VETERANS BENEFITS

ALASKA OFFICE OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS

**COMPLETE GUIDE TO
ALASKA & FEDERAL BENEFITS**

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO START ACCESSING YOUR EARNED VETERAN BENEFITS TODAY

education
transportation
housing
identification
recognition
license plates
employment
recreation
claims
and more!

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VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS:

ANCHORAGE	(888) 353-7574
Veterans of Foreign Wars	(907) 257-4801
American Legion	(907) 257-4802
Disabled American Veterans	(907) 257-4803
Vietnam Veterans of America	(907) 257-4760
WASILLA	
Disabled American Veterans	(907) 376-4318
Veterans of Foreign Wars	(907) 373-7600
Vietnam Veterans of America	(907) 707-7105
PALMER	
Disabled American Veterans	(907) 982-3337
JUNEAU	
Vietnam Veterans of America UAS Armory	(907) 465-4211
FAIRBANKS	
Disabled American Veterans	(907) 353-2203
Veterans of Foreign Wars	(907) 353-4265
Vietnam Veterans of America	(907) 374-0574
SOLDOTNA	
American Legion	(907) 741-9997
KODIAK	
Vietnam Veterans of America	(907) 512-0688

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VETERANS.ALASKA.GOV

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MISSION?

Whether you're just getting out of the military or have been a civilian for years, this magazine is your informational guide to the benefits and services you earned. Stateside or overseas, combat or peacetime, active duty, reserves, or national guard, service takes many forms, and Alaska is committed to serving our increasingly diverse veteran community.

Since our inception, the people of Alaska have always sought to honor our returning military. The Office of Veterans Affairs has continued Alaska's legacy of service gratitude. Our resolve has remained focused: ensuring that our veterans receive the best in care, resources, and opportunities our veteran benefit system can provide. Alaska has more than 67,000 veterans representing four generations across five major conflicts. From buying a home and starting a family to preparing a future for their loved ones or remembering the legacy of those who have passed on, Alaska veterans enter a new stage of life each day.

The robust network of state and federal benefits you will find in this magazine is here to support every veteran. No matter what your next mission is, there's a resource in Alaska for you. From education to employment, health care to home loans, filing a claim to finding long-term-care, Alaska and our network of service officers are available to ensure you are taking full advantage of the benefits you have available to you and your family. Your service to our nation came with many chapters. Your earned veteran benefits are there to increase your quality of life and ensure you are successful in your next mission.

Governor Mike Dunleavy
State of Alaska

Major General Torrence Saxe
The Adjutant General, AKNG
Commissioner, Military & Veterans Affairs

Director Verdie Bowen
Office of Veterans Affairs
Alaska

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HOW TO FILE A CLAIM:

STEP 1: OBTAIN EVIDENCE

You must submit evidence to support your disability claim. Evidence submitted at the time of the filing will help expedite your claim. Your disability evaluation will be based on this evidence, so it is essential that the information is accurate and complete, OVA staff will assist you in the process.

STEP 2: FILE A DISABILITY OR PENSION CLAIM

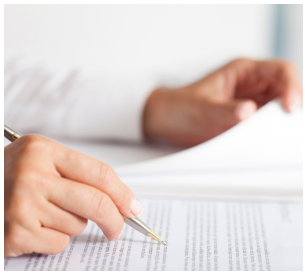
Filing a claim is a free service provided by OVA. Staff are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and certified by the State of Alaska OVA director. The disability claim process begins the moment you file a claim. To file, veterans must sign a power of attorney, which authorizes our VSOs to act on your behalf when preparing, presenting, and prosecuting your claim for any and all benefits.

STEP 3: VA PHYSICAL EXAM

Your nearest federal VA medical center will schedule the exam(s) and contact you. After the exams, a report will be prepared and sent to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for review. You can expedite the process by keeping your appointments and asking your private medical providers to send copies of your records to the federal VA office. Ask your private doctor to include your VA file number on all the records.

STEP 4: RECEIVE VA DECISION

The federal VA will consider all evidence submitted and decide if the claim supports injuries and disabilities incurred while in service. If the federal VA approves the claim, then a rating is decided based on how severe your conditions are. The ratings are defined and set by federal law.



OPTIONS FOR DENIED CLAIMS

If the federal VA denies your claim, you may appeal the decision. You may also appeal if your claim was approved but you disagree with any part of the rating. An appeal involves many steps, some of which are optional and some that are required and have strict time limits including a Notice of Disagreement, Statement of Case, Hearings (Optional) Formal Appeal (Form 9), Board of Veterans Appeals, and U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. Be sure to work closely with your Veteran Service Officer through the appeals process.

COPIES OF VA ELIGIBILITY LETTERS & ACCESSING OTHER DOCUMENTS, RECORDS

Veterans can print a copy of their federal VA Eligibility letter using eBenefits, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs online benefit portal. Register for eBenefits online at www.ebenefits.va.gov. Once your account is activated, hover on the “Manage” tab and choose “Documents and Records." From this portal, you will be able to access many different federal VA letters, your military personnel file to include DD form 214s, as well as medical and pay information.

FILING A CLAIM IS A FREE SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE ALASKA OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMPENSATION FOR THOSE WHO SERVED:
compensation benefits

Disability compensation and veterans' pensions are monetary benefits the federal VA pays to service-disabled veterans or certain low-income combat veterans and surviving spouses. The Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs can assist you in discovering if you qualify.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Disability compensation is a monetary benefit paid to veterans who are disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service. These disabilities are considered to be service-connected. Disability compensation is paid monthly and varies with the degree of disability, the impairment of a veteran's earning capacity, and number of dependents. Veterans with certain severe disabilities may be eligible for additional special monthly compensation. The benefits are not subject to federal or state income tax.

PENSION BENEFIT

A non-service connected VA pension is a benefit paid to wartime veterans who have limited or no income, and who are age 65 or older, or under 65 and are permanently and totally disabled, or a patient in a nursing home, or are receiving Social Security disability payments. The amount payable depends upon the type and amount of income the veteran and family members receive from other sources.

AID & ATTENDANCE (A&A)

Aid and attendance is a benefit paid in addition to monthly pension and compensation. It may not be paid without eligibility for a pension. A&A is allowed if the veteran or another person requires that aid in order to perform his or her daily living activities, is bedridden, or is a nursing home patient because of mental or physical incapacity.

HOUSEBOUND BENEFITS

Veterans and survivors who qualify for federal VA compensation or pension, and are confined to the home because of permanent disability, may be eligible for additional housebound benefits. Qualifying veterans must have a single permanent disability (rated 100 percent disabled) and need assistance; or have a single permanent disability (100 percent disabled) and another disability; or have disabilities evaluated as 60 percent or more disabling. A veteran cannot receive both A&A and Housebound benefits at the same time.

MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY

Historically, veterans have not been permitted to receive full military pay and federal VA compensation for benefits at the same time. Veterans who were entitled to both have had to either waive a portion of their retirement equaling the amount of awarded federal VA compensation or elect not to receive federal VA compensation at all. Receiving both benefits and retirement pay is commonly known as "Concurrent Receipt." In 2004, Congress passed the Concurrent Retired and Disability Act, allowing many veterans to receive 100 percent of their military retirement and federal VA compensation if their VA disability is above 50 percent. If the Disability rating is 40 percent or lower it is deducted from the retirement pay. Because of the complexity of this issue, please visit www.dfas.mil for more information.

SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION

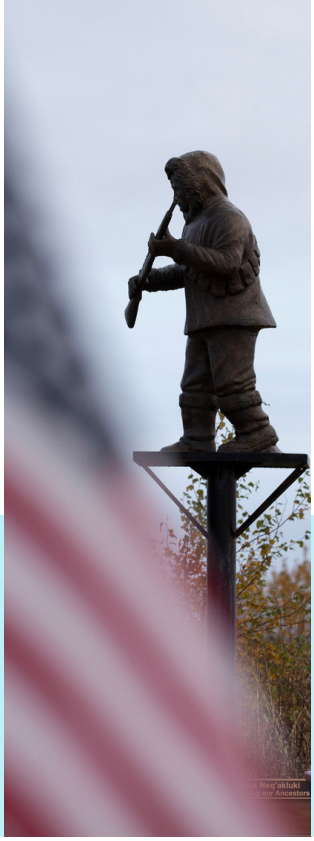
The federal VA offers additional compensation, called Special Monthly Compensation, to veterans with very severe service-connected disabilities, or who have lost (or lost the use of) limbs, organs, or extremities as a result of their military service. The VA may also pay higher rates of compensation if you have lost the use of more than one limb, organ, or extremity, or if it is combined with another service-connected disability or condition, such as blindness or deafness. SMC may also be paid to veterans' spouses, surviving spouses, and parents if the veteran is bedridden, housebound, or requires the aid and attendance of another person to perform the basic functions of everyday life, such as eating, dressing, bathing, and going to the bathroom. More information can be found on the federal VA's website at www.benefits.va.gov/compensation.

CARE FOR ALL VETERANS, BODY AND MIND: health care

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs operates a robust and comprehensive health care system for veterans in Alaska. Included in this system are six VA Health Care facilities, four Veteran Centers, Alaska VA Native Health Care Sharing Agreements, and numerous commercial contracted medical facilities across the state.

ENHANCED COMBAT VETERAN BENEFIT

Veterans, including members of the National Guard and activated reservists, are eligible for 5-year post deployment medical benefit. This benefit is for those who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, and have been discharged under Honorable conditions.



BASIC ELIGIBILITY

A person who served in the active military service and was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable may qualify for federal VA health care benefits. Reserve and National Guard members may also qualify for federal VA health care 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 federal VA health care system begins by applying for enrollment. If you are not enrolled, you can apply at any time. If you served in the U.S. Armed Forces, you can use the federal VA Health Benefits Explorer to learn about the benefits you can receive if you are enrolled with the federal VA for your health care. To apply or use the federal VA Health Benefits Explorer, visit: www.va.gov/health-care/.

ONLINE HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Managing your health information, appointments, prescriptions, labs, blood tests, and even exchanging messages with your health care team, has never been easier. My HealtheVet, your online personal health record, helps you gain a better understanding of your health status and allows you to explore a variety of ways to monitor and improve your health, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To get the most out of My HealtheVet, veterans are urged to visit their local federal VA health care facility to get an upgraded account, known as In-Person Authentication. To begin using My HealtheVet, register at www.myhealth.va.gov.

VETERAN COMMUNITY CARE

A new replacement program for the Choice program provides veterans a greater choice over their health care by using VA facilities or community care providers. There are a variety of improvements under the VA Mission Act of 2018 that makes community care work better for veterans, including streamlined eligibility criteria, a single community care program, better customer service, and a new urgent care benefit. For more information or questions please call: (907) 257-4700 or toll free: (888) 353-7574. Patient Aligned Care Team call center: (907) 257-5460 ext. 5490 or U.S. VA toll free: (800) 827-1000.

NON-VA MEDICAL CENTER EMERGENCY CARE

Veterans are eligible for emergency care at non-VA facilities under certain circumstances. The 2010 Veterans Emergency Care Protective Act enables the federal VA to reimburse veterans, enrolled in federal VA health care, for the cost of emergency treatment. If non-VA emergency care is received, notification to the nearest federal VA health care facility must be made within 72 hours of hospitalization. Federal VA payment is limited up to the point that the veteran's condition is stable for transportation to a VA approved facility. Further information is available at www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/Care_Coordination.asp or by calling (907) 257-4700, toll free (888) 353-7574, or Patient Aligned Care Team call center (907) 257-5460 ext. 5490.

WOMEN VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

Comprehensive health services are available to women veterans including primary care, specialty care, mental health care, and reproductive health care services. The federal VA provides management of acute and chronic illnesses, preventative care, contraceptive services, menopause management, cancer screenings including pap smears and mammograms, and gynecology. Maternity care is covered in the medical benefits package to include care for newborn children of women veterans for up to seven days after birth. Women veterans program managers are available at the federal VA facilities to help veterans seeking treatment and benefits. Alaska's VA Women Program manager can be contacted at (907) 257-4737 or toll free (888) 353-7574 ext. 4737.

GUIDE DOGS & SERVICE DOGS

The federal VA may provide information on guide dogs to blind veterans including the expense of training the veteran on how to use them and the cost of the dog's medical care. Additionally, the state Office of Veterans Affairs may also provide information on service dogs trained for the aid of hearing-impaired veterans, as well as veterans with spinal cord injuries, dysfunction, and other chronic impairments that substantially limit mobility. Work with OVA or a local VSO for more information.

VA/TRIBAL HEALTH CARE SHARING AGREEMENT

The tribal reimbursement program provides a means for tribal health facilities to receive reimbursement from the federal VA for direct care and services provided to American Indian and Alaska Native eligible veterans, as well as all veterans who live in and around tribal facilities in Alaska. If you have questions about this service contact the Patient Aligned Care Team call center at (907) 257-5460 ext. 5490.

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

The federal VA pays a clothing allowance to veterans who, because of a service-connected disability, wear or use a prosthetic or orthopedic appliance (including a wheelchair), which the VA determines tends to wear out or tear the clothing. The VA will also pay a clothing allowance to veterans who use medication prescribed by federal VA physicians for skin conditions caused by service-connected disabilities, which the VA determines causes irreparable damage to the veteran's outer garment. Work with OVA or a local VSO to receive updated information and applications.

AUTOMOTIVE ALLOWANCE

Veterans and service members may be eligible for a one-time payment toward the purchase of an automobile or other conveyance if they have service-connected loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands or feet, permanent impairment of vision of both eyes to a certain degree, or ankylosis (immobility) of one or both knees or one or both hips. They may also be eligible for adaptive equipment, and for repair, replacement, or reinstallation required because of disability or for the safe operation of a vehicle purchased with VA assistance.
To apply contact OVA, or your VSO, or call 1-800-827-1000.

ALASKA FEDERAL VA MEDICAL CENTERS

Anchorage
VA Outpatient Clinic
Office: (907) 257-4700
Toll Free: (888) 353-7574

AK Healthcare One Stop Shop
Office: (907) 257-5463

Juneau
VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Office: (907) 796-4300
Toll Free: (888) 308-7890

Mat-Su
VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Office: (907) 631-3100
Toll Free: (866) 323-8648

Fairbanks
VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Office: (907) 361-6370
Toll Free: (888) 353-5242

Soldotna
VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Toll Free: (888) 353-7574

Homer
Schedule Appointment
Toll Free: (888) 353-7574

ALASKA VA VETERANS CENTERS

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, active-duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components, and their families. Readjustment counseling is offered to make a successful transition from military to civilian life or after a traumatic event experienced in the military. Individual, group, marriage, and family counseling is offered, in addition to referral and connection to other VA or community benefits and services. Vet Center counselors and outreach staff, many of whom are veterans themselves, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief, and transition after trauma.

