

The following is an abbreviated description of the requirements for obtaining an SAH Grant. This pamphlet is not a legal document and should not be considered as such. Nothing in this pamphlet should be construed as changing the law or VA regulations pertaining to specially adapted housing or to special housing adaptations. Only the highlights of the two programs are covered by this condensed version of VA Pamphlet 26-69-1. It does not go into detail regarding unusual or complex problems, which conceivably can arise. It is suggested that the pamphlet be read carefully and in its entirety. For more information contact your [local VA Specially Adapted Housing agent](#) from attached list or call the Veterans Service Center at the closest VA office on **1-800-827-1000**. Download an [application here](#).

## **Part 2 - Special Housing Adaptations**

(VA Pamphlet 26-69-1, pending revision April 2003)

Part 2 is designed to answer questions, which may be asked by veterans and their families regarding Special Housing Adaptations for Disabled Veterans under 38 U.S.C., ch.21, sec. 2101(b). The purpose of the law is to furnish disabled veterans of military service, who may be entitled to a grant of assistance from VA, special housing adaptations for their needs due to blindness or the loss or loss of use of both hands. The maximum amount of the grant is currently \$10,000.

## **Part 2 - Special Housing Adaptations**

### **Eligibility & Statutory Requirements**

#### **1. What is the governing law relating to special housing adaptations for disabled veterans?**

Title 38, United States Cods, chapter 21, section 2101(b). (The original statue was Public Law 96-385, dated October 7, 1980.)

#### **2. Which veterans are basically eligible for the grant?**

Veterans who have a service-connected disability due to military service entitling them to compensation for permanent and total disability due to:

- a. Blindness in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less or,
- b. The anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands.

#### **3. Is there any time limitation or deadline for applying for the special housing adaptations benefit?**

No, there is no time limit on use of the grant.

### **Special Housing Adaptations Benefit**

#### **4. What is the nature of the benefit?**

An eligible veteran may receive a VA grant for the actual cost to adapt a house, or for the appraised market value of necessary adapted features already in a house when it was purchased. In either ease, the maximum grant amount is \$10,000.

## **5. How may the grant be used?**

The veteran has the option to use the grant under any one of the following plans:

Plan (1) The veteran may adapt a house which he/she plans to purchase.

Plan (2) The veteran may adapt a house which a member of the veteran's family plans to purchase.

Plan (3) The veteran may adapt a house which he/she already owns.

Plan (4) The veteran may adapt a house which is already owned by a member of the veteran's family.

Plan (5) The veteran may purchase a house which has already been adapted with special features which VA has determined are reasonably necessary because of the veteran's disability.

Whichever plan is selected, the veteran must either reside in the house or intend to reside in the house.

## **6. What is meant by "a member of the veteran's family"?**

A member of the veteran's family is defined as a person related by blood, marriage or adoption.

## **7. If the maximum grant of \$10,000 is not used for special housing adaptations, may a second grant be obtained?**

No. Under governing law, the grant, up to a maximum of \$10,000 can be used only one time in acquiring a home with adaptations.

## **8. Is a veteran who obtains a house with special adaptations entitled to exemption from State real estate taxes?**

This depends upon the particular State. There are many States that do provide such relief from taxes either in whole or in part. The SAH agent will be able to provide a veteran with more detailed information.

## **What adaptations are considered necessary for a veteran who is blind in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less?**

There are no minimum requirements, but the following adaptations are considered appropriate:

- a. Special lighting; e.g., fluorescent, high intensity, open, indirect.
- b. Sliding doors. This would include sliding kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors, as well as pedestrian sliding and pocket doors. If it is not possible to adapt existing cabinets with sliding doors, new cabinets with sliding doors are acceptable.
- c. Handrails. Grab bars are acceptable in the bathroom, but a glass tub enclosure is not.

