

## Information for veterans

### Federal benefits for veterans and their dependents

The Department of Veterans Affairs publishes a guide that describes the benefits available for veterans and their families. It is titled *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents*. To find out more about VA benefits (and when some of these benefits expire), write and ask for a copy of the guide. If you think you may be eligible for any VA benefit after you're released, you can ask the Veterans Affairs Regional Office for an application.

You can get a copy of the current guide by writing or calling the regional office. The address is Veterans Affairs Regional Office, 155 Van Gordon Street, Box 25126, Lakewood, CO 80228. The telephone number is 1.800.827.1000. The guide is online at [www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov).

According to *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents*, "Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions.... Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits." You must contact a VA regional office to discuss your situation and eligibility.

### FAQs about disability compensation or pension benefits

The information in the following section is current as of 2007, but VA policies may change. Ask Veterans Affairs personnel for current information after you're released. The Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program representative that visits several facilities will also have current information.

#### *Am I eligible for my VA disability pension while I'm in prison?*

If you were receiving a disability pension, your pension payment will stop the 61<sup>st</sup> day of your imprisonment following conviction of a felony or misdemeanor.

If you receive a disability pension, you should notify the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office immediately after you're incarcerated. If you don't notify VA and receive an overpayment, you will lose all payments until the debt is repaid.

#### *Am I eligible for my VA disability compensation while I'm in prison?*

If you were receiving VA disability compensation before you were incarcerated, VA can continue paying certain benefits to veterans incarcerated in a federal, state, or local prison (e.g., city jail). By law, VA is required to reduce your disability compensation beginning the 61<sup>st</sup> day of imprisonment following conviction for a felony.

- If you were receiving disability compensation at the 10% disability rate, VA will reduce your benefit by one-half.
- If you were receiving disability compensation at 20% disability rate or higher, VA will reduce your benefit to the 10% rate.

*Can my spouse, children, or dependent parent(s) receive any of the money not paid to me because I'm in prison?*

According to the Incarcerated Veterans fact sheet on the Department of Veterans Affairs' website: "VA can take all or part of the benefits you are not receiving and apportion it to your spouse, child or children, and dependent parents on the basis of individual need. They should contact the nearest VA regional office for details on how to apply. They will be asked to provide income information as part of the application process."

*When should I apply for my veterans' benefits?*

You may apply or re-apply for VA benefits at any time, but VA will not begin your benefits until they receive official notification of your release from incarceration. Mail or take your application to the Veterans Affairs Regional Office after you're released. The application must be accompanied by an official document (discharge paper, parole agreement/order) that shows the date of your release. If you mail the application, enclose a photocopy of this document. Keep all copies of your application paperwork.

You may want to ask for help with the application process. Contact a Veterans Service organization such as the Disabled American Veterans or The American Legion for more help. You can also ask the Veterans Affairs Regional Office for help. Advocates from these organizations may be able to help you with your application.

*Will my benefits automatically resume when I get out of prison?*

According to the Incarcerated Veterans fact sheet on the Department of Veterans Affairs' website: "Your award for compensation or pension benefits shall be resumed the date of release from incarceration if the Department of Veterans Affairs receives notice of release within one year following release. Depending on the type of disability, VA may schedule you for a medical examination to see if your disability has improved. You will need to visit or call your local Veterans Affairs Regional Office for assistance."

- You may file for and receive these benefits while on parole. Always notify your parole officer of any pension or compensation income.
- You may file for and receive these benefits while you're in a work-release program or residing in a halfway house. Always notify your case manager in community corrections of any pension or compensation income.

### **FAQs about health care benefits**

*Am I eligible to receive VA medical care while I'm in prison?*

According to the Incarcerated Veterans fact sheet on the Department of Veterans Affairs' website: "[C]urrent regulations restrict VA from providing hospital and outpatient care to an incarcerated veteran who is an inmate in an institution of another government agency when that agency has a duty to give the care or services." This means you will not receive VA medical care while you're an inmate in a DOC facility.

*How do I find out if I'm eligible for health benefits after I'm released from prison?*

After you're released, call the Veterans Affairs Regional Office to see if you're eligible for health benefits. You may also apply directly to a VA health care facility.

*How do I find a VA health care facility such as a medical center or outpatient clinic?*

You can call 1.877.222.8387 to find the VA medical center or VA outpatient clinic nearest you.

- VA medical centers are in Denver and Grand Junction.
- VA outpatient clinics are in Aurora, Colorado Springs, La Junta, Lakewood, Lamar, and Pueblo.

