

# Healthcare Services

The VA operates the nation's largest integrated healthcare system with more than 1,400 care sites including hospitals, community clinics, nursing homes, domiciliary, readjustment counseling centers, and various other facilities. There are over 100 care sites in California alone!

## Basic Eligibility

A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable may qualify for VA healthcare benefits. Reservists and National Guard members may also qualify for VA healthcare benefits if they were called to active duty (other than for training only) by a federal order and completed the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty.

## Enrollment

For most veterans, entry into the VA Healthcare System begins by applying for enrollment. While some veterans are not required to enroll due to their special eligibility status, all veterans—including those who have special eligibility—are encouraged to apply for enrollment. Enrollment helps the VA determine the number of potential veterans who may seek VA healthcare services and is a very important part of their planning efforts.

*Note: Enrollment in the VA Healthcare System does not necessarily mean that a veteran has a service-connected disability.*

To apply, complete VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits and provide a copy of your DD-214 and/or Discharge Papers (WWII). This VA Form 10-10EZ can be obtained from any VA healthcare facility or regional benefits office and can be downloaded at [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms), or requested by calling (877) 222-VETS (8387) or contacting your County Veterans Service Office.

Once enrolled, veterans can receive treatment at a VA healthcare facility anywhere in the country. Veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system are afforded privacy rights under federal law. The following four categories of veterans are not required to enroll, but are urged to do so to permit better planning of health resources:

- Veterans with a service-connected disability of 50 percent or more;
- Veterans seeking care for a disability the military determined was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, but which VA has not yet rated, within 12 months of discharge;
- Veterans seeking care for a service-connected disability only;
- Veterans seeking registry examinations (Depleted Uranium, Ionizing Radiation, Agent Orange, Gulf War/Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans).

## Priority Groups

During enrollment, each veteran is assigned to a priority group. The VA uses priority groups to balance demand for VA healthcare enrollment with available resources. Changes in availability of resources may reduce the number of priority groups the VA can enroll. If this occurs, the VA will publicize the changes and notify affected enrollees. Priority groups are defined on the VA website.

## Financial Assessment

Most veterans not receiving VA disability compensation or pension payments must provide information on their gross annual household income and net worth to determine whether they are below the annually adjusted financial thresholds. Veterans who decline to disclose their information or have income above the thresholds must agree to pay copayments in order to receive certain health benefits, effectively placing them in Priority

Group 8. Currently, the VA is not enrolling new applicants who decline to provide financial information unless they have a special eligibility factor.

This financial assessment includes all household income and net worth including Social Security, retirement pay, unemployment insurance, interest and dividends, workers' compensation, black lung benefits, and any other income. Also considered are assets such as the market value of property that is not the veteran's primary residence, stocks, bonds, notes, individual retirement accounts, bank deposits, savings accounts, and cash.

The VA also compares the veteran's financial assessment with geographically-based income thresholds. If the veteran's gross annual household income is above the VA's national means test threshold and below VA's geographic means test threshold, or is below both the VA national threshold and the VA geographically based threshold, but their gross annual household income plus net worth exceeds VA's ceiling (currently \$80,000), the veteran may be eligible for Priority Group 7 placement and qualify for an 80% reduction in inpatient copayment rates.

The income threshold table can be found at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

## Recently Discharged Combat Veterans

Every VA Medical Center has a team ready to welcome OEF/OIF service members and help coordinate their care.

Combat veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, are eligible for enrollment in Priority Group 6, unless eligible for a higher Priority Group. These veterans are not charged copayments for medications and/or treatment of conditions that are potentially related to their combat service. Veterans who enroll with the VA under this enhanced authority will continue to be enrolled even after their enhanced eligibility period ends, although they may be shifted to Priority Group 7 or 8 depending on their income level, and required to make applicable copayments.

Combat veterans discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2008, are eligible for this enhanced enrollment health benefit for five years after the date of their most recent discharge from active duty.

For more information about the various programs available for recent returning service members, go to the Returning Service Members website at [www.oefoif.va.gov/](http://www.oefoif.va.gov/).

## Emergency Medical Care in U.S. Non-VA Facilities

In the case of medical emergencies, the VA may reimburse or pay for non-VA medical care not previously authorized that is provided to certain eligible veterans when the VA or other federal facilities are not feasibly available. This benefit may be dependent upon other conditions, such as notification to the VA, the nature of treatment sought, the status of the veteran, the presence of other healthcare insurance, and third party liability.

There are different regulatory requirements that may affect VA payment and veteran liability for the cost of care; therefore, it is very important that the nearest VA medical facility that provides emergency services is notified as soon as possible after emergency treatment is sought. If emergency inpatient services are required, the VA will assist in transferring the veteran to a VA facility, if available.

## Online Access to VA Health Information and Services

My HealtheVet offers veterans, active duty service members and their dependents, and caregivers anywhere, anytime access to VA healthcare information and services via the internet. My HealtheVet is a free, online personal health record that allows veterans to become more informed by accessing trusted and secure health and benefits information at their convenience.

With My HealtheVet, veterans can access:

- VA prescription refill services

- VA benefits services
- Local VA events activities
- Personal health journals
- Vitals tracking graphing
- Military health history
- Activity/food journals
- Healthy living centers
- VA news feature stories
- Disease condition centers
- Trusted health information

To register, go to [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov), and begin making more informed decisions in collaboration with healthcare providers.

## Veterans Identification Card

The VA provides eligible veterans a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) for use at VA Medical Facilities. The VIC protects the privacy of veterans' sensitive information, as it no longer displays the social security number or date of birth on the front of the card. The VIC will only display the veteran's name, picture, and special eligibility indicators such as service-connected disabled, Purple Heart, and Former POW, if applicable, on the front of the card. Only veterans who are eligible for VA medical benefits will receive the card.