Anchorage
Office: (907) 563-6966

Fairbanks
Office: (907) 456-4238

Wasilla
Office: (907) 376-4318

Kenai
Office: (907) 260-7640

NATIONAL VET CENTER CALL CENTER 1-877-WAR-VETS OR 1-877-927-8387

The Vet Center Call Center is an around-the-clock confidential call center where combat veterans and their families can call to talk about any issue they are facing.

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

Veterans, service members, and their loved ones can contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free confidential support 24 hours a day, even if they are not registered with the federal VA health care.

Call: 1-800-273-8255, press 1.
Text message: 838255
Chat: www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat

VA HOMELESS VETERANS IN NEED

Toll Free: (877) 424-3838

HIGHER LEARNING OPTIONS AFTER SERVICE: education

Many veterans turn to higher education to further their skills and training after serving their country. Contact the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs at (907) 334-0874 or toll free at (888) 248-3682 for information on benefits you may qualify for and to receive assistance.

COLLEGE CREDIT FOR MILITARY TRAINING

All universities and local community colleges in Alaska use the recommendations made by the American Council on Education to award academic credit toward a degree for education and training received in the military. To claim college credit for military training, request a transcript from your military service branch. Each service branch will provide official copies to schools at no charge.

STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR THE ALASKA AIR & ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Alaska National Guard members may receive up to 100 percent tuition assistance at any University of Alaska system school. All Alaska National Guard members are encouraged to contact the National Guard education office at (907) 428-6663 before registering.

FREE TUITION WAIVER FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF ALASKA RESIDENTS WHO DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Spouses and dependents of armed service members who were Alaska residents and died in the line of duty, or are listed by the Department of Defense as a Prisoners of War or were Killed in Action, are entitled to a waiver of all undergraduate tuition and fees through the University of Alaska system. Contact your University of Alaska school before entering a program.

STATEWIDE APPRENTICESHIPS

If eligible, an apprentice may use veterans' educational benefits while registered in an apprenticeship program. If an existing apprenticeship program does not have an approved veterans' program in place, veterans can coordinate the establishment of a new training program by communicating with the employer and the State Approving Agency manager for Alaska at (907) 334-0874.

MONTGOMERY GI BILL

Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) benefits are available for service members and veterans to help with education and training costs by providing direct funds to them for education. MGIB can be used to pay for many different programs including bachelor's degrees; business, technical, or vocational courses; distant learning, including correspondence courses; apprenticeship/job training; flight training; licensing; and certification exams. Eligibility expires 10 years after the service member's discharge. There are exceptions for disability, re-entering active duty or upgraded discharges. For more information, visit www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/ or call (907) 334-0874 for the State Approving Agency representative.

POST 9/11 BILL

The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to Honorably discharged veterans with at least 90 days of aggregate service on title 10 Active Duty or Title 32 Active Guard Reserve Duty after Sept. 10, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. The Post 9/11 GI Bill will pay an eligible individual's full tuition and fees directly to the school for all public school in-state students attending classes at a greater than half-time rate. A monthly housing allowance based on the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents is also provided. Distance Learning enrollee's housing allowance is equal to half the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents. An annual book and supplies stipend of $1,000 is paid proportionately based on enrollment. This benefit provides up to 36 months of education; generally, benefits are payable for 15 years following release if you separated before January 2013. After January 2013, veterans separating from the military will not experience a termination due to time passage. This benefit may be transferred to dependents and spouse based on number of years of active duty and must be accomplished before the military member leaves active duty. For more information, visit www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/ or call (907) 334-0874 for the State Approving Agency representative.

EDITH NOURSE ROGERS SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING MATH SCHOLARSHIP

The VA has launched the Edith Nourse Rogers Stem Scholarship program for students training in high demand STEM fields. The Rogers STEM Scholarship will provide up to nine months of additional Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits (to a maximum of $30,000) to qualified veterans and Fry Scholars seeking an undergraduate STEM degree or who have earned a STEM degree and are seeking a teaching certification. The Edith Nourse Rogers Stem Scholarship is a provision of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Forever GI Bill) that gives extra benefits to students training in the high-demand fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. Obtaining a degree in these areas may require more training than other fields. This provision aims to help cover the difference and give additional incentive for students who choose the careers our society needs most. For additional information visit www.va.gov/education/other-va-education-benefits/stem-scholarship/.

YELLOW RIBBON EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The program assists eligible individuals with payment of their tuition and fees in instances where costs exceed the most expensive in-state undergraduate tuition at a public institution of higher education. To be eligible, the student must be a veteran receiving benefits at the 100 percent benefit rate payable or a transfer-of-entitlement-eligible dependent child or spouse of a veteran. The VA will match the school's percentage (up to 50 percent) to reduce or eliminate out of pocket costs for the eligible participant. To receive this benefit, your school must agree to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program. Three universities located in Alaska participate in the program and more information is available online at www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11/yellow-ribbon-program/.

VETERAN READINESS & EMPLOYMENT

Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) is a program that assists veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, Vet Success offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. You may receive VR&E services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job-seeking-skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist veterans and service members in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment. VA's VR&E counseling program is a great opportunity for veterans and service members to get personalized counseling and support to help guide their career paths, ensure the most effective use of their VA benefits, and achieve their goals. Learn more at www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp.

Care at our Veterans Pioneers Home is an earned benefit available to Honorably Discharged veterans. Alaska Veterans Pioneers Home provides elder Alaskans a home and community that celebrates life.

ALASKA VETERANS & PIONEERS HOME

In 2004, the Alaska legislature approved development of the state's first veterans home. After extensive remodeling and upgrades to meet federal VA requirements, the facility was renamed the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home. The home strives to assist older Alaskans to have the highest quality of life by providing assisted living in a safe home setting that promotes independence, positive relationships, meaningful activities, as well as physical, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Qualifying veterans are eligible for a per diem from the federal VA to offset costs of their care. For more information on how to qualify for the federal VA benefits, call the home's veteran's liaison at 1-800-355-3117 or (907) 745-4241.

The home may provide the following services, depending on health status and need:

- Private or semi-private rooms
- Opportunities for recreation
- Meals and housekeeping services
- Emergency assistance
- Physical activities
- Assistance with activities of daily living
- Nursing assessment and intermittent health services dependent upon level of care
- Payment assistance for those who qualify
- Pharmacy services

Whether you are looking to purchase your first home or adapt an existing residence to fit your service-connected needs, Alaska and its partners want to help you achieve your dreams of home ownership and independent living.

VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY

The federal VA does not actually lend money to veterans. Federal VA guaranteed loans are made by private lenders, such as banks, saving and loans, credit unions, or mortgage companies. The VA guaranty means the lender is protected if the veteran fails to repay the loan. You can apply for a VA loan with any mortgage lender that participates in the VA Home Loan program. The spouse of a veteran who receives Dependency and Indemnity Compensation can also apply for home loan eligibility. Please visit www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans or call the VA Home Loan Eligibility Center at (888) 768-2132 for more information.

