationwide toll-free number, 1-800-827-1000, for benefit information and eligibility requirements, or visit VA's homepage at www.va.gov.

Veterans Health Services

4. How can I receive gender-specific services, including Pap smears, mammography, prenatal and childcare?

Apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ which may be obtained by visiting, calling, or writing any VA health care facility or veterans' benefits office. You can also call toll-free 1-877-222 VETS (1-877-222-8387) or access the form on the Internet at www.va.gov. The provision of health care to non-veteran children is limited to those instances where specific authority is given to VA by law. Contact your local VA health care facility and ask to speak with the Women Veterans Program Manager (white pages of the telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs).

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5. How can I obtain emergency assistance with payment of my delinquent utility bills, rent, mortgage, etc.?

Your state Department of Veterans Affairs can best assist veterans in this situation. You can find the number of your state's Department of Veterans Affairs in the blue or white pages of your local telephone directory. Also, local veterans service organizations, churches, and community organizations may be able to assist veterans in need.

6. How do I get a clinic appointment when the waiting list is six months for an initial appointment?

If you experience an urgent or emergent medical condition, you can contact your local VA health care facility telephone care program or visit their walk-in (urgent care) clinic or emergency room. Non-acute problems will be scheduled on a next-available appointment basis.

7. Where can I get inpatient psychiatric care as a woman veteran?

Most VA Medical Centers have inpatient mental health programs. Contact your VA Primary Care Provider or the local Mental Health Program office for assistance. If you already have a therapist and need inpatient care, please discuss your concerns with your therapist.

If you have urgent or emergent needs, you can contact your local VA health care facility telephone care program or urgent care clinic.

8. Where can I get Military Sexual Trauma treatment?

You may enroll and receive counseling and treatment for any emotional or physical condition experienced as a result of sexual trauma experienced while on active duty at any VA health care facility or Vet Center in the continental United States without regard for your service-connected rating or length of military service.

The Women's Trauma Recovery Program (WTRP), located at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, is a 60-day residential posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and military sexual trauma (MST) treatment program for women veterans. The WTRP is part of the National Center for PTSD and serves women who are coping with the aftermath of all eras and is open to women from across the country. Additional information about this program can be found at www.womenvetsPTSD.va.gov.

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9. Where are the special PTSD treatment centers?

Women Veteran Stress Disorder Treatment Programs have been established at the following VA sites:

- Bay Pines, FL
- Boston, MA
- Cincinnati, OH
- Palo Alto, CA

10. How do I get evaluated for nursing home care?

If you have never been seen at a VA health care facility, you must first enroll for benefits. Then you must enroll in a primary care clinic and ask for an evaluation for nursing home care. The evaluation will be done either by the primary care provider or a geriatrics care team.

11. What is the process of getting quality of care issues addressed?

Contact the Women Veterans Program Manager at your local VA health care facility (white pages under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs).

Veterans Benefits

12. How do I get my disability compensation claim reevaluated?

You may request a reevaluation of your claim anytime that you believe your condition has changed or worsened. Submit the request to reopen or reevaluate your claim to the VA Regional Office by either letter or statement or on VA Form 21-4138, "Statement in Support of Claim,"

www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/21-4138.pdf. Your request should include the following information:

- Name
- VA claim number, Service Number, or Social Security Number
- Day and evening contact information
- Current address
- Statement explaining change requested
- Any new and pertinent medical evidence that supports your request

A Women Veterans Coordinator is available at each VA regional office to assist women veterans.

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13. How and where do I apply for home, business, or car loans?

VA Home Loan Guaranty Program provides loan guaranties to service members, veterans, reservists, and un-remarried surviving spouses for the purchase of homes, condominiums and manufactured homes, and for refinancing loans. Some of the ways a VA loan guaranty can be used include:

- Buy a home
- Buy a residential condominium
- Build a home
- Repair, alter, or improve a home
- Refinance an existing loan
- Buy a manufactured home with or without a lot

You must complete VA Form 26-1880, "Request for a Certificate of Eligibility for VA Home Loan Benefits, <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/26-1880.pdf> and submit it to one of the VA Eligibility Centers along with acceptable proof of service as described on the instruction page of the form.

The Center for Veteran Enterprise partners with the Department of Labor and the Small Business Administration to provide information, assistance, and mentoring for veterans who would like to start their own business. See www.vetbiz.va.gov/ for additional information.

