

VA Office of Survivors Assistance

Helping Survivors in a Time of Transition

The death of a loved one is a life changing event, and the VA Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA) is ready and available to assist survivors in making the necessary transitions during what is most often a difficult time.

"Taking care of survivors is as essential as taking care of our Veterans and military personnel," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "By taking care of survivors, we are honoring a commitment made to our Veterans and military members."

OSA was established in October 2008, designed to serve as a primary resource for information on benefits and services furnished to Veterans' survivors by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). OSA also serves as a principal advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and promotes the use of VA benefits, programs, and services to survivors through outreach.

OSA monitors VA's delivery of benefits to survivors, makes appropriate referrals to VA offices for survivors seeking benefits, and explores innovative ways of reaching survivors who are not receiving VA benefits for which they are eligible. These benefits can include education assistance, home loan guaranties, health care insurance, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). OSA spearheaded updates to the benefits book by clarifying the language regarding bereavement counseling for survivors, which will ultimately make counseling more accessible for all survivors.

"We are your advocate to ensure fairness, equity, and appropriateness of all survivor benefits and to serve as the liaison for inter- and intra-agency collaboration and coordination on survivor issues," said OSA Director Debra A. Walker. "We are also fully committed to staying in step with the needs of survivors to advocate for the survivor community."

To fulfill its mission, the Office of Survivors Assistance has been working closely with senior VA leadership to provide the most up-to-date information on the unique issues faced by the survivor community. OSA gleans much of its information through direct interaction with the survivors themselves. The steady and constant feedback informs many decisions at OSA.

On many occasions, OSA is called upon to assist with an individual's claim. While the thrust of OSA operations is to serve in a policy capacity, OSA staff know that every VA employee has the responsibility and privilege to provide the excellent customer service that our clients so deserve. On any given day, OSA staff may be found working the issues of individual survivors who have contacted OSA directly.

OSA has established multiple partnerships with Department of Defense agencies and Veterans Service Organizations to explore new ways to ease the transition of survivors into the VA system. They also maintain a website to help survivors navigate through resources that may be available to them. ✱



Benefits survivors may be entitled to:

- Burial
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Parents' DIC
- Death Pension
- Aid and Attendance/Homebound
- Education and Training
- Fry Scholarship
- Home Loan Guaranty
- Health Care
- Life Insurance Benefits
- Education Program Refund
- Civil Service Preference
- Commissary and Exchange Privileges
- "No Fee" Passports
- Other

For more information about specific benefits contact VA's toll-free telephone assistance line at 1-800-827-1000.



For more information visit OSA's website at www.va.gov/survivors. You may also call 202-461-1077 or email officeofsurvivors@va.gov.