ALASKA HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LOANS

The Alaska Housing Financial Corporation (AHFC) administers the Veterans Mortgage program, which offers financing for qualified veterans at a lower interest rate. To apply for a loan under this program, contact an AHFC approved lender. AHFC also offers a Veterans Interest Rate Preference, in which a veteran receives a one percent lower interest rate on the first $50,000 of a bank loan when purchasing a new home. Ask the bank handling the financing to implement this program for you. For details, call (907) 338-6100 or 1-800-478-2432 or visit www.ahfc.us/buy/loan-programs/vets.

SPECIAL HOUSING ADAPTATIONS GRANT

The federal VA may approve the Special Housing Adaptations grant to the actual cost for adaptions for a veteran's residence that are determined by the VA to be reasonably necessary. The grant also may be used to assist veterans in acquiring a residence that already has been adapted with special features for the veteran's disability. To qualify for this grant, veterans must be entitled to compensation for permanent and total service-connected disability to certain specifications. To learn more, visit www.va.gov/housing-assistance/disability-housing-grants/.

SPECIAL ADAPTED HOUSING GRANT

The federal VA may approve the grant for not more than half the value of the cost of building, buying, or remodeling an adapted home, or paying ineptness on homes previously acquired up to a maximum set by Congress. To qualify for this grant, veterans must be entitled to compensation for permanent and total service-connected disability to certain specifications. To learn more, visit www.va.gov/housing-assistance/disability-housing-grants/.

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE ADAPTIONS GRANT

The Temporary Residence Adaptions grant is designed to assist eligible veterans who are temporarily residing in a housing unit owned by a family member. Grant funds may be used to adapt the family member's housing unit to meet the current need of the veteran. In order to receive the TRA, the veteran must meet the qualification of the SHA or the SAH grants. To learn more, visit www.va.gov/housing-assistance/disability-housing-grants/.

HOUSING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY GRANT PROGRAM

The federal VA, through its Specially Adapted Housing Assistive Technology grant (SAHAT) program, is authorized to award grants each fiscal year to encourage the development of specially adapted housing assistive technologies. There are many emerging technologies that could improve home adaptions or enhance a veteran's or service member's ability to live independently, such as voice recognition and voice command operations, living environment controls, and adaptive feeding equipment. For more information on the SAHAT grant program, please email sahinfo.vbaco@va.gov.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS & STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS

This grant provides medically necessary improvements and structural alterations to a veteran's/service member's primary residence for the following purposes:

- Allowing entrance to or exit from their homes
- Use of essential lavatory and sanitary facilities (ex: wheel chair accessible showers)
- Allowing accessibility to kitchen or bathroom sinks or counters (ex: lowering sinks and counters)
- Improving entrance paths or driveways in immediate areas of the home to facilitate access to the home through construction or permanent ramping
- Improving plumbing or electrical systems made necessary because of the installation of home medical equipment

For more information about HISA grants, please visit www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/HISA2.asp.

ALASKA PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

Real property, owned and occupied as the primary residence and permanent place of abode by a qualified disabled veteran whose disability was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty and whose disability has been rated at 50 percent or more by their military service or the federal VA, is exempt from taxation on the first $150,000 of assessed valuation. The exemption transfers to the spouse if the veteran passes away and the spouse is at least 60 years of age. For more information, contact your local tax assessor's office by March 15 for the current year exemption.

VETERAN LAND DISCOUNT/PURCHASE PREFERENCE

The Veterans Land Discount program allows certain veterans a 20 percent discount on the purchase price of state residential/recreational land. The discount may be used only once during the veteran's lifetime and may not be used in conjunction with the veterans preference. Under the veteran's land sale preference, before offering to the general public an unoccupied residential land by auction, a veteran has the exclusive opportunity to purchase the land at a restricted sale at fair appraised market value. Parcels that are offered under this preference must be five acres or less, classified as settlement land, and zoned for residential use only. A fact sheet is available on benefits administered by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water Management. For more information call (907) 269-8400 or visit www.dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/cdn/pdf/factsheets/landsales-veterans.pdf.

Veterans' families also make great sacrifices in service to their country. These are benefits and programs that may be available to you as a veteran's spouse, dependent, or survivor.

DEPENDENCY & INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is the primary monthly monetary benefit payable to surviving dependents of a deceased veteran, and is the equivalent benefit to disability compensation for veterans. This benefit is payable if the veteran died while on active duty or in the line of duty, and death was not due to willful misconduct; if death was after service, the death was caused or attributed to a service-connected disability. The rate is increased for each dependent child and also if the surviving spouse is housebound or in need of aid and attendance. The federal VA also adds a transitional benefit per child to the surviving spouse's monthly DIC if there are children under age 18.

DEATH PENSIONS

The Death (Survivor) Pension is a needs-based benefit paid to an unmarried surviving spouse, or an unmarried child, who meets certain age or disability requirements, of a deceased wartime veteran. In order to qualify for the federal VA Death Pension, the VA calculates income received from most sources by the surviving spouse and any eligible children. It includes earning, disability and retirement payments, unemployment insurance payments, interest and dividend payments, and net income from farming, business, or rental property. If the income is below a certain level, the dependent or surviving spouse may be eligible for this pension.

HEADSTONES & MARKERS FOR SURVIVORS

Spouses and eligible dependents are not eligible for a furnished headstone or marker unless they are buried in a national cemetery, state veterans cemetery, or a military post/base cemetery.

SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN

When a military retiree dies, their retirement pay stops. This may mean that the surviving spouse no longer receives a monthly income. One option for surviving spouses is the Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP). The SBP is an insurance plan that gives the veteran's surviving spouse a monthly payment (annuity) to help make up for the loss of retirement income. This payment is not the full retirement but a portion established at the time of retirement between the retired military member, his/her spouse, and the retirement counselor. Survivors should report retiree death to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Casualty Office at 1-800-321-1080.

VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY

The spouse of a veteran can also apply for home loan eligibility under one of the following conditions: un-remarried spouse of a veteran who died while in service or from a service-connected disability, or spouse of a service member missing in action or a prisoner of war, or surviving spouse who remarries on or after attaining age 57. For more information on the surviving spouses VA home loans, visit www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/surviving-spouse/.

SPOUSE MEDICAL BENEFIT

This Civilian Health and Medical Program of the VA (CHAMPVA) is a comprehensive health care program in which the VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries. Because of the similarity between CHAMPVA and the Department of Defense's TRICARE program, the two are often mistaken for each other. If the surviving spouse is eligible for TRICARE, he/she is not eligible for CHAMPVA. TRICARE is a regionally managed health care program for active duty and retired members of the uniformed services. In some cases, a veteran may look to be eligible for both/either program on paper. However, if you are a military retiree or the spouse of a veteran who was killed in action, you are and will always be a TRICARE beneficiary. For more information about these programs call TRICARE at (888) 847-9378 or visit www.va.gov/health-care/family-caregiver-benefits/.

POST 9/11 GI BILL TRANSFER OF ENTITLEMENT

The Post 9/11 GI Bill also offers some service members the opportunity to transfer their GI Bill benefits to dependents. An individual approved to transfer an entitlement to education assistance under this section may transfer to the individual's spouse, or one or more of the individual's children, or a combination of spouse and child. A family member must be enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System and be eligible for the benefit at the time of transfer to receive the transferred education benefits. Also, the military member must accomplish this transfer of benefits before leaving active duty and qualify to move the benefit at the time of transfer. This transfer can not be accomplished after retirement or leaving active duty. For more information about this program, contact the Alaska State Approving Agency manager at (907) 334-0874.