VA does not provide assistance for automobile purchases except for certain veterans and service members who need special adaptive equipment. To apply, contact a VA regional office (1-800-827-1000) or a VA medical center.

14. I have been out of the military for more than 10 years. How do I get an extension to my GI Bill educational benefits?

Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30) Benefits end 10 years from the date of your last discharge or release from active duty. If your benefits expire mid-term, your benefits are extended to the end of the term or semester. (Example: Your benefits expire in November but the course ends in December. You will be paid for December.)

The delimiting date can be extended past your 10-year period if you were prevented from attending classes due to:

- A severe disability, or

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- You were held against your will by a foreign government or power.

The delimiting date is only extended by the amount of time you were prevented from attending classes.

VA can also extend your 10-year period if you reenter active duty for 90 days or more after becoming eligible. The extension ends 10 years from the date of separation from the later period. Periods of active duty of less than 90 days can qualify you for extensions only if you were separated for:

- A service-connected disability,
- A medical condition existing before active duty,
- Hardship, or
- A reduction in force.

If your benefit eligibility is based on two years of active duty and four years in the Selected Reserve, you have 10 years from your release from active duty, or 10 years from the completion of the four-year Selected Reserve obligation to use your benefits, whichever is later. For more information, you may visit www.gibill.va.gov.

Homeless Services

15. How do I contact a coordinator for options for women veterans who are homeless with children?

Contact the local VA homeless coordinator (or point of contact), Social Work Services department, or Women Veterans Program Manager at your local VAMC. There are homeless women veteran and homeless women veterans with children pilot programs located at 11 designated VA facilities as well, and the Women Veterans Program Manager can discuss what options are available in your area.

Burial Benefits

16. Am I eligible for burial at Arlington National Cemetery? What are my options?

Arlington National Cemetery is just one of the nearly 200 national or state veterans cemeteries across the country. Eligibility at Arlington is restrictive. For information, call 703-607-8000 and select (press) 4 or visit <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org/>.

Burial in other national cemeteries is available for veterans, spouses and dependent children. Generally all that is required is some active duty

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service, other than Reserve active duty for training, with a discharge other than dishonorable. Retired Reserve and National Guard members and some others are eligible. State cemeteries may also require residency. For more information visit <http://www.cem.va.gov> or call 1-800-827-1000 and select (press) 0 twice to speak to a counselor.

Locating Military Records

17. How do I locate my military records or those of a relative?

To obtain copies of your military records and/or “Report of Separation from Active Military Service” (DD Form 214 or equivalent), you must submit a “Request Pertaining to Military Records” (SF 180) to the records custodian of your branch of service. Addresses for each service’s records custodian are found on page 2 of the SF 180. The SF 180 requires a signature and must be submitted either by mail or fax. Contact the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100, or fax requests to (314) 801-9195. The web site is www.archives.gov/research_room/vetreecs/index.html

Locating Other Veterans

18. How do I locate a buddy whom I served with in the military?

The Privacy Act obliges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as a Federal agency, to protect the privacy of veterans’ personal information. Therefore, VA cannot release personal information about a veteran in its records system without that person’s permission. VA can, however, forward a message from you to the veteran, providing VA has a current address on record.

Write your message to your friend and place it in an unsealed, stamped envelope. Include a note to VA explaining who it is that you are trying to reach and add as much identifying information as you have. Put all of this in another envelope and address it to the nearest VA Regional Office.

If the veteran is in VA records, your message to the veteran will be sealed and the envelope will be sent to the address on file for the veteran. It is then up to the veteran to contact you. This process is designed to protect the privacy of veterans as required by law. If you have questions, you may call VA at 1-800-827-1000.

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You may also contact the Women In Military Service for America Memorial (WIMSA) located at the ceremonial entrance of Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA, at www.womensmemorial.org or by telephone at 1-800-222-2294.

National Guard and Reserves

19. Where can I find information regarding benefits and services for National Guard and Reserves?

Current and former members of the Selected Reserve who served on active duty may establish veteran status and may therefore be eligible for VA benefits, depending on the length of active military service and the character of discharge or release. Members of the National Guard activated for federal service during a period of war or domestic emergency may be eligible for certain VA benefits, such as VA health care, compensation for injuries or conditions connected to that service and burial benefits. Activation for other than federal service does not qualify Guard members for all VA benefits.