*Am I eligible to receive VA medical care while I'm in community corrections?*

If you're in a community corrections facility, you're probably not eligible to receive VA medical treatment, psychiatric treatment, or substance abuse treatment because you're still a ward of the DOC. The release form you signed to enter community corrections states you're responsible for your medical care while you're in community corrections.

- Just in case this policy changes, contact the Veterans Affairs Regional Office to see if you're eligible to enroll for health care services after your release.

### **Appealing a decision**

You have the right to appeal any decision made by a Veterans Affairs Regional Office to deny you benefits. This is done by writing a letter (called a Notice of Disagreement) to the regional office that made the decision. An appeal should be made within one year of a decision.

- The Veterans Affairs Regional Office at 1.800.827.1000 will tell you how to file an appeal.
- This information is online at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). Click on *Board of Veterans' Appeals*.

You may want to contact a Veterans Service office for help with the appeal process. Each county in Colorado has a Veterans Service office. If you don't know how to contact the Veterans Service office in your county, call the Denver office at 303.343.1268 for information.

## **Veterans Affairs Regional Office**

The Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Lakewood is the only regional VA office in Colorado. It is *the* place to start with any questions you have about benefits for veterans.

- The address is Veterans Affairs Regional Office, 155 Van Gordon Street, Box 25126, Lakewood, CO 80228. The telephone number is 1.800.827.1000.

Once you're out of prison, you will find general information about programs and services for veterans online at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

## **Health Care for Homeless Veterans program**

A Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) coordinator helps homeless veterans find community and VA services. This help might be referrals to medical and mental health services, information about transitional housing, job search assistance, and local resource information.

Coordinators are in the Denver VA Medical Center, Grand Junction VA Medical Center, and the Colorado Springs VA Outpatient Clinic. Call for current information.

- Denver VA Medical Center's HCHV coordinator: 303.399.8020 x2056 or 1.888.336.8262 x2056

- Grand Junction VA Medical Center's HCHV coordinator: 970.242.0731
- Colorado Springs VA Outpatient Clinic's HCHV coordinator: 719.667.5588

## **Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program**

The Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program is located in Denver. This is a six-month program for homeless veterans looking for a job. There is an expectation that you will find work within two months after entering the program.

- To be considered homeless for this program, you may be staying in a hotel, shelter, or living with a family member or friend. You're not eligible for the program if you own or rent any property under your name.

The program offers the following types of help:

- bus tokens, clothing, haircuts, food
- job search assistance and referrals
- transitional housing referrals and information

The address for the program is 1200 Federal Boulevard, Denver, CO 80204. The telephone number is 720.944.3500. Hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Walk-ins are welcome.

To be eligible for this program, you must be a veteran with at least one day of active duty and not have a dishonorable discharge.

## **Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program**

The goal of the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP) is to help incarcerated veterans transition into society after prison. Ideally, the program works with a veteran both before and after release. This program is available in several DOC facilities.

IVTP helps veterans prepare for and find a job. This includes help with a job search, training, and placement. In addition, the program also helps clients with referrals for health care, counseling, treatment, and housing services.

IVTP representatives work with case managers to identify any veteran several months from his/her release date. If you're a veteran, talk to your case manager about the IVTP. The program has an in-facility coordinator at Four Mile Correctional Center who visits DOC facilities to offer transition classes.

If you're not able to meet with an IVTP representative before you're released, you can find out more about the program by calling the John Inmann Work and Family Center at 303.825.1115 after you're released. Ask to speak to the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program representative.

You can also ask for help from a veteran's representative at your county's Workforce Center. (Most Workforce Centers have a veteran's representative.)

- To find your county's Workforce Center, look in your phone book's white pages, usually under Colorado Labor and Employment Department. You can also call 303.318.8000 or go online to [www.coworkforce.com](http://www.coworkforce.com). Click on *Workforce Center Locations*.

You are eligible to participate in IVTP if you're a veteran within 18 months of release from a DOC facility, or if you're in a community corrections facility. Veterans with a bad conduct discharge or dishonorable discharge are not eligible for IVTP.

## **Colorado Incarcerated Veterans Guide**

The *Colorado Incarcerated Veterans Guide* is distributed by the VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System. The guide contains information about services available for veterans that we don't list in this chapter.

- Your case manager may have a copy, or you can write and ask for a copy. The address is HCHV Coordinator, VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System, 1055 Clermont Street, Denver, CO 80220. There is no charge for the guide.

This information is excerpted from CCJRC's publication, *Getting On After Getting Out: A ReEntry Guide for Colorado*. To order this guide, go to [www.ccjrc.org](http://www.ccjrc.org).