ALASKA VETERANS' DEPENDENT TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM

The spouse and dependents of an armed service member, who was an Alaska resident and died in the line of duty, or was listed by the Department of Defense as a Prisoner of War, or was killed in action, is entitled to a waiver of undergraduate tuition at any University of Alaska system school. For more information, contact UAA (907) 786-1480, UAF (907) 474-7211, or UAS (907) 796-6255.

DEPENDENTS' EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

The Survivors' and Dependents' Education Assistance (DEA) program is a federal VA benefit that provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents, spouses, and survivors of certain veterans. The program offers up to 36 months of education benefits. To be eligible, you must be the dependent or spouse of: a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability, a veteran who died from any service-connected disability, a service member missing in action or captured in the line of duty, or a service member forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty. For more information about the DEA program, visit www.va.gov/education/survivor-dependent-benefits/.

MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP

Children of an active duty member of the armed forces who has died in the line of duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible for the FRY Scholarship. Eligible children attending school may receive up to their full tuition and fees for a public school or a statutory annual maximum amount for public school, plus a monthly living stipend and book allowance under this program. For more information about the Fry Scholarship, visit www.va.gov/education/survivor-dependent-benefits/fry-scholarship/.

ALASKA PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

Real property, owned and occupied as the primary residence and permanent place of abode by a qualified disabled veteran whose disability was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty and whose disability has been rated at 50 percent or more by their military service or the federal VA, is exempt from taxation on the first $150,000 of assessed valuation. The exemption transfers to the spouse if the veteran passes away and the spouse is at least 60 years of age. For more information, contact your local tax assessor's office by March 15 for the current year exemption.

GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN:
burial benefits

Every person who honorably serves his/her country has earned the right to be laid to rest with honor and dignity among brothers and sisters in arms. There are a number of benefits available to help guide veterans in deciding their wishes for a final resting place.

PRE-NEED BURIAL ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

The federal VA has implemented a pre-need burial eligibility determination program to assist anyone who would like to know if he/she is eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. Veterans and their eligible family members are encouraged to plan in advance to use federal VA burial benefits that were earned through military service. Planning in advance for a veteran's or loved one's final resting place can eliminate unnecessary delays and reduce stress on a family at a difficult time. Burial in a national cemetery is open to all members of the U.S. Armed Forces and veterans who have met the minimum active duty service requirements, as applicable by law. Spouses, minor children, and under certain conditions, dependent unmarried adult children are also eligible for burial even if they predecease the veteran. More information and forms can be found on the VA's web page at www.va.gov/burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility/.

SERVICE-RELATED DEATH

If the veterans' death is service-connected, the VA will pay a burial allowance up to the maximum set by law for death on or after September 11, 2001. If the veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery, some or all of the cost of moving the veteran's body to the national cemetery nearest the veteran's home may also be reimbursed. There is no time limit for applying for a service-connected burial allowance. The person who bore the veteran's burial expense may claim reimbursement from any VA regional office. For full eligibility requirement, visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/.

NON-SERVICE-RELATED DEATH

The federal VA will pay up to an amount set by law toward the burial and funeral expense for death on or after Oct. 1, 2016, that is non-service-connected and if not buried in a national cemetery. For full eligibility requirements, visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/.

BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

When a veteran is interned in a cemetery that is not under U.S. government jurisdiction, the federal VA may also pay a plot allowance, provided that the veteran was discharged under a condition other than dishonorable, bad conduct, or other than honorable, and meets other qualifications similar to that of a non-service connected death. For more information about plot allowance, visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/.

CLAIM FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

To file for reimbursement of burial expenses, an Application of Burial Allowance form must be submitted to the VA. The person filing the claim must also provide a certified copy of the veteran's death certificate and proof of the veteran's military service (DD Form 214), as well as itemized bills of the funeral and burial expenses. For more information about reimbursement, visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/.

BURIAL FLAG

A U.S. flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany an urn of a deceased veteran who served Honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a veteran's military service to his or her country. When burial is in a national, state or post cemetery, a burial flag will automatically be provided. When burial is in a private cemetery, the funeral director will generally help the next of kin with this process. Also, one can attain the forms for the U.S. flag at any post office.

BURIAL BENEFITS

Dependents and surviving spouses of an eligible veteran are eligible to be interned in one of Alaska's two national cemeteries. One is located in Anchorage at the Ft Richardson National Cemetery and the other is located on the island of Sitka. When death occurs and eligibility for interment in a national cemetery is determined, grave space is assigned by the cemetery director in the name of the veteran or family member. One gravesite is permitted for the interment of all eligible family members. There is no charge for burial in a national cemetery. To learn more, visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/.

BURIAL AT SEA

The VA National Cemetery Administration cannot provide burial at sea. For information, contact the U.S. Navy Mortuary Affairs Office toll free at (866) 787-0081.

HEADSTONES, MARKERS & MEDALLIONS

The federal VA furnishes, upon request and at no charge, a government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world, regardless of their date of death. For eligible veterans who died on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave is marked with a privately purchased headstone, the VA may also furnish a headstone or marker to supplement the grave or a medallion to be affixed to the privately purchased headstone. Eligible veterans are entitled to either a government furnished headstone or marker, or the medallion, but not both. If requested, the medallion is furnished in lieu of a traditional government headstone or marker. For more information about this benefit, visit www.cem.va.gov.

PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATES

A Presidential Memorial Certificate is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current president, to honor the memory of Honorably Discharged deceased veterans. For more about this benefit, visit www.cem.va.gov.

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

The Department of Defense is responsible for providing dignified military funeral honors. Upon the family's request, Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible veteran receive Military Funeral Honors in a ceremony, to include the folding and presentation of the U.S. burial flag and the playing of "TAPS." For more information, contact the Alaska Army National Guard Honor Guard "Military Funeral Honors" team at (907) 428-6688 or (907) 428-6252 or via email at ngakfuneralhonors@ng.army.mil.

COMMISSARY/MILITARY SERVICE EXCHANGE & MORALE, WELFARE & RECREATION FACILITIES

The Department of Defense has expanded access to Commissary/Military Service Exchange and Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities to all disabled veterans along with former POWs and those awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

Veterans who are eligible and want to take advantage of in-person benefits must have a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). Primary Family Caregivers must have an eligibility letter from the VA's Office of Community Care. The VHIC must display the veteran's eligibility status (i.e. Purple Heart Medal recipient, former POW status, or service connected disability).

Veterans must be enrolled in the VA health care system to receive a VHIC. You can complete an application for enrollment in VA health care by telephone without the need for a signed paper application. Call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. through 8 p.m. Eastern time. You can also apply for VA healthcare benefits online at www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/ or in person at your local VA medical facility. Once your enrollment is verified, you can have your picture taken at your local VA medical center, and the VA will mail you a VHIC.

Veterans should feel free to live where they choose without sacrificing access to the care and benefits they've earned. Below you will find information about living in Alaska.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

The federal VA has the authority to provide eligible beneficiaries reimbursement for mileage, special mode of transportation, and in certain circumstance, a taxi or hired car.

If you meet the criteria below, you may be eligible for mileage reimbursement or special mode transport. You qualify if:

- You have a service connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more; or
- You are traveling for treatment of a SC condition; or
- You receive a VA pension; or
- Your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate; or
- You are traveling for a scheduled compensation and pension examination.

You qualify for Special Mode of Transportation if:

- Your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician; and
- You meet one of the eligibility criteria listed above; and
- The travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health).