- d. Smoke detectors/fire detection systems.
- e. Security system. This may include the replacement of hollow core exterior (but not interior) doors with solid core doors, deadbolt locks, storm shutters, etc. This may also include an emergency exit; e.g., a level 5' x 5' platform with stairway and railings.
- f. Intercom system (without a radio unit).
- g. Room addition to an existing house to store sensory aids provided by Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service and to store exercise equipment. This may also include the heating and/or cooling of this room, if the heating and/or cooling unit is permanently attached. Built-in storage areas such as shelves are also acceptable.
- h. Covered porch, in areas of severe inclement weather (maximum size: 6' x 8'). An awning over the front and/or rear doors(s) is acceptable in more moderate climates. A patio or an enclosed patio is unacceptable.
- i. Swimming pool (but not spas, hot tubs, saunas, etc.)
- j. [Concrete or asphalt walkways](#) (but not driveways), if the new walkway involves a new design; e.g., wider or with curbs. However, the replacement of an existing walkway with the same design, only new material, is a maintenance item and is unacceptable.
- k. Fencing, to overcome a safety hazard; e.g., the property ending at a steep drop or abutting a busy street.
- l. Additional outlets and electrical service capacity to accommodate sensory aids equipment.
- m. Correction of safety defects; e.g., replacing space heaters with an electric heat pump or replacing a gas range and oven with an electrical range and oven.
- n. Other adaptations with the approval of VA.

**10. What adaptations are considered necessary for a veteran who has lost or lost the use of both hands?**

There are no minimum requirements; but the following adaptations are considered appropriate:

- a. [Lever-type fixtures](#) in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- b. Quad-rubber doorknob covers or lever-type latches/locks for doors.
- c. The lowering of cabinets, countertops and sinks.
- d. Light switches: toggle or press system.
- e. Tap plates to open and close interior doors; keyless entry-lock systems for exterior doors.

- f. Automatic garage door openers.
- g. Circuit breakers.
- h. Smoke detectors/fire detection systems.
- i. Special plumbing fixtures; e.g., bidet.
- j. Replacement of single or double hung windows with crank-type windows.
- k. Correction of safety defects.
- l. Other adaptations with the approval of VA.

## How To Apply For Benefits

### **11. Where does a veteran go to find out if he/she is eligible for a special housing adaptations benefit?**

Any VA office, preferably the [VA office where the veteran's claim records are located](#). The toll-free number is 1-800-827-1000 .

### **12. How is the veteran advised that he/she is eligible for special housing adaptations?**

A notice of eligibility will be sent to the veteran from the VA. A VA Specially Adapted Housing agent will visit the veteran and counsel him/her in every way possible in using the grant. He/she will be furnished a [supplemental application form](#) to be filled out when he/she is ready to obtain the grant. When the veteran's request for the grant is approved, he/she will receive a commitment letter from VA setting forth the terms and conditions under which the funds will be made available. Any contract executed by the veteran must include the condition that it is subject to VA approval and his/her obtaining the grant.

### **13. Is life insurance available which would pay off the mortgage on a specially adapted house in case the veteran dies before repaying the loan?**

Yes. Most veterans who receive a specially adapted housing grant are eligible for [Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance \(VMLI\)](#) covering the unpaid principal, not to exceed \$90,000 on the mortgage loan. VA representatives will explain this program and assist eligible veterans in applying for this protection. VMLI can only be issued to veterans age 69 and younger. Once issued, VMLI will remain in effect, regardless of age, if there is a mortgage indebtedness.

## Other Similar Benefits

### **14. Are there other benefits similar to housing adaptations to which a disabled veteran may be entitled?**

Yes, an eligible veteran may be entitled to the Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) grant benefit which has a maximum limitation of **\$4,100**. The [Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service](#) will furnish additional information concerning this

benefit upon request (including how to file VA Form [10-0103](#), Veterans Application for Assistance in Acquiring Home Improvement and Structural Alterations).

**15. If a veteran has already received a grant for a wheelchair home, may he/she also receive a grant for special housing adaptations?**

No. Once a veteran has received a grant for a wheelchair home, he/she is no longer eligible for the special housing adaptations benefit. **16. If a veteran receives a grant for special housing adaptations and the veteran's physical condition changes to later qualify him/her for a wheelchair home, may the veteran then become eligible for a grant for a wheelchair home?**

Yes. If a veteran receives a grant for special housing adaptations and the veteran's physical condition changes to later qualify him/her for a wheelchair home, the veteran would be entitled to the full grant for a wheelchair home, as provided by law.

NOTE: Part II of VA Pamphlet 26-69-1, Questions and Answers on Specially Adapted Housing and Special Housing Adaptations, is now available in Braille, in a large print booklet, and on an audio cassette tape. To obtain a copy of this alternative media, please contact the [Specially Adapted Housing agent](#) at the nearest VA Regional Loan Center or office.

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