

Women Veterans Affairs

25 Most Frequently Asked Questions with Responses*

1. What services are available to women veterans?

Response: 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?

Response: Veterans can apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ. 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), 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.vba.va.gov/bln/21/index.htm. The 2003 edition of this booklet lists the variety of Federal benefits available to veterans and their dependents. Selecting the link above will download the booklet as a PDF file and provide information on these VA benefits:

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

Additional information and application forms can be obtained at the VA website at www.va.gov. The Veterans Online Application (VONAP) allows you to complete and submit most application forms on-line.

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

*Based on telephone calls, letters and electronic-mail inquiries received by the Center for Women Veterans

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3. Where are the special PTSD treatment centers?

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

Boston, MA
Brecksville, OH
Loma Linda, CA
New Orleans, LA

4. Where are the designated Clinical Programs of Excellence in Women's Health?

Response:

Women Veterans Health Care Program, Alexandria VAMC
Women Veterans Comprehensive Health, Durham VAMC
Women Veterans Health Program, Boston VAMC, VA New England HCS
Women Veterans Health Program, Bay Pines VAMC
Women Veterans Health Program, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Women Veterans Health Program, South Texas Veterans Health Care System

5. Where can I get Military Sexual Trauma treatment?

Response: 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 through December 31, 2004.

6. Where do I find research studies and surveys on women veterans?

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

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 (HSRD) 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 DVA research websites to know are:

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Website for the HSRD is <http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/>.

For HSRD studies the URL is <http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/research/studies/>.

Focusing on women veterans research:

<http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/page.cfm?pg=26>

<http://www.va.gov/womenvet/>

<http://www.sf.med.va.gov/womens.htm>

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

Response: Contact the Women In Military Service for America Memorial (WIMSA) located at the gates of Arlington Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia at www.womensmemorial.org.

8. How can I get gender-specific services, including pap smears, mammography, prenatal and childcare?

Response: Apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ. The 10-10EZ 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 Coordinator (white pages of the telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs).

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

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

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10. 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?

Response: 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 to Compensation and Pension, Vocational Rehabilitation & 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 the VA homepage at: www.va.gov.

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

Response: Contact the Women Veterans Coordinator at your local health care facility (white pages under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs) or the Veteran Health Administration (VHA) Office of Women Veterans Health at (202) 273-8577 or the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Center for Women Veterans at (202) 273-6193.

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

Response: 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.

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

Response: 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.

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

Response: 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.

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

Response: Veteran 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 Disabled American Veterans (DAV), American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign War (VFW).

WIMSA can also help arrange for members to either speak at civic or education events or to interview about the Women's Memorial, a specific era or women in the military. Contact the Public Relations Department, at 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 wimsa@aol.com.

16. How do I locate a buddy that I served with in 1956?

Response: 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 the 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.

You may also contact the Women In Military Service for America Memorial (WIMSA) located at the ceremonial entrance of Arlington Cemetery in Arlington, VA at www.womensmemorial.org.

17. How do I locate my military records?

Response: 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 (Standard Form 180) to the records custodian of your branch of service. Addresses for

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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) 538-4175. The web site is: center@stlouis.nara.gov.

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

Response: VA Home Loan Guaranty Program:

VA loan guaranties are made to service members, veterans, reservists, and unmarried 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 are:

- 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 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.

Center for Veteran Enterprise:

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 <http://www.vetbiz.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.

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19. How do I locate my mother's military records from World War II?

Response: To obtain copies of your mother's record - write to the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100, fax a request to (314) 538-4175, or access their website: center@stlouis.nara.gov

20. Am I eligible for burial at Arlington National cemetery, if not what are my options?

Response: Although Arlington National Cemetery is a national cemetery, it is one of two cemeteries maintained by the Department of the Army, not the Department of Veterans Affairs.

For further information, you may contact the cemetery directly at:

Superintendent
Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, VA 22211
(703) 695-3250

Or visit their website at <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org>.

You may also wish to consider burial at one of VA's 120 national cemeteries or a State Veterans Cemetery. You may view a listing of these cemeteries at <http://www.cem.va.gov>.

Burial in a national cemetery is open to all members of the Armed Forces and veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements and been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

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

Response: Optional job websites for veterans include the following:

- Department of Veterans Affairs – Office of Human Resources Management:
<http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm>
- Department of Labor veterans site:
<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/hiring/veterans.htm>
- Office of Personnel Management:
<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>
- America's Job Bank:
<http://www.ajb.org>
- A generic but powerful job hunting/posting database used by industry country and worldwide:
www.monster.com

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

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

The delimiting date is only extended by the amount of time you 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:

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/education/c30pam.htm>.

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

Response: Use the Thomas website for legislative information and follow up on Congressional bills: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

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24. How do I get my disability compensation claim re-evaluated?

Response: 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 in either letter or statement form or on VA Form 21-4138 (Statement in Support of Claim). (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/21-4138x.pdf>) Request should include the following information:

- Name
- Claim 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

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

Response: VA provides statistics and demographic information on various veteran populations at the following website: <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/index.htm> under Statistics, Table 2. Additional Statistics by state can be found on the same website under Demographics, VetPop2001, National and State.