Scheduled appointments qualify for round-trip mileage. Unscheduled visits may be limited to return mileage only. In order to be eligible for travel benefits when transporting to VA care or treatment, a veteran must actually be incurring an expense. Should one or more veterans travel together in a private vehicle, only the owner of the vehicle is actually incurring the expenses, and therefore, is the only person entitled to travel reimbursement. However, should multiple veterans share a vehicle where passengers must pay for their transportation such as a taxi or where one veteran pays another veteran for transport, then all are entitled to travel reimbursement either at the mileage reimbursement rate or actual expenses, whichever is less. Keep in mind all veterans must provide a receipt to indicate an incurred expense and to receive reimbursement. For further information, contact the Alaska VA System travel benefits section at (907) 257-4738.

VA/TRIBAL HEALTH CARE SHARING AGREEMENT

The tribal reimbursement program provides a means for tribal health facilities to receive reimbursement from the federal VA for direct care and services provided to American Indian and Alaska Native eligible veterans, as well as all veterans who live in and around tribal facilities in Alaska. This increases our total care facilities to 127 across the state. If you have any questions about this service, contact the Patient Aligned Care Team call center at (907) 257-5460 ext. 5490.

VA/ALASKA HIGHLY RURAL TRAVEL GRANT

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Transportation Program, provides to the State of Alaska, through the Office of Veterans Affairs, a $250,000 annual travel grant. This grant provides transportation options to veterans residing in five rural areas who need to access health care services. The following five VA approved boroughs continue to provide free transportation for veterans: Denali, Matanuska-Susitna, Kodiak Island, Kenai Peninsula, and Prince of Wales-Hyder. Veterans living in those communities qualify to use an array of transportation options so that they may seek the health care they need.

The Office of Veterans Affairs identified and partnered with five transportation organizations to meet those needs: Interior Alaska Bus Line (Denali Borough), Valley Mover (Matanuska-Susitna Borough), Alaska Marine Highway System (Kodiak Island Borough), AAA Alaska Cab, Inc., (Kenai Peninsula Borough) and Inter-Island Ferry System Authority (Prince of Wales–Hyder). Transportation continues at no cost to veterans requiring access to the VA Medical Clinic or Community Based Outpatient Clinics, as well as hospitals under the Native Health Care Sharing Agreement or VA authorized vendors, such as pharmacies or medical specialists. Funds are limited in each area, and this program is used if Travel Reimbursement is not covered for the eligible veteran. For more information, contact the Office of Veterans Affairs at (907) 334-0874 or toll free at (888) 246-3682.

If you are a veteran interested in starting or growing your own business, you are not alone! Many partners are on your side and want to help you secure a financial future for you and your family.

VETS FIRST VERIFICATION PROGRAM

The federal VA has developed a Verification Assistance Program to help veterans understand the verification policy and process. The goal of the program is to reduce the risk of denials stemming from a lack of understanding and misinterpretation of the regulations. The Vets First Verification Program affords verified firms owned and controlled by veterans and service-disabled veterans the opportunity to compete for VA set asides/direct contracts. For more information, visit www.va.gov/OSDBU/verification/index.asp.

PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAP) was authorized by Congress in 1985 in an effort to expand the number of businesses capable of participating in the government marketplace. Administered by the Department of Defense, Defense Logistics Agency, the program provides matching funds through cooperative agreements with state and local governments and non-profit organizations for the establishment of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) to provide procurement assistance.

PTACs come in many different sizes and shapes, reflecting the needs, priorities, and resources of the areas they serve. Some PTACs are administered directly by state governments; others partner with universities, community colleges, local economic development corporations, or other local institutions. Some PTACs operate within Bureau of Indian Affairs areas exclusively serving Native American owned businesses. Many are affiliated in some way with Small Business Development Centers and other small business programs. All PTACs are staffed with counselors experienced in government contracting and provide a wide range of services including classes and seminars, individual counseling, and easy access to bid opportunities, contract specifications, procurement histories, and other information necessary to successfully compete for government contracts.

Many PTAC counselors have backgrounds in government acquisitions, and virtually all receive ongoing training to keep pace with continually evolving acquisitions procedures and policies. The Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers provides a network that allows any PTAC counselor almost instant access to the expertise and experience of over 500 colleagues, as well as real-time information from government agencies regarding new requirements and initiatives.

PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

American Indian PTAC
www.ak-nptac.com
101 W. Benson Blvd., Suite 303
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 302-2400

Statewide PTAC
www.ptacalaska.org
1901 Bragaw St., Suite 199
Anchorage, AK 99508
(907) 786-7258

Fairbanks
www.ptacalaska.org
3750 Bonita St.
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 456-7822

ALASKA SBA RESOURCES

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has many programs that are used for success. Below is one of the centers located in Alaska. You can also visit www.sba.gov to navigate through all the programs supported by the SBA.

Alaska Small Business Development Center
State Office
1901 Bragaw St., Suite 199
Anchorage, AK 99508
(907) 786-7201

PUTTING YOUR EXPERIENCE TO WORK: employment

Veterans bring valuable skills and experience from their military service to the workforce. Resources are available to help veterans get the most out of their careers, whether seeking advancement at a current position or looking for the right fit for their first civilian job/position.

PUBLIC SECTOR ALASKA VETERANS' PREFERENCE

Under Alaska law, a public employer may provide veterans' preference to veterans seeking employment. This is voluntary and some companies located in our great state offer this incentive.

VETERAN EMPLOYMENT TAX CREDIT

A taxpayer who hires a veteran and employs the veteran in the state is entitled to a tax credit. Certain conditions apply, as outlined in the instructions from Form 6325 found at the Department of Revenue, Tax Division. For more information, call (907) 465-3687 or reference Alaska Statue 43.20.048.

ALASKA DISABLED VETERANS & VETERANS EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Veterans can find employment information, education and training opportunities, job counseling, job search workshops, and resume preparation assistance at Alaska Job Centers. The offices have specialists who assist veterans and disabled veterans to find employment.

Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) assist veterans in applying for federal, state, local government, and private sector employment. You are eligible for DVOP services if:

- You served on active duty for more than 180 days (not including training) and were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable; or
- You were medically discharged, regardless of amount of time you served on active duty; or
- You were a member of a National Guard or Reserve unit activated by presidential declaration, for which campaign badges/medals were issued or authorized for the full period of activation, and you were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

DVOPs and LVERs have offices to serve veterans in Alaska Job Centers. For specific eligibility and questions about these veteran services, please contact your nearest Alaska Job Center on the web at www.jobs.alaska.gov/offices/ or via phone at (877) 724-2539.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Veteran Services
The Alaska Department of Labor offers priority service and benefits to veterans and eligible spouses or caregivers who are seeking employment, apprenticeship opportunities, and in some cases, paid on-the-job-training programs.

Who is Eligible?
Veterans who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, are eligible for priority of service.

Examples of priority of service for veterans include:

- Advanced job opening notification; designated computers for veteran use; and advanced use of available training funds
- Priority of service when using job center resource rooms, with internet, copiers, fax machines, and phones
- Workshops to build effective resumes and bolster interviewing skills
- Personal career counseling from job center staff
- Referrals to other partner agencies within a complex arena of federal and local programs

Veterans with significant barriers to employment, as well as eligible spouses and caregivers, are eligible for specialized intensive services to obtain or retain employment. This is a federally defined category with services offered and administered by state employee veterans at Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Matanuska-Susitna Job Centers. These state specialists provide intensive services including:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs
- Development of an individual employment plan to identify employment goals
- Group counseling
- Individual counseling and career planning
- Short-term pre-vocational services that may include: development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare for unsubsidized employment or training

For specific eligibility and questions about veteran services, please contact your nearest Alaska Job Center on the web at www.jobs.alaska.gov/offices/
or via phone at (877) 724-2539.