Operation Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom Veterans: VA provides two years of free health care for veterans who served in certain combat locations during active military service, beginning on the date of separation from active duty. This benefit covers all illnesses and injuries except those clearly unrelated to active military service. For more information call 1-877-222-8387. A Summary of VA Benefits for National Guard and Reserve Personnel is available online at: www1.va.gov/environagents/docs/SVABENEFITS.pdf.

Polytrauma care is available for veterans who sustained an injury to the brain in addition to other body parts or systems resulting in physical, cognitive, psychological, or psychosocial impairment and functional disability. The polytrauma system of care consists of four levels: Level I (comprehensive care), Level II (specialized care), Level III (follow-up care), and Level IV (lifelong care). To coordinate care, consult with a VA primary care physician or a Women Veterans Program Manager at the local VA medical center.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was established to meet the needs of separating service members during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services. The law creating TAP established a partnership among the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Transportation and the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), to give employment and training

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information to armed forces members within 180 days of separation or retirement. TAP helps service members and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace with less difficulty and at less overall cost to the government. TAP consists of comprehensive three-day workshops at selected military installations nationwide. Professionally-trained workshop facilitators from the State Employment Services, military family support services, Department of Labor contractors, or VETS' staff present the workshops. For more information about U.S. Department of Labor employment and training programs for veterans, contact the VETS office nearest you, listed in the phone book in the United States Government under the Labor Department or visit the website at: www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm.

Employment

20. How do I access employment options for women veterans?

Some job websites for veterans include the following:

- Department of Veterans Affairs – Office of Human Resources Management:
www1.va.gov/ohrm
- Department of Labor veterans site:
www.dol.gov/dol/topic/hiring/veterans.htm
- Office of Personnel Management:
www.usajobs.opm.gov
- America's Job Bank:
www.ajb.org

You may also wish to research job opportunities through:

- VA National Employment Office website: www.va.gov/jobs and
- Generic: www.monster.com

Women Veterans Research

21. Where do I find research studies and surveys on women v-terans?

The Office of Research and Development at VA Central Office oversees research within the Veterans Health Administration through its four service areas:

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The [Medical Research Service](#) provides knowledge of the fundamental biological processes to form an understanding of disease pathology, diagnosis, and treatment.

The [Cooperative Studies Program](#) applies the knowledge gained from medical research to patients by determining the effectiveness of novel or unproved therapies using multi-center clinical intervention trials.

The [Health Services Research and Development Service](#) (HSR&D) contributes to improving the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and accessibility of health care services for veterans.

The [Rehabilitation Research and Development Service](#) addresses the minimization of disability and restoration of function in veterans disabled by trauma or disease. Some important VA research websites to know are:

Website for the HSR&D: www.hsrd.research.va.gov/.

For HSR&D studies: http://www.va.gov/resdev/programs/womens_health/

Focusing on women veterans research:

www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/page.cfm?pg=26

www.va.gov/womenvet/

www.sf.med.va.gov/womens.htm

22. How and where do I find historical information on women veterans?

Contact the Women In Military Service For America Memorial (WIMSA) located at the gates of Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA, through their website, www.womensmemorial.org.

23. How do I locate statistics on women veterans by state and nationally?

VA provides statistics and demographic information on various veteran populations at the following website: www.va.gov/vetdata/index.htm under Program Statistics, Table 2. Additional statistics by state can be found on the same website under Demographics, VetPop, National and State.

24. Where do I locate legislation on women's and related issues?

You may access legislative information and follow up on Congressional bills through the Thomas website <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

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25. How do I get the names of local veterans in my area to interview for a school project?

Veterans Service Organizations are available in most communities. Telephone book yellow pages will list local veteran groups under "Veterans" or "Veteran Service Organizations." Examples of organizations include AMVETS (American Veteran), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), The American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW).

WIMSA can also help arrange for members to either speak at civic or educational events or to be interviewed about the Women's Memorial, a specific era, or women in the military. Contact the Public Relations Department, at 1-(800) 222-2294 or (703) 533-1155.

WIMSA also has volunteer opportunities if you are interested in speaking about the Women's Memorial, a specific era, or women in the military. Contact the Public Relations and Education Department at www.womensmemorial.org