FEDERAL VETERANS' PREFERENCE

Veterans' preference provides eligible veterans preference in appointments over many other applicants. Veterans' preference applies to virtually all new appointments in both the competitive and excepted service. Veterans' preference does not guarantee veterans a job, and it doesn't apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments, and reinstatements.

Veterans' preference can be confusing. In accordance with Title 5, United States Code, Section 2108 (5 USC 2108), veterans' preference eligibility is based on dates of active duty service, receipt of a campaign medal or badge, award of the Purple Heart Medal, or a service-connected disability. Please know that not all active duty service may qualify for veterans' preference. Only veterans discharged or released from active duty under honorable conditions are eligible for veterans' preference. This means the discharge must be under an honorable or a general under honorable conditions. Retired members of the armed forces are eligible if a disability rating has been awarded by the military or the federal VA, or if the retirement rank was below major/lieutenant commander or its equivalent.

There are three types of preference eligibility: disabled veteran (10-point preference eligible), non-disabled (5-point preference eligible), and sole survivorship (0-point preference eligible). Zero-point preference eligible means that no points are added to the passing score.

Learn more about eligibility to receive veterans' preference for federal jobs at www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans/veterans-preference/.

ALASKA VETERANS' PREFERENCE

Alaska law is designed to help service members get back to work quickly after serving in the military. Alaska offers 10- and 5-point preferences to all who qualify.

Ten-point veterans, AS 39.25.159 (a) and (c) require qualified veterans having 10 veterans' preference points be offered an interview for all open competitive vacancies (vacancies for All Alaska Residents). This preference does not extend to All Department Employees or All State Employees recruitments. "Qualified" means meets the minimum qualifications. Work Place Alaska automatically identifies 10-point veterans. If you are the selected applicant as a 10-point veteran, you are required to provide a copy of the DD214, DD215, or a letter from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for verification.

Five-point veterans, AS 39.25.159 (a) and (c) required qualified veterans having five veterans' preference points receive consideration for all open competitive vacancies. This preference does not extend to All Department Employee or All State Employees recruitments. "Qualified" means meets the minimum qualifications. "Consideration" requires review of the veteran's work history and education as described in the Applicant Profile and Job Qualification Standards to gain enough knowledge of the veteran's background in relation to the job to be able to determine whether the person should be provided further consideration. If the hiring manager wishes to offer a qualified veteran an interview, the manager may do so. However, offering an interview is not required as it is for a 10-point veteran.

For specific eligibility and questions about veteran services, please contact your nearest Alaska Job Center on the web at www.jobs.alaska.gov/offices/ or via phone at (877) 724-2539.

BE PROUD OF YOUR SERVICE:
records & identification

You served with pride, and the state has a number of ways to publicly display your veteran's status.

AK DRIVER LICENSE/ID VETERAN DESIGNATION

The Alaska Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offers a veteran designation that can be voluntarily placed on your Alaska driver license or identification card. In order to receive the designation, a veteran must provide proof of service and must meet all other Alaska requirements for the driving privilege or ID card. There is no additional fee for the veteran designation. The only price is the cost of a duplicate license if you request before renewal or the renewal fee at the time of renewal. For more information, contact the DMV in your area or visit www.doa.alaska.gov/dmv/akol/index.htm.

VETERAN RECOGNITION LICENSE PLATES

The Alaska DMV offers specialty license plates to veterans, disabled veterans, and qualifying family members. Plates that indicate the branch of service are available with some specialty plates that support your service to include Gold Star families, POWs, and Purple Heart recipients. To obtain a veteran plate, proof of honorable service and supporting evidence for the plate you are seeking must be presented at the DMV during the application process. For more details about the wonderful plates offered by the DMV, visit www.doa.alaska.gov/dmv/plates/index.htm.

VETERAN HEALTH IDENTIFICATION CARD

The Veteran Health Identification Card is issued only to veterans who are enrolled in the federal VA Health Care system and is used for identification and check-in at a VA-approved facility for appointments. It cannot be used as an insurance card, nor it does authorize or pay for care in non-VA-approved facilities. For more information about becoming a patient in the Alaska VA Health Care System, please review www.alaska.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp. If you have any questions about this service, contact the Patient Aligned Care Team call center at (907) 257-5460 ext. 5490.

FEDERAL VETERANS IDENTIFICATION CARD

A Veteran ID Card (VID) is a form of photo identification that you can use to receive discounts offered to veterans at many restaurants, hotels, stores, and other businesses. It is distinct from the ID cards that the military issues to current service members, retirees, and certain veterans with a 100-percent disability rating. You may be eligible for a VIC if you served on active duty, in the Reserves or in the National Guard, and received an honorable discharge or general discharge under honorable conditions. To apply for this card, visit www.va.gov/records/get-veteran-id-cards/vic/.

MILITARY RECORDS/ AWARDS/DECORATIONS/ MEDALS

Veterans or their next of kin who need assistance in obtaining service records, a DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Service), or replacement awards, decorations, and medals must formally request them through the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). The NPRC is the records custodian for most discharged and retired members of all branches of the service. Requests can be made by mailing or faxing a Standard Form 180. The forms are available in any veteran service organization office or post, from local veteran service officers, or the state Office of Veterans Affairs. For more information, visit www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel or call the Office of Veterans Affairs at (907) 334-0874 or toll free at (888) 248-3682.

CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

Requests to have military records corrected are handled through your branch of service. Each service branch has a Board for Correction of Military Records. All requests to correct an error to one's military record must be filed within three years of discovery of the error along with a DD Form 149 and evidence, such as signed statements from you and other witnesses or copies of records that support your case. Applying for a correction is a simple process; however, it is recommended that you seek the assistance of a veteran service officer or contact the state Office of Veterans Affairs. For more information, visit www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/vso/boards-for-correction-of-military-records.

APPLYING FOR REVIEW OF DISHCARGE

You must make your application for discharge upgrade within 15 years of discharge. If your discharge is older than 15 years, you must apply for a change to your military records using the process detailed above (Correction of Military Records). You will need to complete the DD Form 293 (Application for the Review of Discharge or Dismissal from the Armed Forces). For more information, visit www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/vso/boards-for-correction-of-military-records.

Veterans have access to unique opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, and other outdoor recreational activities at state and national parks and other public lands.

ALASKA HUNTING & FISHING LICENSE

Members of the military service or the U.S Coast Guard who are on active duty permanently stationed in Alaska, or a dependent of a military member serving on active duty permanently stationed in Alaska, may apply for licenses and pay the resident rate. For more information, visit www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntlicense.military.

Active members of the Alaska National Guard and Reserves, who are stationed in Alaska and have met the residency requirements under AS 16.05.415 and AS 16.05.940, may receive a free hunting and sport fishing license. The license will only be available through the State of Alaska Headquarters Licensing office. The application/affidavit must be signed by an authorized official. For a list of authorized officials, call (907) 428-6031. For more information, call (907) 465-2376.

Resident hunting and sport fishing licenses are available at no charge to honorably discharged veterans with a 50 percent or more service-connected disability who are Alaska residents. Applicants may obtain an application online or by calling (907) 465-2376.

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY PASS

A one-year pass on the ferries of the Alaska Marine Highway is available for veterans with a service-connected disability. The pass entitles the disabled veteran and an attendant (if required by a physician) to travel at 50 percent of the regular fare, between Alaska ports only. To request a pass application call 1-800-642-0066.

STATE CAMPING PASS

Disabled veterans can receive a free camping pass, which is valid in all developed Alaska State Park campgrounds and is good for two years. To receive the camping pass, a disabled veteran must present proof of a service-connected disability and Alaska residency at one of the Department of Natural Resources Public Information Centers. For more information, call (907) 269-8400 in Anchorage, (907) 451-2705 in Fairbanks, or (907) 465-3400 in Juneau.

FEDERAL RECREATION PASS

The America the Beautiful Parks Pass Series is your ticket to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites across the nation. Included in this series are two passes that benefit current service members and disabled veterans. A free annual pass is available to active duty, Reserves and National Guard members, and their dependents. A free access pass is also available to U.S. citizens or permanent residents with permanent disabilities. Each pass covers entrance fees at national parks and national wildlife refuges, as well as standard amenity fees at national forests and grasslands and at lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation. You can obtain a pass in person, with proper documentation, from a participating federal recreation site or office. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm.

ALASKA RAILROAD DISCOUNT

The Alaska Railroad offers a 20-percent discount to active duty members, military retirees, and dependents. Reservations can be completed on-line at www.alaskarailroad.com or by calling (907) 265-2494. Identification showing proof of status must be shown at boarding.

BASIC ELIGIBILITY

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a broad range of benefits to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and to qualified family members. Among the benefits are various types of assistance, including monthly cash payments to disabled veterans, health care, education, and housing. Veterans must meet the basic requirements set by law in order to receive eligibility for access to the VA program. The VA uses a two-step process to evaluate claims for benefits. First, the individual must demonstrate eligibility for veterans' benefits in general. That is, the individual must prove that he or she is a bona fide veteran and have verification. Second, the veteran must prove eligibility for the particular benefit being sought.

VETERAN DEFINED

To be eligible for most VA benefits the individual must be a veteran or in some circumstances, the survivor or the dependent of a veteran. By statute, a veteran is defined as a "person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable."

In evaluating the evidence to determine whether the individual is a veteran for the purposes of VA benefits, the VA relies upon military service records. The VA is bound by information provided in the military discharge documents.

Records may include a complete original military service record; a copy issued by the military service with the certification that it is a true document; or a copy submitted by an accredited agent, attorney, or service representative with special training, who certifies that it is a copy of an original military service document or a copy of a copy of such a document. The service discharge document must contain data reflecting the length, time, and character of the service. If the individual does not provide the requested documentation or other evidence, or the submitted documentation does not meet the requirements, the VA will seek to verify the individual's military service directly from the appropriate military service branch.

ACTIVE SERVICE CRITERIA

An individual must have "active military, naval, or air service" to be considered a veteran for most VA benefits. Keep in mind not all types of service are considered active military service for this purpose.

In general, active service means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service; or as a commissioned officer of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessors.

Active service also includes a period of active duty for training during which the person was disabled or died from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated in the line of duty. It also includes any period of inactive duty for training during which the person was disabled or died from an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty or from certain health conditions incurred during the training.

The determination of whether an individual has met the active service requirement may not be a simple process. The individual and the VA may have to scrutinize the individual's service records to determine whether the individual's service fits into one of the many categories of active service, or whether an exception has been made for his or her service, so that it is considered to be active service for the purposes of veterans' benefits. In addition, an individual may have more than one period of service, which may further complicate the determination.

LENGTH OF SERVICE CRITERIA

For people who enlisted prior to Sept. 8, 1980, no minimum length of service is necessary to be considered a veteran for most VA benefits. However, certain minimum length of service requirements applies to people who enlisted on or after Sept. 8, 1980. The general requirement is the "full period" for which the service member was called or ordered to active duty or, if less, 24 months of continuous active duty.

Several exceptions exist to this rule. For example, service-connected disability compensation benefits are exempt from the length of service requirement. Thus, a veteran with a disease or injury incurred during active service generally may receive service-connected compensation for that disability. Other exceptions to the minimum service requirements include claims for VA life insurance benefits, hardship discharges, and persons retired or separated from service because of a service-related disability.

If the former service member did not serve for the full period of active duty and served less than 24 months, and none of the statutory exceptions apply, then the veteran did not complete a minimum period of active duty and is "not eligible for any benefit under Title 38, United States Code or under any law administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs based on that period of active service."

DISCHARGE CRITERIA

The statutory definition of veteran requires that the individual be discharged or released from military service "under conditions other than dishonorable." There are currently six types of discharges issued by the military services:

1. honorable discharge (HD)
2. discharge under honorable conditions (UHC) or general discharge (GD)
3. discharge under other than honorable conditions (UOTHC)
4. bad conduct discharge (BCD)
5. dishonorable discharge (DD)
6. uncharacterized (entry level -- served fewer than 180 days)

The statutory definition of veteran does not precisely match those five categories of the discharges, and the VA often determines on a case-by-case basis whether the individual's discharge qualifies as under conditions other than dishonorable. In most cases, the VA considers honorable discharges and discharges under honorable conditions to be conditions other than dishonorable and will usually qualify an individual as a veteran under the first step of the eligibility test, which usually qualifies a veteran for most benefits.

Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Under other than honorable conditions discharges must be reviewed for benefits by the VA. Veterans in prison and parolees may be eligible for certain VA benefits and must contact the VA to determine eligibility. VA benefits are not provided to any veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant.

DISTINGUISHING WARTIME & PEACETIME MILITARY SERVICE

All military service is classified as either wartime or peacetime service. The type of service may affect eligibility for VA benefits. For example, only veterans with wartime service qualify for Improved Pension, which pays benefits to low-income veterans who are either elderly or nonservice-connected disabled veterans.

Periods considered "wartime" for the purposes of veterans' benefits are defined in law. Veterans who served during those periods are considered to have "served during wartime" by the VA, even if the service was not in a combat zone. Those time periods not designated by Congress as wartime are considered to be peacetime. If a veteran served partly during wartime and partly during peacetime, the veteran meets the wartime criteria if he or she served 90 consecutive days, at least one day of which occurred during a period designated as wartime.

VETERAN STATUS FOR NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVE SERVICE MEMBERS

To be eligible for VA benefits, members of the National Guard and the reserve components must meet the same standards as other individuals. In many cases, they do not meet the active-duty standard or length-of-service standard and are therefore ineligible for VA benefits. Members of the National Guard and Reserves who are never activated for federal active duty military service do not meet the active-duty requirement. National Guard and reserve members who are called to active duty and serve the full period for which they are called meet both the active service and length-of-duty requirements. National Guard and reserve members also qualify as veterans for the purposes of VA benefits if they are disabled or die from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

National Guard and reserve members may qualify as veterans for the purposes of VA benefits under other circumstances, which adds to the complexity of the eligibility determination. For example, under certain conditions Guard and reserve members may be eligible for education benefits through the Post-9/11 GI Bill and home loans from the VA. Eligibility under these special cases is usually determined by the VA after reviewing the individual service member's military service records. National Guard and reserve members who served over 20 years and retired from their perspective service have earned the right to be called veterans but still must meet the active-duty requirements set by law.

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